

Beyond Redemption

Love and Longing
In the Old West

By

Mark W. Swarbrick

Based Upon Actual Events

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This book is dedicated...

To my precious daughter Chloe, without whose daily insistence I write another chapter for her, this book would have never been completed.

Special Thanks...

To Bonnie Swarbrick Morehouse for proofreading and editing the manuscript.

Other Publications by Mark Swarbrick...

Theistic Evolution: Did God Create Through Evolution?

Heavenly Miracles: True Stories of Supernatural Intervention

To Mormons with Love: A Pilgrimage Through Mormon History and Doctrine

King James Onlyism: Is the KJV the Best Bible Version?

The Hidden Truth About Catholicism

Life After Death: What Happens When We Die?

The Covid Conspiracy: The Cure for Covid and the Plot to Hide it from the World

Hidden History: The Untold Story of the Democratic Party

Swaggartism: The Strange Doctrines of Jimmy Swaggart Ministries

Truly Amazing: The Real Story of Adam and Eve

Note from the Author

Thank you for picking up this book. I hope you enjoy reading the story as much as I enjoyed writing it. It has been a labor of love that spanned more than a decade. The characters are now alive in my mind, as I am sure they will be in yours long after you read the last paragraph.

The best way to thank an author is to write a review. You see, no matter the quality of a book, without reader appraisals all the hard work that went into the writing is for naught, for without reviews, the book is buried under the 33 million other books for sale on Amazon. Reader opinions take a book from obscurity and place it in the hands of others to enjoy.

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Acknowledgements

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information, and put me in touch with accomplished author and historian Brad Courtney.

Brad Courtney, historian, educator, songwriter, and author is based in Prescott where the majority of this story takes place. Brad was a featured historian in True West magazine and is dedicated to bringing history to light and promoting its accuracy. His advice and insights were invaluable in ensuring the credibility of the manuscript.

Drew Desmond, historian and author, is the founder of the Prescott Arizona History Blog and administrator of the Celebrating Historic Prescott Facebook group. Drew also provided helpful assistance with historical details. Having spent many thousands of hours reading old Prescott newspapers and periodicals, Drew is an encyclopedia of local history. When asked what hotels existed near the Prescott Plaza in 1889, he knew immediately – the Bellevue and the Pioneer.

I also want to praise noted historian and author, Professor Larry D. Ball. His seminal work, *Ambush at Bloody Run* provided the historical data needed to accurately recount the gunfight that begins my story.

I treasure the opportunity to have exchanged correspondence with the late Nancy E. Place Brown, daughter of Joe Place. Nancy provided direct quotes from Joe's conversation with Gilbert Webb in the prologue of the story.

I also thank the Arizona Appaloosa Association who verified that Appaloosa horses reached Arizona by the time this story begins in 1889.

My hope is that my efforts, in collaboration with the people mentioned above, have brought the lure, the lore and the life of the Old West to those who peruse the pages of this book.

Preface

ON MAY 11TH, 1889, local Mormons attacked and robbed the U.S. Army payroll while it was escorted by a dozen Black soldiers. If you want to get right to the action, you may skip to Chapter 1. However, if you are interested in the history and background, I highly recommend reading the Preface and Prologue. The payroll robbery which begins our story was motivated in part by religious fanaticism. Consequently, this historical novel intersects two genres not typically intertwined – classic western and Christian literature. Why? Because it is unrealistic to write about an actual robbery motivated by religion without referencing theology.

The reader should be aware this book transgresses a few conventions. First, the N-word is used a few times when it represents an exact quote from an actual person. These quotes were entered into the court record through the testimony of Black soldiers giving eyewitness accounts of what the bandits said.

This historical novel attempts to portray the attitudes and beliefs of people living in the Old West, honestly representing how people thought and spoke in the late 1800s. The thoroughly researched account touches upon the unorthodox doctrines and anti-government perspectives of the polygamous Mormons of that time and the figures of speech in general use. The Arizona Territory of 1889 was a rough place. It was the quintessential Wild West, and where race was concerned, it was clearly not the home of political correctness.

In this desolate and remote land, Black men were routinely referred to as niggers. Not even the testimony of Blacks was considered valid in a court of law. Of course,

all of that was very wrong, yet that was the unfortunate reality of the period.

Some conversations are reproduced verbatim; they have not been whitewashed, for scholastic dishonesty for the sake of moralism is a disservice to the reader. Only by studying the past as it really was can we learn from it and advance to a better tomorrow. Hopefully, readers will appreciate the historical honesty and not be offended.

The author is a resident of Arizona and has traveled to the remote and rugged scene of the assault. He corresponded with the descendants of people who knew Gilbert Webb, the Mormon leader who planned and instigated the holdup, which brought to light some previously unknown facts.

The cause of the 1889 robbery of the U.S. Army payroll near Pima, Arizona, was rooted in racial bigotry fueled by the catalyst of some heterodox religious doctrines of Mormonism. Therefore, this writing has characters who deal in depth with theological matters. This is in line with reality. As reported to the author, the architect of the crime himself struggled with his conscience in later years, evidenced by Webb's actual quote about the theft: "*If the Mormon Church is true, I reckon I'm all right, but if not, I'm in a lot of trouble.*"

Within the primitive and wild land called Arizona were isolated Mormon settlements. These settlers were different from the Mormons¹ of today. The official records of the Mormon Church reveal that in the late 1800s, Mormons had an extreme disdain for the Black race. Mormons of the 19th century codified their dislike for the Negro into a doctrine.

¹ Mormons today wish to separate from the Mormon name and be called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this book the traditional name "Mormon" is used, but not to antagonize Mormons. Mormons used that moniker for themselves in 1889. Thus it is used here to remain true to the historical setting of the account.

The Mormon leader and prophet Brigham Young taught that the spirits of Black men were inherently flawed and less virtuous than white people. According to Mormon theology, God cursed them with black skin for alleged misbehavior committed in a former ethereal existence before birth. Not until 1978 did the Mormon Church soften its stance and allow Blacks to hold leadership positions within the Church.

Mormons of the 1800s had an abhorrence for something else as well: the United States government. The foundation of that conflict had a long history. Their attempts to seduce impressionable young women away from their families and husbands into a polygamous religion enraged local residents. Consequently, Mormons found themselves embroiled in armed confrontations with state authorities in one place after another.

The Mormons fled Ohio for Missouri to evade an arrest warrant for their founding prophet, Joseph Smith. Then they ran afoul of the law in Missouri, after which they escaped to Illinois, formed their own army called the Nauvoo Legion, and went to war against militias called out by law enforcement.

Amid that conflagration, Joseph Smith, the religion's founder, was jailed for ordering the destruction of private property. When a Missouri militia entered the jail to extradite Smith to Missouri on a warrant for conspiracy to murder their governor, Smith pulled a pistol smuggled to him and opened fire on the militia, killing one and injuring two others. This resulted in the militia returning fire and killing Smith.²

² The facts given here of the shootout (which contradict the current Mormon position) come from Mormon Elder John Taylor, who was an eyewitness, being in the room with Smith when the shootout occurred. His account is recorded in the *LDS Documentary History of the Church*, vol.7, pp. 101-103, and is confirmed by *History of Hancock County*, TH. Greg, published 1880, and also by *Mormonism Unveiled*, by John D. Lee, published 1877. Lee was

After losing that fight, the Mormons had a mass exodus to Utah, where their new leader, Prophet Brigham Young, refused to obey federal authority. In 1857 President James Buchanan sent the military to the Utah Territory in what became known as the Utah War, which brought the territory back under the control of the United States. By 1889 the Mormons were at relative peace with the government, but enmity still existed among many of the old-time Mormons.

The attitude of Mormons toward Blacks, along with their feelings about federal authority, were two volatile ingredients that created a mixture that merely needed a spark to ignite an explosion of violence. That spark came in 1889 when a Black regiment of federal soldiers was assigned to guard a gold shipment coming through the mountains just a few miles from a Mormon settlement. Religious bigotry, anti-government sentiment, gold and greed combined and culminated in the 1889 Mormon robbery of the Army Paymaster in the mountains southwest of Pima, Arizona. It happened precisely as described in this story, and that event forever changed the lives of everyone involved.

Major Wham (the Army Paymaster) and several soldiers were able to identify most of their assailants. They named Gilbert Webb, his son Wilfred Webb, the three Follett brothers, Lyman, Ed, and Warren, along with David Rogers, Thomas Lamb, Sebird Henderson, Marcus Cunningham, and Cyclone Bill Beck. All were Mormons, except for Cunningham and Beck.

The religiously fueled racism of the Mormon robbers led them to underestimate the bravery and prowess of the Black soldiers guarding the gold shipment. This miscalculation caused the ambush to turn into a vicious bloodbath instead of a simple holdup. To this day, no one

the adopted son of Mormon prophet Brigham Young and was well aware of the facts. Lee was later executed for complicity in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

knows what happened to the thirty thousand dollars in gold. This money was in the form of freshly minted, uncirculated gold coins, today worth at least three million dollars to rare coin collectors.

For those interested in only the bare facts, the author recommends the book *Ambush at Bloody Run: The Wham Paymaster Robbery of 1889 – A Story of Politics, Religion, Race, and Banditry in Arizona Territory*. Unfortunately, it is rare and will cost you \$40 on Amazon, but used ones are available for about ten dollars. But for those who wish to experience the story as a historical novel, *Beyond Redemption* will transport the reader to another time where they will see and feel history with its full emotional impact.

The brutal gunfight wounded many and killed several. Those who escaped unscathed found their lives haunted by the horrors of that fateful day. This is the story of how some of those men dealt with the life-altering ramifications of that fierce battle. While some suffered through life with guilt, a seared conscience, and a scarred memory, others found a way forward, seeing the providence of God and divine goodness even in the midst of evil.

This book is a “Western” in every sense, with plenty of action and attention to detail, such as the slang, the firearms, and the historical events of the time. However, while Westerns tend to concentrate on action, bravery, and cold-hearted toughness, many leave out an authentic element of life in the Old West: the spiritual nature of man. This is unfortunate, as omitting this fundamental aspect of human nature gives an inaccurate picture of life in the 1800s.

Most pioneers who settled in the West were God-fearing folks with a Christian worldview. This is simply a fact. People then, perhaps more than now, gave thought to right and wrong, common decency, and the afterlife. Even some hard-core criminals – and there were plenty of those

in the West – were known to call upon God for mercy when they stood on the gallows.

This book endeavors to bring to life not just the rough and adventurous reality of the Wild West but to comprehensively portray the people of that time: real men and women, complete with both carnal and spiritual natures. The people in this story are not stick figure soulless specters but characters representing genuine people who hold eternity in their hearts.

Many pioneers went west looking for gold or rich land and found neither. Yet through their endurance and fortitude, some discovered something better – a life enriched with accomplishment, truth, and love. For every tale of woe, there is an intertwined story of joy and goodness. It is always there to see if one looks for it. No situation, indeed no people, how ever scarred by evil, are beyond redemption unless they choose to be.

In the Arizona Territory of the late 19th century, some men mined for gold while others took it at gunpoint. May this book be a tribute to all those pioneers who etched out a home in the Arizona wilderness, particularly those who did so without losing the anchor of their morality while defending themselves against those who had.

Prologue

El Paso, Texas – 1916

GILBERT WEBB sat hunched on a wooden bench on the worn boardwalk in front of the hotel. The elderly gentleman wrapped the collar of his woolen jacket tight around his neck against the chilly November wind that whistled between the buildings. A lone tumbleweed rolled down the street, hesitating here, pausing there, then rushing off steadily on its journey to nowhere.

In the distance Mount Franklin rose regally over the city, its snowy heights shrouded with wispy clouds of white coldness, giving the peak a mantle of mystery. The whinny of a horse drifted on the breeze. The sounds of someone tying a horse to the railing and tromping down the wooden boardwalk echoed on the crisp morning air.

An old man sat heedless on a boardwalk bench, his empty gaze fixed upon the misty mountain, while his tired soul suffered an icy loneliness as frigid as the overshadowing snowy crest. His tortured spirit, consumed with distant memories, was oblivious to his surroundings.

With cruel vividness, long-dead specters haunted his mind, whispering, beseeching, and accusing. Once more, they cried and screamed. A plea for mercy: “*Webb! No!*” Rifles firing through thick smoke. A frenzied command: “*Kill them! Kill them all!*” He had ordered that. Murderous volleys of thunderous rifle fire echoed and rumbled through the mountain valleys. He buried his face in his hands as if to hide from the torturous memories.

A voice from the past called his name. “Mr. Webb?”

Webb took his head from his trembling hands and peered up to see a tall, slender young man standing over him. Slowly recognition came to him. “Joe? Joe Place?” the elderly man asked with a wavering voice.

“Yes, sir. I have come.”

The aging gentleman stared and said nothing.

“Sir, are you all right?”

The old man slid over on the bench. “Sit with me.” Joe sat down, and Gilbert Webb laid his hand on the younger man’s arm. “Well,” he said with a gravelly voice, “I see you haven’t managed to blow yourself to kingdom come yet?”

“Naw, I’m gifted when it comes to dynamite – been doing some blasting for ’em over at the quarry. They got your message to me last night. Didn’t know you were in El Paso. Last I heard, you had a contract with the railroad down in Mexico.”

“Things went sour. Again. The Mexican revolution got plumb out of hand. It was time for the gringos to head for safer pasture.”

Joe Place pulled his collar up against the cold wind. “Shall we go in and get some hot coffee?”

“No. Don’t care to go inside.” Webb gazed at the mountain and remained silent as if the younger man wasn’t there. The two sat in awkward silence. The whistling winter wind whipped to a higher pitch and ebbed away to a distant moan. With it came the smell of wood smoke from the stoves and fireplaces of the city. Somewhere a shutter banged repeatedly. Finally, with a fixed stare upon the mountain, Webb whispered, “Gone. All gone.”

“What is it, sir? Who’s gone? Gone where?”

Webb suddenly turned to Joe with a wild-eyed stare. “*Gone to judgment!*” Just as abruptly, his face returned to the mountain.

The thought flitted through Joe’s mind that perhaps his elderly friend had become deranged. “Has someone died?” he asked.

“Died?” Webb’s quavering voice shook. He squinted at him sharply and answered, “Oh yes. Many.”

Joe gave the aging man a searching look. Sad wrinkles framed the dark eyes of the gentleman’s hardened face. He noticed his full beard had turned completely white. With his black flat-brimmed hat and dark coat, he still looked the part of an Old Testament prophet, but the formidable manner Joe remembered about him had vanished.

