

*Rattlesnake Ridge*  
Excerpted from Spooky Texas  
Retold by S. E. Schlosser

Adam Gimble was the very best fiddler in Texas. Folks came from miles around to the weekly barn dance, just to hear Adam play. Adam was right proud of his reputation. He liked to boast of his prowess with the fiddle and often said that he could charm rattlesnakes out of their dens. One evening, upon hearing this boast, a dark stranger spoke up from the far end of the bar.

“Charm rattlesnakes out of their dens? That’s a mighty big boast,” the dark-haired man said. “I’m a pretty good fiddle player myself, and fifty dollars says I can charm more rattlesnakes than you.”

“I’ll bet you anything you like,” Adam said defiantly.

“Done!” said the dark stranger with a devilish grin, and he arranged to meet Adam the next evening at dusk at Rattler Ridge.

Adam came striding up to the top of the ridge at the appointed hour to find the stranger perched on a flat-topped rock. He flashed a grin at Adam, and Adam shivered

a bit.

Propping his rifle up against the rock, Adam tuned his violin while the stranger pulled out his own violin; his eyes glowed with a red light. "I will mark them as they come out," he said, grinning at the unease he saw in Adam's face.

"How are you going to do that?" Adam asked, swallowing nervously.

"I'm the Devil. I can do anything I please," the man said. "Rattlers with a yellow dot on their heads responded to your fiddle, and rattlers with a blue dot responded to mine. You start."

Adam gave a muffled gasp when he realized the dark fellow was the Devil. But, pride came to Adam's rescue. Raising his head and standing tall, he put his fiddle to his chin and began to play. He started with a jig and then a fast reel. The rattlesnakes came as he played, their triangular heads glowing with large yellow dots that lit up the darkness of night.

Adam played on and on, caught up in his music and he had no idea how long he played before the Devil called a halt and took his turn. The Devil began to play, marches and waltzes and slow ballads. Each song was lovelier than the

one before, and the far side of the rock gradually lit with the eerie glow of many blue-dotted rattlesnakes.

Then the Devil and Adam played together, fast songs that made the rattlers whirl and slow songs that made them sway gently. It was only in the gray dimness just before sunrise that Adam realized that the strange night was over. Adam pulled the fiddle away from his chin and looked around. To his astonishment, there seemed to be twice as many yellow snakes as blue.

“Well,” said the Devil, “It’s obvious that I must concede the contest to you.” He made a strange half-bowing motion and threw a fifty-dollar bill down on the rock. Then the Devil vanished.

Grinning in triumph, Adam reached down for the fifty-dollar bill—and then froze when he heard a long, drawn-out hiss of a rattlesnake’s warning. The whole ridge rang with the warning of more than a hundred snakes.

The snakes were slowly creeping up the rock toward him as Adam reached desperately behind him toward the rock where he’d propped his rifle. And that’s when he

remembered the Devil's strange bowing motion just before he vanished. The Devil had taken his gun!