

THE ELECTRIFYING CARD GAME

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Written in 1992*

This story will take us back 50 years ago when I was about 15. There was this fellow I knew named George Sutton who was about my Dad's age and a very nice guy. He had come from Arkansas a few years before. One day while talking to Mr. Sutton, he said, "Why don't you boys come over some Saturday night. We can play cards and listen to the Grand Ole Opry." I said, "That sounds good to me. We will be over one of these Saturday nights." Mr. Sutton lived alone in a little two room house two miles away. We didn't have a radio at home. Very few people in our neighborhood did have a radio back then. There wasn't many things we could do for entertainment in those days. We went to the movie picture show in town when we had the money. Radios were powered with batteries, because there wasn't any rural electric in our part of the country at that time. One Saturday night my friends, Wes Miller and John McCord, and myself rode our saddled horses over to Mr. Sutton's place to play cards and listen to the Grand Ole Opry. We got to his house around 9 o'clock. Mr. Sutton was glad we came and made us feel right at home. He said he had put up a new radio aerial wire and made it much longer than the old one was and said he was getting much better reception than before. He had tied it to a tree quite some distance from the house. We were all sitting around the table playing cards and listening the Opry was coming in loud and clear. Around 11 o'clock a storm began moving in and it was a bad electrical storm. There were loud blasts of thunder that made that little house tremble. There were violent gusts of wind and the rain began to really come down while the lightning bounced around everywhere. Suddenly the

lightning struck real close and knocked us all out of our chairs and across the room. The table was knocked over so the kerosene lamp hit the floor and broke in a hundred pieces. It was pitch dark in there. While the storm was raging something fearful, we were somewhat dumbfounded by that bolt of lightning. After a while Mr. Sutton got up and stumbled around in the dark and found a flashlight. Then he began to look us over to see how bad we were hurt. He then lit another lamp. The rest of us were all still laying on the floor and couldn't seem to get our wits about us. We didn't get our senses back for a good while. This was a terrifying experience. A few minutes later I got up and sat in a chair. A little later, John got up but Wes was still on the floor, but we got him up and set him in a chair too. Wes was sitting closest to the radio so I guess he got the hardest jolt. Mr. Sutton was the farthest away so he got a lighter jolt than we did. We knew the lightning current had run in on the aerial wire, because the radio was dead. Smoke was pouring out of it but nothing caught on fire. I had a can of Prince Albert Tobacco in my shirt pocket and there was now a deep burn on my chest the size of the Prince Albert can. Mr. Sutton had a pocket watch in his pocket which was pretty well melted away. It left a bad burn on his body. Wes had a wrist watch on that had a leather band. The heat had burned the leather band completely off the watch. Wes had a round hole on his wrist where the watch had melted away. Now John wasn't burned any place. As we began to get ourselves back together, we realized just how fortunate we had been. Some of us or all of us could have been killed. We didn't play any more cards that

night and about two hours later the storm was over. We climbed on our wet saddles and headed home.

That was the first time and the last time we ever played cards at Mr. Sutton's place. In the years that followed I would never play cards when it was stormy. I suppose I was afraid to. About two years later Wes went off to war. He was wounded by a German sniper's bullet which shattered his left jaw bone and blew away much of his mouth. He had a number of surgeries and was delayed about two years in coming home. He arrived home with a Purple Heart, but carried the ugly scars on his mouth and face to his grave. Wes was never the same after the war and was only 47 when he died in Long Beach, California. John suffered from a number of strokes and was bedfast for the last 15 years of his life. He lived to be 69 years old and died in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Mr. Sutton lived around 18 more years after our card game that stormy night. Now this is how it happened one night in these hills some 50 years ago.