“Too many dead and gone. Too many killed,” Webb rambled on. “Gone. And the gold...” Webb broke into a cynical laugh. “Vanished!”

“Gold?” Joe asked but received no answer. Reaching over, he put a compassionate hand on his friend’s shoulder. “I am pleased to see you, sir. It’s been too long.”

Turning on the bench to face his old companion, Webb sighed and gave a slight but sad smile. “Joe Place, you’re a decent man. You’ve always been a friend to me, even when some men wouldn’t. I’ve never forgotten that. Son...” Webb choked up for a moment. He chomped his mouth, trying to find words. “Son, don’t ever do anything to cause you to leave your home and family. No amount of money is worth it.³ And there is no undoing the past, no matter how dearly we may wish it.”

³ Actual quote - Correspondence to the author from Nancy E. Place Brown, daughter of Joe T. Place.

“If I may be so bold, sir – Have you made peace with God about what happened? Have you prayed for forgiveness?”

“Well...” Webb shifted uncomfortably at the question and straightened up on the bench. “Well, I reckon I’m all right if the Mormon Church is true. But if it isn’t...” Webb paused and swallowed hard, “if it isn’t, I’m in a lot of trouble.”⁴

“It saddens me to see you tormented so,” Joe said. “You’re right. The wrongs of the past can’t be undone, but they can be forgiven.”

Gilbert Webb stared sadly at his friend and shook his head. “Those I’ve hurt, those I’ve killed, they aren’t around to do any forgiving.”

“Mr. Webb, what happened? Not that I need to know. I think you need to tell it.” Joe waited while his aged friend stared at the ground, then added, “There is always redemption if—”

“Things haunt me,” Webb interrupted. “Things I wish I could forget.” He shook his head. “No one had to die. If only...” Webb fell silent. He sat in rigid silence with a clenched jaw, his flowing white beard buried in his chest. Then, grasping the bench’s iron siding with gnarled, trembling fingers, he closed his glistening eyes and remembered...

⁴ Actual quote per correspondence from Nancy E. Place Brown to the author. Joe Place was a good friend of Webb and they did have a conversation in front of a hotel in El Paso, where Webb confessed his crimes. Webb’s statement to Joe Place, used in the story, is a direct quote: “*If the Mormon Church is true, I reckon I’m all right, but if not, I’m in a lot of trouble.*” Webb’s exact words seem to reveal the robbery was ordered and sanctioned by the authorities of the Mormon Church. Joe did work as a blaster in the mines and eventually died in an explosion.

1

Valley of Decision

Arizona Territory – 1889



CAL CHANDLER had to do something he dreaded. As he reined his horse onto the dusty lane leading to his uncle's ranch, he stopped to gaze westward at the fiery rose-red shades of an Arizona sunset. The Santa Teresa Mountains to the west offered a stunning contrast between their looming dark peaks and the wispy white clouds stretching across vast valleys. Radiant hues of red and gold illuminated the mountainscape, bathing the scenery in a warm, breathtaking glow that evoked wonder and awe. Cal longed to ride toward the sunset, keep going, and never

return. But instead, he had to face his uncle and tell him he was wrong.

Telling Gilbert Webb he was wrong was something that just wasn't done. In the Mormon community of Pima, Arizona, Gilbert Webb was mayor, patriarch, and church elder. To many people in Pima, he was also employer and benefactor. Rumor had it some who dared cross him found out too late he could also be judge and jury. No one was more influential and powerful than Gilbert Webb, not around those parts.

His horse tried to turn back. Cal reined his mount around and nudged him onward. "I know, old boy," he said, as much to himself as to his horse. "I would rather go home too, but some things gotta be done." Yet, while his face reflected a determined resolve, his countenance masked an uneasy fear in the pit of his stomach.

Dusk was falling as he dismounted in front of the impressive ranch house and tied his horse to the hitching rail. The dog lying on the porch barked, alerting his master that a visitor was at hand. A tall, hefty man of fifty-some years stepped out onto the expansive veranda that bordered three sides of the home. Although balding on top, the hair on the sides of his head reached his collar, while his long black beard, streaked with grey, fell to his chest. He looked the part of a man of grave import and powerful influence.

"Who goes there?" came the challenge. "State your business."

"It's me, Uncle Gilbert. It's Cal." He strode up to the veranda.

"Cal? That you, my boy? What brings you around this time of the evening? Everything okay with your folks?" The older gentleman held out his arm, and they shook hands as Cal came up the steps onto the veranda.

“Everyone is fine. I must speak with you, sir.” Cal swallowed hard and attempted to control his breathing.

“Of course. I am always pleased to be the Lord’s servant and advise those seeking the right path.” His formal and trite proclamation was Webb’s manner. His pretentious air of pious grandeur was acceptable to the Mormons of Pima, Arizona, for they knew the secular power and religious authority he wielded. “Have a seat here with me, lad,” Webb said condescendingly, indicating one of the chairs on the spacious front porch.

Cal had always been uncomfortable with his uncle’s displays of religious drama, but he hid these feelings. He had been raised to show respect to his elders. “May we walk, sir? I need to speak with you in private.”

“It’s like that, I see. Come then.” They walked down the lane together in silence until they were out of earshot of the house. “What’s troubling you?” asked Webb.

Cal’s heart pounded. His mouth went dry. Hiding his uneasiness, he plunged in. “Sir, I’m not going with you tomorrow. I can’t do it.”

“Having a bit of nerves, are we?” Webb’s voice dripped with sarcasm. He glanced over at Cal scornfully. “I wouldn’t have figured you to play the coward.”

“Sir, it’s not—”

“Now listen,” Webb interrupted. “You stick close by me tomorrow, young man. I’ve been through many a battle, and this will be a picnic compared to most. You’ve got nothing to worry about. Just—”

“No sir!” Cal’s outburst silenced Webb, whose face reddened with indignance. Clearly, his uncle was not accustomed to being interrupted. “Sir, it’s not like that at all.”

Webb stopped walking and glowered at Cal, "Suppose you tell me what it is like, then!" Webb turned and walked on.

Cal followed alongside. "I'm not afraid. It's..." Cal hesitated. This was every bit as difficult as he imagined it would be. He was going against the thoughtless obedience to leadership ingrained in him his entire life. And it was hard. Very hard.

"You're not afraid? Then what is it?" Webb stopped and glared at Cal. "Out with it, boy."

Cal was silent while his mind grasped for the right thing to say. He would have to spit it out and be done with it. Cal looked Webb in the eye. "It is *wrong!* I won't be part of it."

Webb turned away in disgust and walked over to the horse corral. Leaning against the fence, he gazed across the valley, his jaw grinding with fury.

Joining him at the corral fence, Cal continued. "It is stealing. It's murder. And—"

Webb glanced sideways at Cal, who had stopped mid-sentence, startled by his uncle's rage-reddened face. Feeling his uncle's eyes bore a hole through his soul, he wished to be anywhere but there. He resolved to get this over quickly and leave. He met his uncle's cold stare and faced him man to man as he had never dared before.

The volcano burst. "You forget yourself!" snapped Webb as he turned toward Cal and took a long stride forward, closing the distance between them. For a moment, Cal thought his uncle might actually strike him. He held his ground. Webb was a sizeable man who towered over Cal. With his long flowing beard and blazing eyes, he resembled a Moses declaring fiery doom to sinners.

"Listen close, and you'll learn something, young man!" Webb's voice rang with religious authority as he looked heavenward. "God approves this plan. I have prayed over

it. I have the witness in my bosom.” He thumped his chest with his fist. “It is approved by Heavenly Father. You young men don’t appreciate the warfare going on! Read the scriptures! We are involved in a spiritual war that touches this world. You best remember your Mormon oath to avenge the blood of the prophets!”

“I know my oath,” Cal fired back. “How will this robbery avenge the murder of Joseph Smith? Not to insult you, but—”

“Insult me? You insult yourself! Listen and take care to heed my words!” Webb’s voice crackled with anger. “You *will* do your duty tomorrow.” Webb began measuring his words out formally as though he were prophesying. “I do not think you such a fool as to go against heaven’s guidance.” Webb squinted intently at Cal with narrowed eyes. “How old are you?”

“Almost twenty. Old enough to decide.” Cal met Webb’s hard look with resolute determination.

“Almost twenty?” Webb snorted through his nostrils and shook his head sarcastically. “Still in your teens, barely more than a child. And do you think to tell me what is right?” He glanced around indignantly as though casting about for evidence of his nephew’s foolish audacity.

He gestured toward Cal with his hand. “You! You know what is right? Look at me!” Webb pointed at his own face. “Look at these lines. These aren’t wrinkles; they are war maps. Look at my gray hair!” He ran his fingers through his long hair. I earned this!” Webb stepped closer and put his face close to Cal’s. Then, pointing at his old, hardened face, he hissed, “And with these eyes, I have witnessed the persecution this government heaped upon us!”

“That’s your fight, sir. It’s not mine. I won’t be cannon fodder in your private war, a war that was over long ago.”

“The Lord rebuke you!” Webb shook his finger in Cal’s face. “You would do well to keep silent and heed your elders!” Webb took a deep angry breath and spewed his vitriol. “I was there when the governor ran us out of Missouri. I was there when they attacked us again in Illinois with an army of seven hundred men!”⁵ He paced back and forth in front of Cal and continued his rant. “I fought with the bullets whistling by me while those heathens’ cannons wrecked our lovely city. I fired until my gun was too hot to hold.”

Webb pointed his finger accusingly at Cal. “Have you ever faced death? Faced someone trying to kill you for doing nothing more than practicing your faith? They gave us one day...” Webb stopped, held up a crooked finger, and shook it for emphasis. “Just one day, to abandon our beautiful Nauvoo. A city I helped build with these hands.” Webb held his clawed, calloused hands in front of Cal’s face. “They gave us one day to cross the Mississippi into Iowa,” Webb raged on. “I was in Utah when Buchanan sent federal troops to wipe us out. Oh, how they have persecuted us!”

“You see it your way. I don’t see—”

“See? Of course, you don’t see!” Webb turned his back contemptuously and strode toward the house, leaving Cal alone. Stopping, Webb turned around, his face lit with fanatical indignation. “You’re too young to see anything! These are the latter days.” Webb gestured wildly with exaggerated emphasis, and the volume of his voice rose as he ranted on. “Soon this world will become the inheritance of the Saints, and our God will judge these heathen Gentiles. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when the armies of heaven – and that’s us, mind you – shall deal out righteous judgment upon those who know not God!

⁵ See *History of Hancock County*, TH. Greg, 1880 for an excellent and detailed account of the Mormon war in Illinois.

When our kingdom in Utah fills the whole earth, this Gentile government – this enemy of God – will be no more. We will triumph!” Webb stood shaking, overcome with zealous anger.

“We’ve been accepted–” Cal began but stopped as he realized anything he said would only encourage his uncle’s theatrics.

“Accepted? Now listen, boy, and listen well! The wealth of this world belongs to God’s people, the same as when the Israelites plundered the Egyptians. Day after tomorrow, the Army Paymaster comes through those mountains with thirty thousand in gold, intended as payment to government soldiers. Gentile dogs, they are! They’ll spend it on gambling, whores, and liquor.

“God decrees His Church shall have it! And don’t you worry none about folks gettin’ killed. No one’s gonna get shot, except maybe a couple of old mules. More than a dozen of us will have the trail covered from the bluff. And remember, the gold is guarded by niggers!⁶ They’ll turn tail and run for sure. You can count on it.”

Cal hated dealing with his uncle’s pompous behavior and bigoted attitudes. He turned and walked to his horse, checked the tightness of the cinch, put his foot in the stirrup, and mounted. He realized the pious prophet within his uncle was awakened, and reasoning with him was impossible. There was nothing to do but go. “I’ve said what I came to say.” Cal reined his horse around to leave.

⁶ Nigger: The term "nigger" was not considered profane by all in the 1800s as it is today. It was used by some whites at that time as a racial slur but by others as simply a neutral descriptor. However, Native Americans viewed Black soldiers much differently. The Indians related their dark countenance and tight curly woolly black hair to that of the buffalo and thus called them Buffalo Soldiers. They meant no disrespect by the term, for the American Indians knew what Webb had yet to learn: Black soldiers were bravely ferocious and could be a formidable adversary, as they had proved repeatedly during the Civil War and in the Indian wars.

Webb stepped off the porch. Covering the distance with three quick strides, Webb's sinewy hand grasped the bridle of Cal's horse. Night had fallen, and his uncle's countenance, half hidden by shadows, was an eerie phantom in the dim light. Cal sensed an evil presence as he saw the dark fierceness of his uncle's face.

"I'll be expecting you," snarled Webb. "You be here in the morning to do your part." He paused, letting his words sink in. He continued in a cold, raspy voice that came through the darkness as a threatening growl, "It is written, 'he who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.' You think on that. We'll be doing God's work tomorrow, and those who shirk their duty are worse than apostates. Only their own blood can atone for such sin!" Webb shook a clenched fist as though he were strangling a rabbit, and in a throaty whisper, uttered, "*Blood atonement!*"

As he scowled at young Cal, the old patriarch's maniacal face was a specter of self-righteous fervor. "It'll go well for the families of those who help in this, the kind of help your folks are in sorry need of." Webb paused, stepped back, lifted his head sanctimoniously, and said, "You know your duty." Then, turning on his heel, he marched into the house, slamming the door behind him, leaving Cal alone in the dark.

2

Valley of the Gun



CAL RODE TOWARD the Webb ranch in the darkness of the early morning hours before sunrise. He had ridden home the previous night in deep thought about his choices. He had tossed and turned most of the night, considering the outcome of every course of action he imagined.

A war raged within his heart and mind. He had been taught from childhood that obedience to Mormon authority is an essential godly virtue, that when their leaders spoke, the thinking had already been done. But over the years, he had seen and heard things that troubled his conscience.

Webb's plan to rob the U.S. Army Paymaster gold shipment en route from Fort Grant to Fort Thomas had become one more in a series of events that had Cal deeply conflicted. If he disobeyed or questioned leadership, he would be guilty of violating God's authority on earth. Yet scripture and his own sense of right and wrong would condemn him for being part of the holdup.

Webb and the church claimed the United States government was God's adversary and deserved their enmity. Was it true? Questions spun through his head.

Would they really get away with the gold and help their struggling community? Could his uncle be right? Should he repent his disobedience and obey his leadership?

Cal did not necessarily believe all of his uncle's arguments. But he didn't disbelieve them either. He desperately wanted to get it sorted out in his mind. Doing the right thing had always been important to him. Perhaps all of Webb's ranting was merely a justification for what he wished to do – to steal gold – or was it the voice of God?

Besides the moral dilemma, there were practical matters to consider: Webb was his employer. He would lose his job if he disobeyed, and Webb would make it hard on any other rancher in the Mormon community who dared to hire him.

Ultimately, he decided he had no choice but to go along with Webb. A lifetime of ingrained obedience made submission an impulse difficult for Cal to ignore. But the overriding reason was his parents. He knew what it would mean for them if he failed to comply with Webb's demands. Webb could be generous, but it always came with strings attached. He was a master manipulator. Webb would make it difficult on every one of his relations if he didn't follow through. He'd seen it happen before.

Cal's family had their own small ranch. The meager amount of hay and oats they could grow was sold to the Army through a government contract that Webb had negotiated. They would be wiped out if Webb didn't buy his folks' crops. That's how Webb liked to engineer things – getting complete control while being heralded as the hero.

The implication of Webb's reference to blood atonement was not lost on Cal either. It was a death threat. Although not practiced by the church anymore, Cal had heard that Webb had been involved in the church's blood atonement frenzy in earlier years wherein the prophet Brigham Young had declared the church needed to be

cleansed of wickedness, preaching the only way some could atone for their sins was for the church to murder them.

Particular men were selected to carry out the commands of the church hierarchy and “save” specific individuals in the middle of the night by shedding their blood. Webb, it was rumored, had been one of the so-called “Danites” who implemented the church’s judgment on malcontents.⁷ Cal wasn’t worried about himself. He could vanish, but he feared the sort of diabolical revenge Webb would think up for his family if he crossed him.

Ironically, it was love that led Cal to involve himself in thievery. His concern for his brother, sister, and parents, and the fear of what Webb could do to them, motivated him. He concluded that he was left with no choice. And then there was the lingering doubt: How could all his relations, the entire community of Pima and the church itself – his whole world – be mistaken? How could he, not yet twenty years old, know right from wrong better than his elders?

Cal reined his horse to a stop at the top of the slight rise overlooking the Webb ranch, nestled in a grassy valley among gently rolling hills. The eastern horizon was brightening with a hint of the coming day. Looking below, in the pre-dawn darkness, Cal could make out about a dozen men and horses gathered near the corral. He took a deep breath of the cool morning air and let out a weary sigh.

Cal nudged his horse onward down the slope and up the lane toward the ranch house. At the corral, he dismounted among the other men. He didn’t feel like conversation, so he busied himself caring for his horse, leading him to the watering trough. Everyone was silent or talking in low tones. There were women and children in the house and

⁷ Wife No. 19, 1876, by Ann Eliza Young

other workers around, none of whom were privy to their plans.

Soon Webb appeared, leading his horse around the corner of the barn. When he mounted, the others took that as a cue and swung into their saddles. Webb signaled to move out. The band rode to the southwest, following a wagon trail out of the fertile farmland of the Gila River Valley and into an arid, rocky pass between the Pinalaño Mountains on the south and the Santa Teresa Mountains to the north.

When they were out of earshot of the ranch house, the group livened up as the sky illumed with the sunrise. Some acted like they were out for a morning romp or a Sunday picnic, galloping back and forth, joking and laughing. Cal took stock of who was there. They were twelve, most of them young cowhands in Webb's employ, and a few were owners of nearby ranches.

With displeasure, Cal noted the three Follett brothers and Marc Cunningham were among them. Cunningham was not a Mormon, but that wasn't why Cal disapproved of him. It was well known that Cunningham had been a corrupt deputy sheriff. He and Wyman Follett had been arrested for cattle rustling two years earlier. He knew the five of them to be a wild bunch well associated with trouble.

Webb's son Wilfred was riding next to his father. Cal and Wilfred had a dislike for each other dating back to childhood. Wilfred had inherited his father's addiction to power. While the senior Webb's method was calculating and methodical, Wilfred's nature was to be outspoken and rude, a trait that had put Cal and Wilfred at odds more than once.

Cal's thoughts were interrupted when David Rogers rode up next to him. Rogers owned a small farm near his

folks' place. Cal had always liked his soft-spoken and kind manner.

"So, I see you got roped in on this deal too," Rogers said.

"Yeah, I reckon so," Cal replied. He wasn't sure how much of his opinion he should divulge.

Rogers reined his horse closer to Cal. "Well, I'm sure not here by choice."

"No?" Cal looked at him inquisitively, noting the sour look on his usually happy face.

"No," Rogers said, "I'd as soon be back at my place diggin' a ditch. Fact is, that's what I was doin' this mornin'. I was up at first light cleanin' out my irrigation ditch before the day's heat set in.⁸ That's when those yahoos showed up." Rogers tipped his head toward the Follett brothers riding ahead of them.

"The Follatts?" Cal asked. "What sort of mischief are they up to now?"

"Those troublemakers showed up at my ranch early this morning. I told 'em there's no need for me to be goin' along on this little escapade. I helped some with the plannin' and all, but I got to feelin' uneasy about it. It got to botherin' me enough to where I wasn't sleepin' good, so I said to go on without me 'cause I'd decided to stay out of it, but not to worry as I'd keep my mouth shut."

"So, you have misgivings about this too. It's good to know I'm not the only one. Why did you change your mind and come along?"

"Like I said, not by choice. That rascal Lyman, you know what he did? Pulled his gun and put it to my head."

⁸ Per court testimony

“He pulled his gun on you?”

“Sure did, that ornery cuss. He cocked it too. Told me it was too late to turn yellin’. I’m mad enough I could just bite myself! The scrawny little toothpick ain’t got no respect for his elders.” Rogers scowled, shook his head and nudged his horse onward. “I’m tellin’ you, the whole miserable lot of ’em are trouble. They’re itchin’ for gunplay, and mark my words, this thing won’t be as simple and bloodless as old Webb makes out.”

“Well,” Cal said, “I’ll be honest with you. I want no part of this either, and I told Webb so last night.”

Rogers looked surprised. “Now it’s my turn to ask, why did you change your mind? Did you get a gun put to your head too?”

“More or less. He threatened blood atonement for disobedience. You know what that means. He also threatened to make it hard on my folks if I didn’t come along and do my duty. It’s worry for my folks that brings me along. Plus, I figured I might have a little clout, Gilbert sort of bein’ my uncle and all. I thought maybe I could keep some of these unruly ones from doin’ somethin’ stupid.”

“Good luck with that. You’re gonna need it!” The two rode in silence for a while, and then Rogers asked, “You said Webb is sort of your uncle. What do you mean, sort of?”

“Webb’s not my real uncle. Ever since I was a child, I’ve been told I should call him uncle. After my pa died, I guess my ma sort of figured I needed a male figure in my life. I don’t know. Hadn’t given it much thought ‘till lately. He’s always been Uncle Gilbert to me. I used to think that was right dandy. Not so much anymore, though.”

“I hear ya there,” Rogers said with a sarcastic laugh. “I used to figure him for a friend. Not so much anymore for me, either.”

Riding in the lead, Webb turned his horse and galloped back toward them.

“Well, speak of the devil,” Rogers said.

Cal had a knot in his stomach. He had no desire to talk with the man forcing him into this melee. Webb reined his horse around and rode abreast of Cal and Rogers.

“Good to see you both this fine day!” Webb was jubilant. “I knew you would both do the right thing. Rogers, ride up there and take the lead for me while I have a word with Cal.”

Rogers looked over at Webb with a sour face. “Ain’t ya gonna put a gun to my head first?”

Webb was indignant. “What sort of crazy talk is that?”

“Like you don’t know,” growled Rogers. “Don’t pull no pretenses with me, Webb. I’ll have words with you later.” Rogers spurred his horse and rode ahead, leaving Webb and Cal alone.

“I don’t know what’s eatin’ that ornery coot,” Webb grumbled. “Must be too much excitement for him, I suppose.”

“The Folletts forced him to come at gunpoint. I reckon he didn’t cotton too well to that.” Cal was not usually so blunt with his uncle and was surprised at his boldness.

“Oh, they did, did they? That’s not my doing.” Then, with a smirk, he added, “Well, boys will be boys!”

Cal looked at him sullenly, and Webb quickly changed the subject. “Look, I want you to know I’m proud of you for being here. I knew you had it in you to do the right thing. If I sounded harsh last night, I want you to know it was all for your own good. All of our people will be grateful for what we do. The rewards will benefit everyone in our community.”

As Webb droned on, Cal barely listened as he stared straight ahead as they rode. He knew Webb had no answers for the questions troubling his mind. He resented not being given a choice. He felt guilty for going along and guilty for not wanting to go along.

Cal wrestled with uncertainty, questioning his loyalty for not being fully obedient to his uncle's wishes. Was this God's plan to provide for their community? Was his heart in rebellion against the Lord's work? He knew he needed to resolve his inner conflict, to seek wise counsel, but he refrained from confiding in anyone. He couldn't let his guard down in front of Webb, who would only interpret his hesitation as a sign of weakness.

Webb ranted on. "When I get to remembering what this cursed government has done, well, it gets my ire up, and I'm afraid I unleashed some of my righteous indignation on you. But we must remember *they* are the enemy, and we are all brothers. So we have to stick close and fight together."

"*Are they the enemy?*" Cal glanced doubtfully at Webb.

Webb raised an eyebrow. "Do you need a history lesson?"

"Whose history?"

"The Saints. Is there any other that should matter to you?"

Cal gave his uncle a cold stare. "Well, I'm here."

"That you are, my boy! And glad of it, I am. You'll do fine today."

"Let me ask you something," ventured Cal. "Do you really think this can be done without bloodshed? Is that your intention?"

"That is absolutely my intention," Web answered. "I've planned it well. You'll hear the details tonight, but for now,

put your mind at ease and trust me. We'll present such an overwhelming show of force they will see right off their only option is surrender. We'll let them throw down their guns and walk away."

"You'll ensure the chance to surrender is given?"

"Yes. I give my oath on it."

"Do you think you can control this rowdy group?"

"I'm counting on you to help me. You're young, but you've got leadership in you. I've seen it. Men respect you."

"Not all men."

Webb let out a half laugh. "I do wish you and my boy could get along. But then, I've been wishing that for more than ten years. Never mind that now. We must be of one accord. You watch and see. The Saints will be victorious, and you will be rewarded. Yessir, you wait and see." Webb spurred his horse and galloped back to the front of the riders.

As Cal rode, his thoughts drifted to the past and his childhood in the Gila River Valley of the Arizona Territory. When he was a young boy, his parents migrated from Utah to this beautiful place. The Gila River begins at the Black Range Mountains in western New Mexico and winds through eastern Arizona, ending its journey at Arizona's western border, where it meets the Colorado River.

West of the badlands of New Mexico rise barren mountains with treacherous gorges and impassible canyons, stretching into the vast wilderness of eastern Arizona. Yet, among the majestic mountains of this untamed region lies a fertile green valley three miles wide and forty miles long, the Gila River Valley.

Surrounded by mountain ranges on all sides, this narrow ribbon of lush, high-plain farmland became their

new home. They took residence in Pima, where a settlement of Mormons eked out their living farming the rich land of their mountain valley. Cal immediately loved the area. The oasis of green, nestled between the rough and rocky ridges of the surrounding mountains, was a refreshing contrast to the arid deserts of Utah.

His family's trek to southeast Arizona had been arduous. Weakened by the trip, his father caught pneumonia and died a few months after arriving in Pima. His grief-stricken mother was alone in a new land with three children to raise.

Gilbert Webb introduced his mother to Jim Walker, a man in the church who needed a wife. His mother's marriage to Jim was one only of necessity. Still, as time passed, she began to respect and love the hardworking man who provided for them. All was well until Jim took a second wife, and Cal saw the light in his mother's eyes die, never to be rekindled.

Cal was twelve years old then, and for the first time, he began to question in his heart the teachings of his church. He had seen firsthand how polygamy – plural marriage, as the Mormons called it – had hurt his mother. He kept it all inside, not daring to voice what he assumed were wicked thoughts from Satan. But it wasn't only plural marriage that bothered him. One day when he was sixteen, he tried to talk to his mother about another troubling aspect of their religion.

“Ma, is it true that Black men are inferior?” he asked one day.

His mother put down the laundry she was folding. “Cal, what are you worrying your mind over now?”

“You remember Casey, the Black man who used to work for the McNallys?” Cal continued when his mother nodded. “I got to know him the summer I worked for them.

He was a hardworking hand. And good-natured too. I never met a humbler soul. He was always helpful to me. He was a decent man. But the church says their souls are flawed, so God cursed them with black skin. But when I think of Casey, it seems he was as reputable as any man, even better than most.”

“Cal,” his mother looked at him sternly, “you know when our prophet has spoken, the thinking has already been done. God’s ways are not man’s, and when we start questioning, we play into the devil’s hands.”

He felt condemned for having doubted his church. That didn’t quell the persistent questions in his mind, but he kept his sinful misgivings to himself from then on.

The battle raging in his soul was not a new conflict. It had been building for years. He had been taught the Mormon way was the only way, that only they had the true gospel of God. All other so-called Christian churches were false. They alone had a real prophet to guide them into the truth. His mother and father had believed this, and he grew up believing it. But for several years, he had been acutely troubled by the church’s teachings.

Cal was roused from his recollections as Rogers returned to ride with him. He welcomed his company. They rode in silence as they proceeded twenty miles farther into the rolling foothills. It was late afternoon when they reached their destination. The road dipped into a shallow draw and climbed steeply on the far side. Leaving the road, they turned left, followed the wash briefly, and angled right into an arroyo.

Guiding their horses carefully around boulders, cactus, and thorny mesquite, they plodded upward through loose rock into a saddle between two high knolls. Dropping down the far side of the saddle, they descended into a tiny secluded ravine hidden on all sides by surrounding hills. Riding through a tangle of mesquite and palo verde trees,

they entered a small clearing. Within the maze of desert foliage, a camp had been set up. Several men were about, their horses tied to a picket line strung between two trees.

Webb sounded off, “Men, tie your horses at the picket line and gather ‘round.”

After the men assembled, Webb continued, “There’s a big pot of beans on the fire. Tomorrow will be a long day with little food, so y’all eat hearty now. Now, over by the second picket line,” Webb pointed to his left, “is all the horse-shoeing equipment. Yank your horseshoes off and shoe them backward. That’ll throw the trackers off.”⁹ “After we get the gold, we’ll split into several groups. Make sure you cross and recross the river several times before heading back to your ranches.

“The gold shipment will be coming down that narrow road into Cottonwood Wash around noon or soon after that, the same road we were on coming here. We’ve been working up on the hillside above the road. We’ve stacked up rocks to give us some fortifications to shoot from. Later tonight, we’ll block the road with a boulder in a spot where they can’t get around it.

“Now, here’s the plan. When the wagons stop for the boulder, we’ll let them see they’re outnumbered and outgunned. We want them to realize that any resistance will be suicide. Now hear me: No one fires unless I do. I’ll give them a chance to surrender and order them to walk down the hill, leaving the wagons. If they do, then fine. If not, then I’ll fire the first shot. That’s your signal for everyone to open fire. But shoot to miss. We ain’t aimin’ to kill them. Just rain bullets around them so they know it’s pointless to resist. And if shootin’ starts, then shoot the lead mules right

⁹ The ploy was unsuccessful. Reversing horseshoes was a trick known to be used by bandits, and the posse quickly recognized the ruse. They followed the reversed horseshoe trail toward the Mormon settlement of Pima.

off so the wagons can't get away. Once they realize they're trapped and outgunned, they'll give up.

"I count seven of us who have repeating Winchesters. Those soldiers will be carrying unloaded government-issue single-shot Springfields. They don't stand a chance against our firepower." Webb raised his Winchester and stated with a wry grin, "We just need to explain it properly to them." The men laughed. "You boys get some hot food and see to your horses and turn in early. We'll be up at daybreak."

The men dispersed. Cal fished his tin cup from his saddlebag, walked over to the fire, and helped himself to some beans. He had decided not to bother with reversing his horseshoes. For one reason, it was riskier. If stopped and questioned and it was noticed his horseshoes were reversed, it would be a dead giveaway that he'd been in on the robbery. Plus, he wanted his horse to be as sure-footed as possible.

Cal took note of Webb's son Wilfred. Wearing a fancy new fringed leather jacket and sporting a double holster gun belt decked out with twin six-shooters, he looked to be the show-off Cal knew him to be. His mind flashed back to the time when they were young boys. Cal and Wilfred had gotten into a fight right after the Sunday morning church service. A couple elders quickly stopped the tussle, but a smoldering rivalry continued between them.

Cal saw Wilfred headed in his direction. As much as he disliked Wilfred, he felt he should try to get along with him for the sake of the mission.

Wilfred swaggered over to the fire. "Hey Chandler, why aren't you over there gettin' your horse re-shod?"

"I reckon that comes under the heading of my business," Cal answered calmly, as he scooped a spoonful of beans out of his cup.

Wilfred bristled. "I'm makin' it my business. Anything to do with this operation is my business."

"Bully for you," Cal said. "If you want to croak you're the biggest toad in the puddle, go right ahead. But go find another puddle." Cal couldn't help grinning just to irritate Wilfred and let him know he didn't take him seriously, which was something Wilfred couldn't stand, and Cal knew it.

Wilfred's face reddened. "Hobble your lip, smart boy!"

Cal continued to sip from his cup of beans, deliberately ignoring the braggart. Cal felt he should hold his tongue but couldn't help himself. "A man doesn't have to be smart or tough to be one up on you, Willy." Cal busied himself, moving some hot coals closer to the pot of beans.

Wilfred found himself momentarily speechless. He disliked being called Wilfred but hated even more to be called Willy. He preferred to be called W.T.

"You'll find out who's tough!" Wilfred said, taking a step backward.

Cal glanced up to see Wilfred motionless, poised like a rattlesnake ready to strike, his right hand spread open and hovering an inch from his holstered gun.

Cal refilled his cup with beans. "If we're going to have a gunfight," Cal said nonchalantly, "you might want to wait till I go get my gun, just so it's fair and all." A slight Cheshire smile crossed Cal's lips.

Incensed that he couldn't bully Cal and even madder that Cal mocked him, Wilfred was livid beyond control. For a moment Cal wondered if Wilfred might actually shoot him down in cold blood.

"Hey, you two!" Gilbert Webb's voice thundered through the camp. "Hold your horses, boys!" The senior Webb strode over to them with an axe in his hand. "Can't

you two get along for only one day?” Webb scowled at Wilfred.

Sitting cross-legged on the ground eating his beans, Cal shrugged his shoulders. “Reckon not,” he replied while stirring his can of beans.

“Wilfred, take this axe,” Webb said, shoving a long-handled axe into his son’s hand. “Go tie it to your saddle.” Wilfred held the axe and stood glaring at Cal. “Go on, boy. Do as I say! We’ll need that axe tomorrow. You two can settle your differences another day.”

Wilfred strode off angrily toward the picket line while Webb shook his head at Cal and walked away. Cal finished his beans. The thought crossed his mind that he should have tried harder to get along with Wilfred. He quickly dismissed the notion. Wilfred’s narcissistic attitude had always rubbed him the wrong way.

Cal picked a level, semi-secluded spot among the desert shrubs and set up his camp for the night. He cleared a place for his bedroll and checked his gear. He had packed as if he would be on the trail for a few days, not knowing what the next day might bring. He had packed everything he might need – a cooking pot, blankets, a tarp, rain slicker, beef jerky, flour and beans, grain for his horse, rifle, and forty rounds of ammunition. He was particularly proud of his single-shot 1874 model Sharps rifle, not merely because of its renowned accuracy and knock-down power but also because it had been his father’s gun.

The sun set before he finished. He crawled into his blankets for warmth. Using his rolled-up saddle blanket for a pillow, he made himself as comfortable as possible and closed his eyes. Sleep did not come. He had a new problem to consider: How was he supposed to help keep the men in line when Webb didn’t say anything about it to the others? Of course, if he had, Cal thought, Wilfred would probably

have shot him out of pure jealousy. He decided he'd have to talk to Webb about this in the morning.

He hoped things went as planned and life could return to normal. If no one got shot, if they could do this and make a clean getaway, and if the authorities didn't figure out who pulled off the robbery – and that was a lot of ifs – then life would go on as before. But if not, Cal's future was uncertain. Eventually, he fell into a fitful sleep.

Cal awoke cold and stiff just before daylight. Some of the men were up and warming by the fire. Cal joined them and soaked in the warmth. Then, after eating some cold beans and packing his gear, he waited for orders. He wanted to find an opportunity to talk to Webb alone, but he didn't seem to be around.

After a time, Webb appeared and called everyone together. "Alright, men," Webb said loudly. "We can climb over this rise to our south and work our way down onto the hillside overlooking the spot we have picked for the ambush. Young Andy is going to stay here and tend to the horses. We only have a few hours to get ready. Fetch your guns and all your ammunition and follow me."

Cal removed his rifle from its scabbard, strapped on his cartridge belt, and joined the men as they scrambled on foot over the hillside. As they came down the other side, Cal could see the wagon road below and the boulder they had rolled into the road. A half dozen or so stone fortifications were constructed a short distance down from the brow of the hill.

Webb started giving orders and getting the men into their positions. The largest stone rampart was next to a tree, and Cal took his position there with two other men. This fort consisted of a natural stone wall formed by several massive boulders next to a gnarly mesquite tree that grew up among the rocks. The barrier was reinforced with

boulders and stacked rocks to give optimum concealment and protection.

Cal scurried up into a crevice between the boulders where he was partially hidden and shaded by the tree. From there he had an excellent view of the road below. He was well hidden from anyone below but was also obscured from the view of the rest of the band. That suited him fine. If it came to shooting, he didn't plan on doing any, and he preferred that no one know it.

There was nothing to do but wait and think. Troubling thoughts and questions assailed his mind. Had he made the right choice in coming? He had imagined he might help exercise some control and prevent any killing. He realized now what a foolish idea that had been. The band was scattered over the hillside, and there was no way for anyone to control them. He must give up any idea of trying to help Webb lead these men. Clearly, Webb had only been giving lip service to wanting his assistance. He could hear some of the boys laughing and joking about "shootin' niggers." He could only hope they would heed Webb's orders not to shoot unless he did.

Cal shifted his cramped position and wiped the sweat from his forehead. It was a warm day for May, and his heart pounded as he sweated with nervous anticipation. His desire for this to be over made the minutes drag by. He took a cartridge from his belt. Flipping the lever down on his rifle, he opened the chamber. The long fifty-caliber metal cartridge slowly slid into the gun. He pulled the lever back up and closed the breech against the cartridge. His thoughts whirled faster. Why was he loading his gun? It seemed like the thing to do. Best to be prepared. Was he going to shoot? He removed his handkerchief, rubbed dirt from his sweaty hands, and wiped the dust from his rifle. He waited.

Despite his misgivings about the robbery, he couldn't help but feel a strange excitement. They were about to stop

armed soldiers and rob them at gunpoint. The thrill, however wrong, was a heady feeling. He was with his own kind, his own people. He was following orders. If they were successful, it would mean wealth for their community and their own families. If Webb was right and all went as planned, the gold would be spent on supplies and farm equipment instead of on whiskey and gambling. Was that really so bad?

His thoughts whirled. Was Webb right or wrong? Was he doing right to obey orders? What did God think of this? The dichotomy of the situation was straining his mind. He had been taught from his youth he was one of the saints of God. He was to live to please God. Yet he was hiding in the rocks, about to ambush the unsuspecting and steal gold. "*He who lives by the sword will die by the sword.*" He had read that in the Bible, and it kept going through his mind.

This couldn't be right, he thought. But if he disobeyed, he would be in trouble with prominent people in the church – the one true church. The church had been his whole life. Everyone he knew in his community was supposed to be servants of Almighty God. How could they be wrong? Was it true that everyone else – all the outsiders – were enemies of God?

He heard footsteps on the loose rock behind him and turned to see Gilbert Webb scurrying over to them. "Boys, they'll be coming through any time now. I want everyone quiet as church mice." Webb moved on to the other stone forts, getting everyone quieted down.

Cal looked across the valley to the Santa Teresa Mountains, where he could see a hawk circling far overhead in the clear blue sky. He envied the bird's freedom. It was all quiet now. The minutes crawled by while the sun rose higher.

Wiping his wet, sweaty hands on his shirt, he crawled into position flat on his belly on the rocks. He leveled his rifle at the road below and resigned himself to his inescapable destiny. He was a Mormon. He would do what he had always done. He would obey. As he waited for the inevitable, adrenaline surged through his veins while his pounding, troubled heart thrilled with anticipation and fear.

3

Gunfight at Bloody Run



BLOODY RUN.¹⁰ That's what they called this place ever since a band of renegade Indians attacked settlers coming through this pass a few years earlier. Cal wondered if this remote and cursed gulch would run with blood again. He hoped it would not.

This was the perfect location for an ambush.¹¹ The wagon route narrowed as it snaked down the steep hillside into Cottonwood Wash. There was no room to turn a wagon

¹⁰ Holding Up the Pay Escort, painting by Frederic Remington (1861-1909), painted on location shortly after the holdup. Image is public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. See: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holding_Up_the_Pay_Escort_Remington.jpg

¹¹ You may see the location on Google Earth. The coordinates are: 32 49'58.86 N 110 07'38.59" W

around and no cover for anyone on the road. Yet the steep hillside on the southeast side of the road, where they were hiding, was littered with boulders and trees that provided them concealment and protection.

They held the high ground on this ridge, giving vantage over the road below. Cal shifted his cramped legs as he lay prone on the ground. He waited while straining his ears to hear any sound. A few yards to his right, Cunningham and Wilfred whispered back and forth and noisily moved around on the rocks. Irritated, Cal wanted to scold them to be still. Knowing it would be futile, he said nothing.

He surveyed the terrain and studied how this would go. Once the soldiers reached the massive boulder blocking the roadway, they would be trapped, with no way around it on either side and no room to turn the wagons. Webb's men could rain lead on that spot if the soldiers tried anything. With no trees for cover, the soldiers would be completely exposed. It was the perfect trap.

He heard something. Lying motionless, he listened, scarcely breathing. Was it the sound of wagon wheels on rocky ground or his imagination? He strained his ears. Only silence. He focused on where the road dipped below the rim of the distant hill. Faint voices drifted from somewhere. Cal's heart beat faster as he saw movement, a rider coming over the rise at a brisk trot. It was a Black woman riding astride, decked out with a red skirt, a yellow top, and a flamboyant cape.

"I think that's Frankie," whispered Cunningham.

"I'll be danged if it ain't!" Wilfred answered. "She's the only woman I know that would dress and ride astride like that."

Frankie Campbell was well known by all in the area. She and her husband were local professional gamblers. He was not accompanying her that day, as he was locked up on

murder charges. She intended to arrive at Fort Thomas to be on hand when the soldiers were flush with gambling money from the paymaster's delivery.

Thirty yards behind the Black lady gambler, a team of mules crested the top of the hill. Cal counted two wagons, each pulled by six mules. They were headed straight for the carefully laid trap. He flattened down into the rocks, making himself invisible. From what he could see, it looked like the two wagons were being escorted by a small group of about a dozen men.

As they started down the steep grade, the men jumped out of the wagons and walked on either side, lessening the weight and helping to ease their descent. They were oblivious to the peril ahead.

Cal's conscience stung his heart one more time. His mind countered with something his mother had instructed him to memorize, a quote from the prophet Brigham Young. He recited it silently to himself.

*The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth.*¹²

He would do his duty and trust his leadership. It would be all right. Webb was correct – they would surrender. They must. What else could they do?

The soldiers had not yet spotted the barricade. They were approaching a slight bend in the road, and once they passed it, they would see their path was blocked. Cal held his breath as the military contingent rounded the curve and

¹² Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 9, p. 289, 1862

continued straight on. Frankie rode past the boulder and then stopped to see how the soldiers would deal with the obstacle. The wagons approached the boulder and stopped. Two soldiers walking in front strode to the barricade and bent down to examine it. One of them commented that the boulder could not have rolled there naturally.

“Throw up your hands!” Gilbert Webb’s voice echoed through the hills. He was standing in plain sight, holding a Winchester rifle. Wilfred Webb and Marc Cunningham stepped out and showed themselves, weapons raised. *“Look out, you black sons of bitches!”*¹³ yelled Wilfred as he brandished his two six-shooters.

Cal would remember later how the plan skewed off course in mere seconds when their prey reacted with unexpected alacrity. Webb’s command to surrender had the opposite of its intended effect. One of the Black soldiers by the boulder hollered, *“Look out – robbers!”* Yanking his pistol from its holster, he began firing.

The boom of Webb’s rifle reverberated. A split second later, just as Webb had ordered, everyone on the hillside opened fire. A thunderous roar ensued as they sent a shower of bullets into the road below. This volley was supposed to cow them into submission while harming no one. That didn’t happen. To his horror, Cal saw one of the soldiers on a wagon seat clutch his belly as he pitched forward into the dirt. Crawling under the wagon, the wounded soldier returned fire. Another soldier screamed and fell as a bullet shattered his ankle. While lying defenseless in the road with no cover, he loaded his gun and began firing at the bandits.

Webb’s intention to orchestrate a peaceful surrender had fallen apart in mere moments. His undisciplined and wild young ruffians had wounded several men with their

¹³ Pardon the “French,” but this and other such phrases are actual quotes as recorded in subsequent court testimony.

initial volley, either through carelessness or maliciousness. The trapped soldiers fought back with the ferocity of a cornered cougar, pulling pistols, loading rifles, and returning fire with deadly precision.

With bullets ricocheting around him, Cal cautiously peered out from his rocky concealment, mesmerized by the violent scene below. The sight before him was appalling. The lead mules were struggling for their lives, their bodies writhing after being struck by a fusillade of bullets. Despite the horror of the scene, Cal could not look away. The other mules in both teams were panicked, dragging the wagons and dead mules over rocks and cactus in a desperate attempt to escape the gunfire. The spectacle of utter chaos and devastation was seared into Cal's memory forever.

The gutshot soldier firing from underneath the wagon was narrowly missed by the wheels as the terrified animals, lurching and plunging, hauled the wagon and dead mules to the side of the road. Frankie Campbell's horse reared and she was thrown into the brush, where she crawled into hiding. Her panicked horse ran the gauntlet, tearing back up the hill past the wagons through a hailstorm of bullets.¹⁴

As the soldiers scrambled off the road, they searched frantically for any meager cover that could protect them from the hail of bullets raining down. Across the road, a small rock ledge formed a wall several feet high, offering shelter to the besieged men who showed no signs of giving up the fight. The ledge stretched for about ten yards, providing a small but resilient haven for the brave soldiers determined to do their duty.

As the soldiers scrambled to the refuge of the rock ledge, Webb's voice resounded through the din of gunfire. "*Pour it on boys – keep 'em pinned down!*" Splintered rock fragments stung Cal's face as a ricocheting bullet shattered

¹⁴ The details regarding Frankie Campbell are all historical fact.

inches from his head. He buried his face in the dirt. Moving over slightly for better cover, he took aim at the rock ledge and fired. The smoke from his gun was like a homing beacon. The well-trained soldiers responded with a half-dozen bullets zipping past his head, crashing and ricocheting into the surrounding rocks.

Cal tried to return fire but found it impossible. They had his position. As soon as he leveled his rifle, a murderous hail of bullets would come his way. He ducked down and watched as Wilfred and Cunningham, who had been having the same difficulty, sprinted to the fortification adjacent to them.

Several men dashed back and forth between positions, running from fort to fort, shouting and jeering as though it were a game. One of them suddenly fell as he ran. He tumbled over the rocky hillside and lay still. Cal saw bright red blood spattered against white rocks. Wilfred and one of the others scurried out and grabbed their fallen comrade by the hands and feet, dragging him to cover.

A scream and a curse rent the air, and a bandit dropped his gun as a slug shattered his arm. With a shriek, another Mormon fell as a bullet found its mark. Cal was aghast. The Black soldiers were not running away.

Webb's angry shout was heard by all, "*Shoot the black sons of bitches!*"¹⁵ With that order, the rate of fire increased dramatically with a determined intent to exterminate the soldiers. With a sickening feeling, Cal realized he was being forced to choose. Now they were the ones under siege. The daring and skill of the Black soldiers had been sorely underestimated, and they were paying the price. No longer an ambush, it was now a fight to the death. It was kill or be killed. One was as distasteful as the other and Cal

¹⁵ Exact wording per court testimony.

anguished over the choice. He loaded another cartridge into his rifle.

Cal cautiously squirmed in between two towering boulders, squeezing into a narrow crevice. From his new vantage point, he peered intently down at the battle raging below, the acrid smell of gun smoke burning his nose. The cacophony of two dozen guns, firing repeatedly, echoed and reechoed through the hills. The deadly din was punctuated by the piercing screams of men on the receiving end of hot lead. It was a scene of utter devastation that sickened Cal. But still, he kept watch, gritting his teeth and steeling himself for whatever might come next.

His heart pounded and his stomach churned. He cocked his rifle, for it was his duty to kill the soldiers. Dust and smoke stung his eyes and blurred his vision. He wiped the sweat and grit from his brow and took aim. He sent another bullet smashing into the rock wall. Questions raced through his mind. Was this his duty? Is this who he was – a killer? He reloaded.

A couple of Webb's men crossed the road above and below the ambush site and flanked the soldiers' position. The desperate soldiers now had fire coming from three directions. The crossfire took its toll as one after another of them went down with bone-shattering wounds. Still, the soldiers fought on.

Cal was utterly sickened. He could not bring himself to fire upon them. And there was no longer any need, for the tide had turned and the soldiers were being massacred. He could do nothing but watch the horror continue. The firing slowed, while thick gun smoke drifted in the air, clouding the scene.

The victims were pinned down by the fusillade of bullets raining around them, and fewer of them fired back. Cal caught glimpses of some of the wounded soldiers escaping down a gulch toward the bottom of the draw.

Cunningham boldly stepped out in plain sight and emptied his Winchester, keeping everyone behind the rock wall pinned to the earth.

One by one the soldiers made a mad dash to the wash at the bottom of the hill. The bandits could have easily shot some of them as they escaped, but they let them go, even hollering at them to get on down the road. Finally, the last of the soldiers retreated to Cottonwood Wash and the gunfire subsided. Nonetheless, occasional long-range fire from the soldiers in the wash kept the bandits from retrieving the loot.

“Lyme, get down there and bust open the strongbox,” yelled Gilbert Webb. Lyman Follett, who was hunkered down behind a large pile of rocks, ignored the order.

“Lyme!” Wilfred shouted, incensed that Lyman dared ignore his father’s command. “Get down to that strongbox now!”

“Not yet, they can still hit me!”

“I told you to get down there to the strongbox!”

“No, they might be able to hit me from there.”

“Damn it, Lyme, I can hit you myself from here, and I damn sure will if you don’t move!”¹⁶

Grudgingly, Lyman made his way down the to the wagons without incident. Gilbert Webb walked over to Cal’s side of the hill, not appearing the least shaken by the battle. He was all orders and action. Webb sent Cunningham, Wilfred, and several other men down to the wagons. Then going over by Cal, he said, “You’re in a good spot there, boy. Stay put and keep a sharp eye down the

¹⁶ The wording of this exchange is exactly quoted per soldier’s court testimony.

road. You see any of them coming back this way, you nail 'em with that Sharps. Understand?"

Cal nodded his assent, cocked his rifle, and crawled higher onto the boulder where he had a better perspective of the chaotic scene. The two wagons had been dragged into the bushes beside the road and were hung up on the rocks. Two of the mules lay dead, while a third was on its side, wounded. It kicked and quivered, making the most pitiful sounds. Cunningham walked over and shot the animal in the head, ending its misery. The live mules, startled by the shot, jerked at the harness and jolted the wagon. Webb was down in the road taking command. "Set the brakes on the wagons, boys, and settle them mules," he barked. "Bring that axe over here. Start cutting up the harness. We gotta make it hard for 'em."¹⁷

A couple of the men took turns whacking at the strongbox. With each blow of the heavy axe, the wood shattered. Finally, the lid opened. With jubilant shouts, they removed the bulging bags of gold and silver coins. Webb gave two of the bags to Wyman and one to Cunningham. "Get on up over the hill and head back to the horses. Fill your saddlebags and get ready to ride. I'll see you at the camp."

Cal cautiously peered over the rocks from his perch on the hillside and scrutinized the area where the road crossed Cottonwood Wash. With a start, he noticed movement just where the road dipped into the wash. Leveling his rifle and resting it on the boulder before him, he waited. Again he saw it. Someone was trying to sneak back up the hill in the brush and rocks beside the road.

Cal was confident he had not killed anyone yet, and he was hoping he would not have to. He raised the sight slightly on his Sharps rifle and carefully aimed. He spotted

¹⁷ Ostensibly to prevent the soldiers from using the wagon to haul the wounded to Fort Thomas and alert authorities.

the soldier beginning to move forward and squeezed the trigger.

His bullet shattered rock inches from the soldier, who ducked behind cover. He could have shot the man, but that was not his intent. Reloading and firing repeatedly, he ricocheted bullets off the rocks around the soldier, who soon scampered back down the hillside to the wash.¹⁸

“Hey there, Cal!” a voice yelled. He turned and saw Webb behind him. “Time to go.” Webb grinned. “Unless you’re having too much fun!”

Cal crawled down from the jumble of boulders, and Webb tossed him one of the bags of loot. “Get back to camp and put that in your saddlebags. I’ll see you at my place later tonight.” Gilbert Webb turned and climbed over the brow of the hill.

Cal stood alone on the hill overlooking Bloody Run. His rifle, smoking from the battle, hung loosely in his grip as he clutched the bag of stolen gold. Faint cries of pain from wounded soldiers drifted from Cottonwood Wash far below. The grim realization crept over him that the haunting memory of this fateful day would remain with him for the rest of his life.



¹⁸ Sergeant Benjamin Brown and Corporal Isaiah Mays were awarded the Medal of Honor while eight other soldiers received a Certificate of Merit.

4

The Outlaw Trail



BACK AT CAMP, Cal saddled his horse, tied on his gear, and emptied the bag of coins into his saddlebags. Just as he finished, he heard groans and cries of anguish.

“Please stop! For God’s sake, put me down. It hurts!”

Two men were carrying one of their wounded into camp. It was Jeff Whitlock, a young man from one of the valley ranches. They set him down in the shade of a juniper tree, and the men gathered around him.

The injured man writhed in agony, and his face contorted with pain as he cried out, “*Oh God, help me! God*

forgive me!” He groaned pitifully for a while and then called out, *“I’m so thirsty. Please! Water!”* Cal ached for the man as he poured some water from his canteen into a tin cup and held it to lips that were frothy with blood. The wounded man choked and gasped and was unable to swallow. Webb came over and unbuttoned the man’s shirt to examine the wound. Then, stepping away a few paces, he called the men aside.

“The poor boy is gutshot,” Webb stated flatly. “He cannot live.”

“How are we going to get him out of here?” someone asked.

“We can’t,” said Webb. “There’s no way he can ride, and he screams in agony if we only try to move him. If we leave him here, the posse will surely find him before the day ends. He’ll die soon, but not before he confesses everything to the law and cooks our goose.” The men shifted uncomfortably. It was eerily quiet, except for the young man’s moans and the curses of men swearing under their breath.

“We need to do the merciful thing,” continued Webb, “and the smart thing is to silence him and end his suffering quickly. I do not lay this deed at any man’s feet. It has been laid upon us all. We must all fire our weapons, laying the burden upon no single one of us. We shall be together on this.”

Cal felt sick and his conscience assailed his heart with questions. How could all this be happening? He had obeyed, yet all went wrong. He stepped away from the group. Nothing had gone the way Webb had said it would. Instead, their simple robbery had turned into a murderous bloodbath. And now this: They were going to shoot the pitiable, suffering boy – just kill him like he was a sick dog.

Seething anger raged in Cal. He stomped over to his uncle, and he let his fury explode. “You have deceived us! You think you are led by God? You have led us down a treacherous path of blood and murder, and now you would dispatch a brother as you would a lame horse?” Cal’s fiery stare and defiant words made Webb hesitate, but only for a moment.

Gilbert Webb’s strike was quick as a rattlesnake. The Winchester rifle in Webb’s hands was a swift blur as he clubbed Cal on the side of his head with the rifle stock. The unexpected blow knocked him to the ground.

“Boys, let’s get this done.” Webb pumped the lever on his rifle as he stepped over Cal, moving toward the mortally wounded man.

Cal tried to get up, but the world spun, and he fell to the ground. His sight narrowed, and he looked on helplessly through a darkening tunnel. Through his blurred vision, he could see men gathering around their wounded brother. He heard the clicks of guns being cocked, and the last sound before he lost consciousness was the deafening roar of a dozen guns firing at once.



Cal slowly regained consciousness and became aware of a throbbing headache. Opening his eyes, he sat up, the pounding in his head intensifying. Putting his hand to his head, he felt the gritty stickiness of blood matted in his hair. Wincing as he wiped the blood off his face, he rose to his feet.

He was alone. Everyone was gone, and where Jeff had lain, a crimson pool of blood soaked into the ground. He staggered groggily to his picketed horse, hoisted himself into the saddle, urged his mount forward, and rode out of the thicket.

Following the terrain downhill, he entered the small wash that ran east to west. East would lead him back to the Gila River valley, to his family, home, church, and his god. His horse pawed the ground impatiently while Cal held him in check. Which way should he go? The gnawing questions of his youth had come back in full force.

More painful than the wracking pain in his head was the anger that burned in his soul. He had been deceived, and the full realization of that made him question everything he had ever been taught. He had been living his life devoted to his religion, committing fully to it. He had believed it all, and what did he get in return? Lies, deceit, blood, and betrayal.

No more. He would reject everything. His indoctrination had taught him he would be destined for outer darkness if he abandoned the one and only true church. He dismissed that troubling thought. From henceforth he vowed to believe nothing. He was done with religion.

While Cal thought Webb was a fraud, another part of him recoiled at rebelling against his church. He was leaving behind the one true church, becoming an apostate. He would be damned, eternally lost, or so he had been told. But how could he now believe anything he had been taught? He had been told to obey his leadership and that it was God's will to steal from the non-Mormons, that God would bless it, and that all would go well. Events had proved otherwise. No, he would not believe anything anymore. He willed his religious faith to depart. He refused to be duped. It is better, he thought, to believe nothing than to risk believing lies.

He urged his horse forward, turned into the wash, and with a heavy heart headed west, away from home. There was nothing back there for him any longer, for he could not live a life he no longer believed in. He stewed on his anger and feelings of betrayal. How could he know what to

believe about God or about anything? How was he to determine truth? If a cold, bloodthirsty man like Webb represented God's authority, what sort of god was that? Riding deeper into the mountains, he gave little thought to where he was going. Away. That was all that mattered. Away from Webb and away from a religion that killed.

The wash he followed petered out as he crested the hill and his route intersected with the wagon road a mile west of the bloody robbery scene. Following the road west, he nervously nudged his horse into a trot. Running into anyone on this road would be real trouble. Anyone coming from Fort Grant to Pima would be on this route, and that worried him.

The sky turned overcast. Thunderclouds formed over the mountains to the southwest. Cal noted the sun was now low on the horizon. He needed to find shelter, and he had to get off this mountain ridge and away from where he might run into anyone, and he needed to do it fast.

Spurring his horse to a gallop, he sped down the road, which wound its way into the watershed above Aravaipa Canyon. Here the track veered east toward Fort Grant. Relieved to have gotten this far without being seen, Cal left the main wagon route and followed a faint horse trail that headed west into a canyon in the Pinaleño Mountains.

As he entered the broad canyon, the vegetation changed from desert to woodland. As he climbed higher, the scrubby, thorny desert transformed into slopes and green hills covered with pine and juniper. Riding off the trail into the trees, he searched for a campsite. Finally, he rode up an incline into a tangled snarl of trees and brush at the base of a cliff, a perfect spot hidden from sight but with a view that allowed him to keep an eye on the trail below.

Cal wanted to sequester his horse on level ground farther from the trail so he rode around the cliff to the top of the knoll where he found level ground and grass. He

unsaddled, hobbled his horse, and poured out some of the grain he had brought, and then made his way back down to the base of the cliff.

As thunder and lightning drew nearer, he searched for a good spot under the looming cliff. He found a natural overhang that offered much-needed protection from the approaching storm. Taking out his canvas tarp, Cal tied it to a sturdy piece of scrub growth on the cliff wall. While the rising wind whipped at the corners of the canvas, threatening to rip it from his hands, he hurriedly anchored the far corner to the ground with a heavy rock. The makeshift shelter complete, he stowed his tack underneath and carefully laid out his bedroll on the gravelly soil. Huddling against the rocky cliff under the tarp, he cradled his rifle and pulled his slicker around himself for warmth against the howling wind.

The rumbling thunder grew closer, and then the rain came. Cal felt pleased to be warm and dry despite the inclement weather. The rhythmic pattern of rain on the tarp lulled his mind. Lightning flashed and thunder rolled through the canyon. Pulling the slicker over his head and closing his eyes, he slumped into an exhausted sleep.

He awoke with a start, not knowing how long he had slept. It was completely dark now. The wind had stopped but it was still raining. What had awakened him, he didn't know, but something seemed amiss. Peering out from under his shelter, he studied the trail below. He saw nothing, but heard faint voices. Wrapping his fingers around the cold steel of his rifle, he watched intently.

It was difficult to see anything in the pitch-blackness of the canyon and the pouring rain. Who would be traveling in this weather, he wondered? It would either be someone hunting for the likes of him or it could be any number of bad men known to haunt these parts. He considered the irony; he was now one of those bad men. Well, he thought,

whoever's down there better be a bigger badman than I am if he comes this way.

He squinted and peered through the rain and darkness. Despite the poor visibility, he dimly made out two riders passing by on the trail below. Sensing other horses nearby, his horse neighed, and the two riders stopped. Cal moved his hand to the hammer on his rifle. Cal's thoughts raced. *Surely, they heard my horse!* He could hear them talking but could not make out what they were saying over the rain. The men stayed still for a full minute and then rode down the trail.

He waited, peering into the darkness. The men seemed to have ridden on. Whether they were lawmen, bad men, or just ranchers traveling by, he would never know. He did know that posses, lawmen, and the army would be combing the state for anyone suspicious. An attack on U.S. soldiers would not go unanswered. He was going to have to be very cautious to avoid capture.

He thought of home and felt great sadness. He worried about his mother. He had left his entire life behind. His sorrow was outweighed by his anger against Webb, the man who had brought all this upon him. Now he was thrust into a life on the run. He felt betrayed by his church and forced into the life of an outlaw. No, he determined, he would not be an outlaw. Though he must run like one, he resolved to find an honest way of living. He was not just running from the law; he was running from being an outlaw.

The haunting memories of that fateful day plagued Cal's thoughts. Images of bright red blood splattered on stark white rocks replayed again and again in his mind. Above all, he could not forget the suffering face of Jeff Whitlock, whose pathetic cries of agony and panicked look were forever imprinted on his mind. The horror of what he had witnessed tortured him.

Cal surmised they had killed Jeff and taken his body somewhere to be buried in a shallow grave or thrown down an abandoned mineshaft. He wondered if the men had all made it back home. Cruel questions assailed him. Had any been caught? Had anyone confessed and named names? Named him? Would they shoot him or hang him if he was caught? What did it feel like to be hung?

His mental turmoil kept Cal from sleep, so he studied on what his next steps should be. It was paramount that he get as far away from the area as possible – the farther he could get, the safer he would be. With distance came safety, and that was his top priority. However, he had little money to travel on, and the little he did have wouldn't last long. He would need to find work somewhere.

He went over in his mind what he knew of the area's geography. He knew that the San Pedro Valley lay to the southwest. It was a ribbon of secluded farming and ranching land that stretched south toward Mexico. This area should have ample opportunity for him to find water, food, and work. He decided the San Pedro Valley was his best hope, if he could get there. With that thought, he drifted into a fitful sleep filled with macabre dreams.

He awoke to find the rain had stopped, and the eastern sky hinted day was coming. Cal packed up his shelter and carried his saddle and bridle through the brush and oaks above the cliff, where he found his horse contentedly munching grass. He saddled up and tossed his saddlebags on behind. It was then he noticed the weight. The gold! In the aftermath of all the trauma, he had forgotten he was carrying some of the stolen payroll. He opened a saddlebag and looked at the bright yellow coins.

Cal studied the bag of gold, his mind feverishly weighing the risks and benefits of what to do with it. He realized that being caught near the robbery scene with such a large quantity of gold would almost certainly lead him to

a hangman's noose. He considered his options. As much as he could use the money to facilitate his escape, he had no desire to keep it.

It was blood money. It represented all the death, killing, and misery that Webb had thrust upon him, and he wanted nothing to do with it or the curse it would surely bring. He walked over to a tall cottonwood tree nearby, dug a pit in the sandy soil with his bare hands, poured the coins into the hole, and covered it up. The task completed, he mounted his horse and headed deeper into the canyon.

5

Canyon Del Oro



AFTER RIDING FOR HOURS with an empty canteen, Cal was hungry, thirsty, and weary. He noted damp sand in one of the tributaries. He turned into the side canyon, hoping there might be running water higher up. The floor of this wooded gorge was about a hundred feet across, with rocky sides sloping upward. Soon the wet sand turned into a small rivulet of water. Following the flow upstream, he came to a clear pool among the rocks, where he filled his canteen while his horse drank his fill.

As he rested in the shade, he heard the faint sounds of someone chopping wood farther ahead. He doubted if anyone in this remote place had heard of the robbery, and hunger overcame caution. Riding farther, he came to a clearing with a log cabin. A whiskered old man in dirty overalls was working hard on his woodpile. He had just set a log on its end and was about to split it when he briefly

glanced at Cal, then turned back to his work and swung his axe.

“If’n you be intendin’ to bushwack this old man, you may as well know it now – I am the poorest soul livin’ in these here mountains. I ain’t got nuthin’ worth taking.” The man set another log on the stump and swung his axe again.

“Sir, I have no intention of robbing you,” Cal said.

The old man rested his axe on his shoulder. “Good for you then, young feller, ’cause there sure wouldn’t be no future in robbin’ a sorry old miner like me. All you’d get for your trouble is half a wheelbarrow of low-grade silver ore that wouldn’t pay you more’n two bits after you hauled it a hundred miles to the mill.”

Cal dismounted. “If I could water my horse, I’d be mighty obliged.”

“Suit yourself, water’s over yonder.” He pointed with the axe to a trough at the side of the cabin, and then continued his chopping.

Cal led his horse to the trough, tied him to the railing, and walked back over to the old man. “I’d be happy to chop wood for you and any other chores you got if I could take supper with you.”

The man stopped, rested his axe head on the stump, leaned on the handle, and stared at Cal. “I know what ya did,” he stated flatly.

Cal’s heart raced. Had someone ridden through with news of the robbery? If he ran for his horse, the tough old coot could bury his big axe in his back before he took three steps.

“You know what I did?” Cal managed.

“Yep, sure do.”

“What do you think I did?”

“It’s plumb obvious what ya did. Ya think I got this old by bein’ stupid?” The old man pulled out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat from his face. “Well, do yuh?” The man looked up, waiting for an answer.

“No sir.”

“No sir what?”

“No sir, I don’t think you’re stupid.”

“Oh I see, you just think I’m old then.”

“I didn’t mean—”

“I’ll tell you what ya did. You headed out to see the world, didn’t pack enough grub, figuring you could just live off the land. That’s what ya did, all right. Didn’t ya?”

Cal stared, searching for words, and the old man went on, “You young fellers ain’t got no sense. Think ya can just live off the fat of the land. The man hoisted his axe over his shoulder and marched off toward the cabin while continuing his rant. “Ha! Fat of the land. Ain’t no such-a-thang. Even the wolves are skinny ’round here. Name’s Chester. Bring in an armload of that wood, sonny-boy, and I’ll heat us up a pot of stew.”



Despite their first tense encounter, Cal and the old man hit it off quite well. Chester explained that he had a small silver mine he was working farther up the canyon.

“I can’t pay ya,” Chester said, “but if you help me get some ore stockpiled, I can feed ya and put a roof over yer head.”

Days turned into weeks, and Cal was pleased to be doing something besides farming, ranching – or running. He figured it was safest to stay hidden in this remote mountain canyon until things cooled down. A

posse, he reasoned, would be looking for riders, not for someone hard at work at the bottom of a mine shaft.

Each day they would hike up the trail to the mine tunnel. Cal's job was to cart the ore out of the mine, dump it, and return for another load. It was brutally hard work. Even though he found Chester somewhat eccentric and outspoken, he came to appreciate his practical wisdom and knowledge of mining.

"I'll say this fer ya, son," Chester said one day, "you ain't lazy. Fact is, you're a hard-workin' young man. Now, the things I been a showin' ya about timberin' a mine, you remember 'em. That knowhow will put beans in your belly. There's always a mine superintendent looking to hire a hard-rock miner that knows his stuff. Today I'm gonna start teaching ya how to blast without blowin' yerself up. Come along, and I'll teach ya how to use a star drill and show ya a trick or two on loadin' your holes so you can fire off a good shot. You pay attention. A man who knows how to set charges can get hisself a job in whichever mining camp he chooses."

Cal followed Chester to the back of the mine tunnel. "I drilled this hole yesterday," Chester said. Crouching down at the back face of the tunnel, Chester removed three sticks of dynamite and one fused blasting cap from his pouch. He carefully inserted the blasting cap into one of the sticks and slid the dynamite into the small hole.

"Now son, look close here. I've drilled this hole deep enough to take three sticks. The stick with the cap goes in first, and you put it in backward. See? The blasting cap end goes first, and you let the fuse trail out alongside the dynamite. The other two sticks, those without blasting caps, go in next. You slide the other two in after, so the blast fires out of the hole, not into it. When the first stick goes off, it will detonate the other two sticks that don't have caps."

“It has to be that way?” Cal asked. “What happens if you put the other two in first and have the one with the cap and fuse last? Don’t you want the blast directed into the hole for maximum effect?”

“Many a foolish miner’s been kilt doin’ just that. First of all, you can’t direct the blast into the hole; there ain’t nowhere for it to go. It’s a dead end. The blast’s gotta come out of the hole. You’re not tryin’ to blast a hole into the rock. That’s impossible. You use the explosion to fracture the rock laterally from your drill hole.

“Now, the important thing is, you gotta make sure all three sticks get exploded. If’n you do it right, and the blast starts at the back of the hole, the force is concentrated and directed out of the hole so that the other two sticks are detonated. On the other hand, suppose you do it the other way, the way you said. In that case, you are tryin’ to send the blast into the hole, and there ain’t no outlet, so the explosion comes out the hole from only the first stick on top, which might leave the sticks under it unexploded. Then some poor soul comes in and starts muckin’ it out, and he crushes a stick of dynamite in the rubble, which turns him into buzzard food, and it’ll all be your fault.”

“I see,” Cal nodded.

“So,” Chester continued, “if you detonate the stick at the bottom of the hole with the blasting cap, then the blast is sure to explode the other two sticks as the explosion travels out the drill hole.”

“Alright, I got it.”

Chester took a long wooden pole, tamped the sticks tightly together, then pulled out a match, preparing to light the fuse. “Are you a religious man, Cal?”

The question triggered a flood of conflicting thoughts. “My family is Mormon,” Cal replied.

Chester looked at Cal for a moment. “Yeah, I’d call that religious. You know, I’ve blasted with powder, dynamite, even nitro. This here’s pretty safe ’cause we’re blasting in a short tunnel we can get out of before it goes off. I’ve blasted in places where I’m down five hundred feet of shaft and then scurried fifty feet into a side drift, draggin’ dynamite and blastin’ caps with me.”

Chester crouched down by the fuse, match in hand, and continued. “I’ll tell you what, laddie boy, somethin’ that’ll make you do some thinkin’ that goes beyond religion. When I’m in a deep mine like that, and I pack those charges and set the caps, my hands start shakin’, and sometimes the fear is so real I can taste it in my mouth ’cause there’s a kit and kaboodle of things can go wrong.

“So I light that there fuse, knowin’ that moment could be my last – right then I think, there ain’t nothin’ more important than a man’s relationship with his Maker. Ain’t no man-made religious mumbo jumbo can do you no good then. It’s gotta be somethin’ real – from in here,” Chester thumped his chest, “or it’s just so much nonsense.”

“Are you saying my faith is man-made mumbo jumbo?” Cal said, riled by Chester’s comment.

“Oh no, I’m not pointin’ no finger. I’m not talkin’ ’bout nobody. I’m preachin’ at myself more’n anyone. I don’t know enough about your religion to say much. But maybe you can educate me a bit. You say you’re Mormon, eh? You folks are big on having more’n one wife, ain’t that so?”

“Yes,” Cal answered coolly. “I reckon you could say that.” He shifted uncomfortably on the pile of rocks he was sitting on. A conversation about his religion was the last thing he wanted.

“I always wondered something. Do your Mormon women give birth to about as many boys as girls, same as everywhere else?”

“I suppose they do.”

“Well, the thing I can’t figure, if God didn’t mean for marriage to be one man and one woman, like Adam and Eve, and if’n He wanted each man to have several wives, then how come he didn’t make it so women bear a lot more girls than boys, so there’d be enough wives to go ’round for everyone?”

“I don’t know,” Cal said. “I never really thought about it.”

“Well,” Chester chuckled, “I reckon you got somethin’ new to think about.”

Cal was thinking what to say but had no time to answer, for right then Chester lit the fuse. In the bright flare of the burning fuse, Chester winked and smiled. “It’s moments like this that make you think about what matters.”

Cal stared at Chester and swallowed.

“We got ninety seconds,” Chester said matter-of-factly. “I reckon we better not sit here chewin’ the fat too long.”

“Ninety seconds?”

“They don’t give fuse away for free, you know.”

Cal jumped up, bumped his head on the rock ceiling, and followed Chester out of the tunnel. No sooner had they sat down in the shade of a cottonwood tree than the ground shook at the explosion and gray dust belched from the mine.



As the weeks passed, Cal felt his body grow solid and wiry from the hard toil. He learned to enjoy Chester’s sage advice and interesting observations on life. Day by day Chester passed on to him his wealth of mining knowledge.

Then it happened. It was a day like any other. Chester had gone up to the cabin to retrieve another single-jack

drill. After a short while, Cal headed out of the mine to get a drink. Suddenly he stopped cold in his tracks. Voices drifted into the tunnel. Walking carefully and quietly forward, he edged toward the opening. Staying hidden in the dark shadows, he peered out. Two men on horses were talking to Chester. He couldn't make out who they were. He could only hear bits and pieces of the conversation. "Traveling alone...holdup..."

Cal's heart pounded and his breath quickened. He was being hunted, and here he was, trapped and unarmed. He continued to watch. The men tipped their hats, turned, and rode away. Cal went back into the mine and continued working. Chester joined him shortly but said nothing about the two strangers. At supper that night, Cal was quiet, considering whether he had stayed in one place too long. Maybe it was time to move on.

"We had some company today," Chester said abruptly. "Seems the Army payroll was stolen by a band of desperadoes."

Cal's heart leaped, but he tried to appear calm. "Oh?" he said, feigning surprise.

"Them fellers said one of 'em's still missin', and he's supposed to have a good portion of the gold. They just wanted to know if I'd seen any strangers passing through." Chester kept on eating and said no more.

"Yeah?" Cal's throat tightened and he swallowed hard. "What did you tell them?"

"Chester looked up and stopped chewing. "Well, I told 'em the truth, of course." He went back to eating.

"You did?"

"Course I did. What'd ya think? That I'd lie and make up a story?" Chester shoved more food in his mouth and pointed at Cal with his spoon. "You know as well as I do there ain't been nobody up here."

“There’s me.”

Chester let out a hearty laugh. “Yeah! You?” Chester chuckled some more. “I don’t figure a robber that got away with a fortune in gold is gonna be interested in working for free in a dusty old mine!” Chester studied Cal’s face for a moment. “No, you ain’t no bushwhacker.” He took another bite of stew and pointed his spoon at him again. “No sir, ya ain’t no badman. I’d bet my life on it.”

Chester reflected for a moment. Then, gazing studiously at Cal, continued, “I’ve known a few bad men in my time. I can tell an outlaw right off when I look ’em in the eye. You’re no bandit, my boy. Running, yes, you be runnin’ from something. But runnin’ ain’t necessarily a bad thing. It depends on what you’re runnin’ from. Sometimes it’s smart to run.”

“What am I running from?” Cal dared to ask.

“That’s a good question. A man can only answer that for his own self. If’n he’s a man of character, he can make himself ask the hard questions.”

After they finished eating, Chester leaned back, lit his pipe, and took a long draft as he gazed at Cal thoughtfully. “You’ve worked hard and you’ve learnt well. I done right by ya. It’s for sure you can get a job at any mine that’s hiring. Just remember my words.”

Sleep did not come quickly for Cal that night. He wondered what exactly Chester meant when he said “Remember my words.” Which words? What was he alluding to? And he pondered the two strangers that had shown up looking for him. They could not have been the law. They had said there was “one still missing who has some of the gold.” The only person with that information would be Webb himself. No one else had seen Webb toss him the bag of gold coins. Webb was hunting him and was

sending his men to track him. The time had come to leave. Cal could feel it. It seemed to him that Chester knew it too.



It was in the early morning hours before daylight that Cal saddled his horse and prepared to go. He mounted up and turned his horse toward the trail when he was startled by Chester's voice.

"You best take this with you, young man." Chester stepped out of the darkness and handed him a small bundle. "There's some hard tack to tide you over on your journey. Ain't too tasty, and it's hard as bedrock, but it'll keep ya from starving."

Feeling sheepish for planning to leave without a word, Cal took the package while he searched for the right words. Before he could say anything, Chester spoke.

"Now, of course, you can go where you please, but if you want to put your new skills to use, I say you should head for Prescott. Lots of mines operate in those parts. Just find the mine boss and tell 'em you can timber and blast. You tell 'em you learned from the best, Shorty Chester Johnson. People know me, so you go ahead and trade on my name. There's a lot I ain't had time to teach ya, so when you get hired, make friends with some of the old salts right off and learn all you can from 'em."

"I'll do that."

"Oh, and one more thing, you be sure to listen to the Tommyknockers."¹⁹

¹⁹ Old-time prospectors and miners held various beliefs and superstitions regarding "tommyknockers" in the workings of underground mines. Tommyknockers were believed to be supernatural spirits, either angels or ghosts, that would warn miners of imminent dangers, such as explosions, cave-ins or dangerous gasses, by knocking on the walls or making tapping sounds.

“Tommyknockers? What’s that?”

“You ask any of the seasoned miners, they’ll tell ya. You just be sure you run when you hear ’em knockin.”

“Alright, Chester, I will.”

Chester stepped back. Scratched his whiskers, smoothed his beard, and looked down the trail. “Now listen up. When ya come out of this here small canyon, turn right and foller the main canyon downhill. From there, you’ll hit some rugged dry country. Don’t dally none as it’s dry desert and there ain’t no water. Ain’t no people either. Rattlesnakes and jackrabbits are all that live there. Just pick any wash runnin’ toward the southwest and follow it down.

“You’re gonna come to a wide valley, across which you’ll see a mountain range.” Chester, who was usually quite jolly, spoke with an earnest tone. “Don’t you go into them mountains on the other side of that valley. Hear me now. Those are some real badlands. You could get your horse crippled in that mess.

“Once you get to the center of that valley, turn south and follow the wash. Halfway down the valley, it’ll get greener and you’ll begin to find water. Folks call it Sulphur Springs Valley. Keep followin’ the wash, and it’ll take you straight to Willcox. It’s about forty miles, more or less.

“You can catch the train in Willcox, and they’ll load your horse in a cattle car. It’s only a flag stop, so the train ain’t a gonna stop less’n they know someone wants on, so don’t be shy about making it known. That train goes through Tucson and will get you to Phoenix. From there, you’ll have to go on horseback.

“There’s a stage line that runs from Phoenix to Prescott, and you can follow that route. It will get you to Prescott if that’s where you wanna go. One last thing: This here stream is the last water you’ll be a havin’ till you get close

to Willcox, so fill your canteen and let your horse drink up before you leave the creek. Now I'll quit jawin' and let you get on your way."

Cal tipped his hat to Chester and had turned his horse to go when he was startled by Chester's yell. "Hold up!" Cal's heart jumped. "Wait a bit," said Chester. "I got somethin' else fer ya."

Chester disappeared into his cabin and came back with a gun. Cal's eyes grew wide. "Here ya go," Chester said as he handed the six-gun up to Cal. "I don't feel right not givin' ya somethin' for all yer hard work. You're headed into some rough country where there might be even rougher men. Hopefully, ya won't need this, but better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it."

"Thank you, Chester. I'll never forget you or all you've taught me."

"You're welcome, young man. So long, and Godspeed to ya!"

Cal nudged his horse forward and headed down the trail that would take him away from his mountain hideaway. He might have chosen to stay if he had known what lay ahead.

6

Jessica Lorena McKenzie



THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS were a blur. Chester's directions proved invaluable. When Cal arrived at Willcox, he and his horse were hot, tired, and thirsty. He put his horse up for the night at the livery stable. It was late, and being too exhausted to look for a hotel, with the permission of the hostler he bedded himself down for the night on some loose hay in a corner of the barn.

The following day at the flag stop, it all worked out just as Chester described. The black, smoke-belching locomotive steamed up to the platform, and Cal loaded his

horse into a stock car. The rails led west from Willcox across the alkaline plain of the Willcox Playa, a dry, desolate lakebed consisting of forty square miles of white sand and salty deposits. The train chugged onward, and gradually the dusty landscape greened with palo verde trees, yuccas, and saguaros.

The train continued westward, traveling through the frontier town of Tucson and then angling northwest to the new settlement of Phoenix, where the sputtering and hissing locomotive ground to a noisy halt. He unloaded his horse from the stock car and spent another night sleeping in the hay at the livery. After getting directions from the hostler, he saddled up and headed north. He would take Chester's advice and look for work in the gold mines around Prescott.

He had learned that the first settlement on his route, the little mining town of Gillett, was thirty-seven miles north of Phoenix.²⁰ He was told there would be a small hotel where he could get a room for the night. It being the middle of summer with afternoon temperatures well over a hundred degrees, he made an early start, leaving before daybreak.

The long ride was tedious. The sun was low on the horizon and twilight was at hand when he got close to Gillett. He wondered if the dirt wagon trail he followed through rolling desert hills went anywhere. It was a desolate country, certainly no place for a town. But finally, he rode down a steep hill to a welcome sight – the Agua Fria River and the settlement of Gillett on the far side.

²⁰ Gillett is now a ghost town. The remains of the old hotel are the most prominent feature. The author has been there many times. Sadly, no one can go there anymore as the state sold the land to a private individual.

After letting his horse drink his fill, he crossed the foot-deep water to the other bank and followed the dusty track through a grove of gnarly mesquite trees. Soon he saw the hotel, the largest and most prominent building in town, and the first thing he came to. On the front was a wooden sign: *Burfind Hotel*. He dismounted, tied his horse to the railing, stepped up on the veranda and went inside.

He was greeted by a short man, not much taller than the counter he stood behind. "What can I do for you, mister?"

"I'd like a room for the night."

"Well, I might have a room, and I might not." The small man was nervous and excitable, with a high-pitched voice. "You see, the stage is a runnin' late," he wheezed, "but it should be coming in shortly. We're an official stop on the line, you see, and we must keep rooms available for passengers. Once the stage arrives, I'll know if I have a room for you. I can always put you up in a hammock on the back porch if you want."

The little man stopped to polish his spectacles and then rasped on. "Believe me, in this heat, you'd be more comfortable sleepin' outside. It's cheaper. Only two bits for the hammock."

"Suits me just fine," Cal said. "I'll take the hammock." He laid a coin on the counter.

"Good choice," squeaked the balding man as he wiped the sweat from his brow. Puttin his spectacles back on, he pushed them up on his nose. "Other folks will be payin' more to stay in this bake oven. These thick stone walls hold the heat long after the sun has gone down. That's nice in the winter but not so much in the summer. It's a hard life here, mind you. Now, if you want a hot meal and some drink, tell Ginger in the next room. She'll fix you up for a fair price. Take a seat at any of the tables here and make yourself at home."

“Thanks. I need to see to my horse. Is there a livery in town?”

The nervous man continued shuffling through papers on the counter. “Yes sir, we do, such as it is. We used to have two liveryies, but now just the one, and I’m not sure how long that will last. We once had a bank, a lumberyard, a meat market, two blacksmiths, two stagecoach stations, four stores, and nine saloons. But no more. They moved the stamp mill up to the Tip Top Mine and killed our town.” The fidgety clerk grimaced and shook his head. “Oh gracious, what is to become of this place? Oh dear me...”

Realizing he was ignoring his customer, he continued with his plaintive high pitch. “Ah yes, young man, the livery – head down the main road, and you’ll see it on your left.” He shuffled papers on the counter while muttering under his breath, “Killed our town they did. Just killed it.”



Remains of the Burfind Hotel, Gillett, Arizona²¹

²¹ The town was named for the mining developer of the Tip Top Mine, Dan B. Gillett. The town's name is misspelled as Gillette on U.S. Topographic Maps and elsewhere.

Cal put his hat on, stepped outside, untied his horse, and headed down the street, passing one abandoned building after another until he came to the livery. After caring for his horse, he returned to the hotel and relaxed on one of the benches on the front veranda. After a few moments, he heard the whinny of a horse and rattle of the stagecoach coming through the mesquite grove. He didn't know it then, but the arrival of that stage was destined to change his life forever.

Cal watched as two men disembarked from the coach. Then a distinguished gray-haired gentleman stepped down, turned, and reaching up, took hold of a daintily gloved hand. He helped the young lady down – a lady such as Cal had never seen before. Her delicate face and lovely blue eyes were framed by auburn curls that were crowned by a stylish bonnet. Her long hair was arranged in a gracefully twisted coil down her back.

Her trim figure was accented by the most exquisite dress Cal had ever gazed upon. The emerald green of her fashionable dress contrasted with the rich red of her tresses. Pale green lace framed her collar and wrists, and her bonnet echoed the colors with similar hues. She stepped down from the coach with elegant grace, alighting on the sandy soil in her black lace-top shoes.

Cal was mesmerized. He had never seen a woman wearing her hair so meticulously arranged in such an attractive manner. He was accustomed to women having their hair hastily scrunched into a bun. And where he was from, the women and girls wore plain and practical loose-fitting garb. The attire worn by this lovely lady was something quite different, and it had all of Cal's attention. The lady and her entourage made their way into the hotel. She glided up onto the veranda and looked directly at Cal, who averted his eyes, embarrassed to be caught staring.

After a short while, the vision of beauty returned and seated herself on the other bench near Cal. “Good evening, ma’am,” Cal said. “If your husband and the rest of your party are joining you, I will relinquish my seat so you may sit together. I need to check on my horse anyway.” He didn’t have to check on his horse. It was just something to say.

“My husband?” she laughed goodheartedly. “I wouldn’t mind being joined by my husband,” she paused and with a whimsical smile added, “if I had one!”

“I’m sorry, I thought—”

“Oh, you mustn’t be sorry. You’re not the only one who has jumped to that conclusion. I truly don’t know why that is. I suppose it’s because he is so careful to ensure I don’t fall out of the stage on my head. You’d think he thought me a clumsy klutz! But he’s a bit old for a nineteen-year-old girl, don’t you think?”

She did not wait for Cal to answer but continued on. “Not to mention he happens to be my uncle. He’s seeing to it I get safely to Prescott. He owns a hardware store there. I’m moving from Tennessee.”

“That explains it then,” said Cal.

“Explains what?”

“Your lovely southern accent. I have seldom heard it.”

She laughed again and said, “Thank you, but I’m not the one with an accent. You have an accent!”

Cal smiled, “Yes ma’am, if you say so. You are a long way from home.”

“Yes, and this country is a hot, dry, and unattractive desert compared to my Tennessee’s beautiful rolling green hills. But my Uncle Henry promises me it is green and cool in Prescott.”

“I’ve heard the same,” said Cal. “It’s a mile high and will be much cooler than here. I’m from mountain country and am not used to this heat.”

“Oh, my yes, the heat. It is oppressive. I stepped into my room, which was hotter than a Dutch oven. I told my uncle I was going outside to find a shady place to pass the evening.”

“What brings you to these parts?” Cal asked.

“Time for me to see the world!” She laughed again in that same lighthearted way that made Cal’s heart flutter. Then, in a more serious tone, “And God told me to come.”

“You have conversations with God?” Cal blurted out the question without thinking it might sound rude.

“Don’t you?” she countered, not the least bit ruffled. “Are you not a praying man?”

“Of course I am.”

“Then you talk with God too. Prayer is a two-way conversation, you know.”

“I’m Mormon.” As soon as he said it, he wondered why he did. Was he a Mormon? Had he not decided to turn his back on his religion?

She looked at Cal thoughtfully. “I suppose we should properly introduce ourselves. My name is Lorena. Well, actually it’s Jessica. Jessica Lorena McKenzie. But I prefer my middle name, so I go by Lorena.”

“That’s a beautiful name. I’m Cal Chandler.”

“Pleased to make your acquaintance, Mister Chandler. Do you like being a Mormon?”

Cal was taken aback by such a direct question. Why would she ask that? He had not liked being a Mormon of late, but the last thing he wanted to do was think about it or

admit that out loud to someone. “What do you mean, do I like being a Mormon?”

“I mean just what I said. Do you like being a Mormon? I’m a Christian. If you ask me if I like being a Christian, I would be pleased to affirm that I do.” She paused and studied Cal with her enchanting blue eyes. When Cal said nothing, she asked, “How many wives do you have, Mr. Chandler?”

The impertinent question irritated Cal. He had come to hate polygamy, but he also disliked having his family’s religion denigrated. Cal chose to deflect with humorous sarcasm.

“Are you applying to be part of my harem?”

“Mister Chandler!”

“Pardon, ma’am. Didn’t mean to ruffle your feathers. The truth is, I have no harem, nor wives, nary a one.”

“I didn’t mean to pry into your affairs. It’s just that I met some Mormons back east and had several interesting discussions with them. They told me your prophet, Brigham Young, said the only men who become gods are those who practice polygamy.²² So, I am curious, Mr. Chandler. Is it your plan to become a god by having many wives?”

Cal’s pulse quickened under the vexing question. It was one thing for him to hate his religion. It was another thing entirely for someone else to disparage it. “Miss McKenzie, If I had known we were going to have Sunday School, I would have worn my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes.”

“I’m sorry to be so direct, Mr. Chandler. But really, it’s a simple question, one that is basic to Mormon theology. I

²² “*The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.*” Mormon Prophet Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 11:269.

would very much like to know your thoughts on the matter.”

Cal was irritated, but he tried not to let it show. Who did this woman think she was to question his faith? But while she was direct and confrontational, she did it with an attractive and sincere comportsment. Cal had never encountered anyone like her. Still, he did not relish her challenging questions.

When Cal still didn't answer, she continued, “You know, the Bible says there is only one God. The book of Isaiah says, *‘Before me, no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.’* And First Timothy says, *‘There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’* Do you believe the Bible, Mister Chandler?”

Cal had just about enough of this lady's assertiveness. How could such an attractive girl be so infuriating? “You must understand,” Cal said, “the Bible has been changed, mistranslated, and misinterpreted many times down through the ages.”

“Do you think so?” Lorena leaned forward, a sincere look on her face. “And how do you know that? Which parts do you consider to be changed or misinterpreted – just the ones that disagree with Mormon theology? The Apostle Peter wrote that no scripture is a matter of anyone's private interpretation.²³ It means what it plainly says, nothing more, nothing less.

“And Jesus said His words would never pass away. You do believe what our Lord said, don't you? But you are saying His words did pass away. Was Jesus mistaken? Do you really intend to deny our Lord's word?”

Cal wanted to scold her and tell her he was a priesthood holder in the one true church led by the one true prophet. But now he had come to doubt all that himself, so why

²³ 2 Peter 1:20

should he try to defend it? It would be best, he decided, to refuse to get drawn into a debate.

“I’m sorry, ma’am, I need to turn in.” Cal stood up. “I’m leaving early for Prescott.” Though true, it also made an excellent excuse to end the conversation.

“We are leaving early as well,” she replied. “I truly hope I didn’t offend you. Perhaps I’ll see you on the trail. Goodnight, Mr. Chandler.”

Cal bid her good evening. Then, going through the hotel to the back porch, he found the hammock and a blanket laid out for him. He was bone-tired from the long ride and wanted to sleep, but he had too many thoughts swirling through his head for sleep to come easily. Being confronted with scriptures he could not refute had been frustrating, yet he found Jessica Lorena McKenzie to be the most outspoken, attractive, and fascinating woman he had ever met. She was also the most exasperating.

7

Ambushed



EARLY THE FOLLOWING DAY, after a hearty breakfast at the hotel, Cal went to the livery to retrieve his horse. He walked into the barn and found the hostler talking with a tough-looking older man with a bushy mustache. As he was saddling up, the man came over to Cal.

“Young man, are you headed up Prescott way?”

“Yessir, that’s my plan,” answered Cal.

“Name’s Frank. I drive the stage. I’ve got a proposition for you. I usually have a man ridin’ shotgun with me on this route, but I’m stuck runnin’ this one alone. There’s some wild country between here and Prescott. We’ve been gettin’ held up and robbed about once a month, so we try to use outriders whenever possible.²⁴ There’s safety in numbers. Seems like if we got other riders with us, the bandits decide to hold off for easier pickings.

²⁴ In the late 1800s, the stage from Gillett to Prescott was robbed on average a dozen times a year.

“Now, if you’d be interested in being an outrider and stick with us all the way, I’ll see the stage line pays you a fair wage for your time when we get there. Of course, it’ll slow you down some, as we make several stops to change out the teams at the stations, but you’ll get a place to sleep and free grub all the way.”

“I reckon I can do that,” Cal said. “Getting’ paid to eat free sounds fine by me.”

“Excellent! Are you heeled?”

“I can be.”

“Alright then. When we’re on the trail, wear your iron where it shows. The idea is to appear to be more trouble than we’re worth. I plan to be movin’ out in less than twenty minutes. See you over at the hotel.”

Cal finished saddling up. He took the Colt .44 that Chester had given him out of his saddlebag and checked the loads. Tying a piece of rawhide to the gun, he hung it from his saddle horn where it would be quickly accessible. Cal led his horse the short distance back to the hotel, where he found the stage being loaded with luggage while the passengers waited on the veranda. Frank returned, climbed up on his seat, and hollered, “All aboard!”

Cal mounted his horse, and as Lorena walked by, he tipped his hat and greeted her with a good morning. Lorena smiled and returned the greeting.

“Are you riding with us today, Mr. Chandler?”

“Yes ma’am. I got wrangled into ridin’ shotgun, so to speak.”

“Spectacular! I’ll feel safer knowing you’re watching over us.”

Cal wasn’t sure if she was jesting or in earnest. “Yes ma’am,” he responded.

The stage splashed through the rushing waters of the Agua Fria before veering northeast toward Black Canyon Station, kicking up dust as it rumbled along. Cal followed as they traveled slowly on the rough trail through rocky hills covered with thorny scrub, cactus, and mesquite. He'd ride beside the coach at times, but whenever the trail narrowed, he moved ahead or trailed behind. Suddenly, the stage came to a halt, and Frank motioned for Cal to approach.

"Just up ahead," Frank said, "is where we've had most of the trouble. For the next several miles, we'll be in winding draws and arroyos in the middle of nowhere, and many places are perfect for an ambush. Keep a sharp eye. Stay close and ride where you can be seen." Frank gave the horses a "Hi-ya!" and they were off.

Cal unhooked his six-gun from the saddle horn and slid it into his belt, ready to use at a moment's notice. He kept a watchful eye as Frank signaled for him to ride closer to the stagecoach. Cal obliged, maneuvering his horse until he was right beside the coach. Occasionally, he would catch a glimpse of Lorena smiling up at him or giving him a playful wave, which he returned with a smile of his own. He couldn't stay angry at such a breathtakingly beautiful woman. She was so darned pretty it hurt.

Riding near the coach, Cal considered the irony of the situation. Weeks earlier he had hidden in the rocks overlooking a remote mountain pass, preparing to ambush the unsuspecting. Now the circumstances were reversed. He was the one who might be ambushed. Was his fate to reap what he had sown? He had wanted to ask Frank what the plan of action was if they were held up, but he hadn't had the opportunity.

His thoughts turned to his own misdeeds. He wondered whether anyone had been caught and worried about Webb's men hunting him. He had been given a sizeable portion of

the gold and then disappeared. Webb would not let that stand. Although he had buried the gold, wanting nothing to do with the blood money, Webb didn't know that. He would assume Cal had taken it for himself.

Webb would make finding him a personal vendetta. That was for sure. No one crossed Webb and got away with it. Webb would also be concerned that Cal would be caught and testify against them. As long as Cal was missing, Webb would be hunting him. He would be after his gold and looking for retribution. If the law didn't catch and hang him, Webb would try to do it himself, and he had the resources and men to find him.

His thoughts kept returning to Miss Jessica Lorena McKenzie. How silly, he thought to himself. Why should I think of her? I don't even know her. I might even dislike her. Besides, I don't exactly have a bright future. Still, she is an interesting young lady and perhaps—

“Ho!” The yell shattered his reverie. Riding on the stagecoach's left side, Cal looked up to see a horse and rider blocking the road ahead, the rider brandishing a double-barreled shotgun. “*Hold up there!*” came the command.

“Whoa!” Frank yelled to the horses as he pulled firmly on the reins and stomped hard on the stage brake. But before he could stop the coach, a thunderous boom echoed through the canyon as flame flashed from the bandit's shotgun. One of the horses in the team reared on its hind legs, while the others lunged in fright.

The sudden appearance and shout of the bandit had startled Cal's horse. Quickly drawing his gun from his belt, he felt his horse tense. What happened next no one expected, least of all the bandit. With the roar of the shotgun, Cal's startled horse took a giant leap forward. Simultaneously, on Cal's right, the four horses pulling the stage plunged ahead in terror.

To avoid the runaway stage, the would-be robber whirled his mount to the side of the road, not realizing he was putting himself in the path of Cal's stampeding horse. The two animals collided, Cal's horse striking a glancing blow to the side of the robber's horse, knocking the bandit's horse off its feet and sending its rider flying into the cactus at the roadside. Cal was at full gallop, and the momentum helped his horse keep its footing. Stage and outrider charged ahead down the road.

The wild ride continued as Cal, gun in hand, galloped after the coach, glancing behind frequently but seeing no sign of pursuit. Finally, after a mile or so, Frank managed to stop the stage. Cal rode up to find Frank on foot, speaking soothingly to the anxious horses.

"We got torn harness." Frank's hands were visibly shaking. "If I can get my nervous fingers to play along, I'll have this mess tied together pronto." He threaded some rawhide through the harness, tied off a knot, and gave it a firm jerk. "Almost done here."

"Take your time," Cal replied, sticking his pistol in his belt and pulling his Sharps rifle from its scabbard. "I'll cover the back trail. If he comes this way, it'll be the last thing he does. Just holler when you're ready."

The coach door opened, and Miss McKenzie's uncle started getting out. "Best to stay inside the coach." Cal's voice was calm but firm. "It might not be over. We'll be moving soon."

Cal tied his horse to scrub brush at the roadside and backtracked down the road about fifty yards. Crouching down and taking cover behind some rocks, he cocked his rifle and aimed down the road in the direction from which they had come. Nuzzling the rifle's stock into his shoulder, he steadied his breathing, calmed his pounding heart, and waited. This time he would not be shooting to miss.

After about ten minutes, he heard Frank holler. Uncocking his rifle, he straightened up and sprinted back to the stage. “No sign of him,” Cal assured Frank. “I don’t think he’ll be giving us any more trouble. Most likely he’s too busy pickin’ cactus out of his hind end.”

“Hope so!” laughed Frank as he climbed up to his seat on the stage. “That had to be the dumbest stage robber I ever did see. I don’t know why he fired his shotgun into the air. He’d be countin’ his stolen loot by now if he hadn’t spooked the horses. But that was some quick action on your part back there. You’re a good man to have around when trouble’s a-foot. We’ll overnight at Bumble Bee and leave there in the morning with a fresh team of horses. Not much there but we’ll get a hot meal and a night’s rest. Let’s get to it.”

“Suits me fine.” Cal swung into his saddle.

Frank picked up the reins. “Let’s roll!” He slapped the reins across the horses’ backs. Cal fell in behind while keeping an attentive eye on their backtrail.

Frank had informed Cal that he expected the remainder of the route that day would be uneventful. He had never heard of anyone being held up on the stretch from Black Canyon Station to Bumble Bee. The only danger was the road itself, for in this area there were some treacherous spots.

Cal soon saw that the stage road, carved out of the side of the hills, was becoming a test of the driver’s skill and grit. The rugged track had become nothing more than a narrow shelf hacked out of the side of rocky cliffs, a twisting maze of sharp curves and dangerous corners.

Stages ran this route every day in both directions, and if the northbound stage met a southbound stage on this stretch it was a serious problem, as in most places the track was only wide enough for one coach to pass. At every turn,

the drivers stopped, listened, and blew a long blast from a horn.²⁵ This signaling tool was carried by every driver on the route to signal oncoming stages. If there was a response of two short toots, that would signal that the other stage had heard the warning, in which case the “up” stage was supposed to pull into the first wide space in the road and wait for the “down” stage to pass.

They continued to snake their way around a maze of hairpin turns and perilous curves, the passengers feeling every bump and jolt as the stagecoach bucked its way along the precipice, threatening to plunge to its doom at any moment. Cal caught sight of Lorena’s frightened face as she peered out at the treacherous drop-off at the edge of a road barely wide enough for the coach.²⁶

Frank handled the team expertly as he cautiously guided the coach up the mountain, silently praying there would be no rattlesnake in the road to spook the horses. They stopped before every sharp turn, where Frank gave a long loud blast on his horn and listened intently for a response before proceeding.

As they approached the crest, Frank stopped the coach at a widened part of the road near a blind curve. He blew the horn and listened. There was no response but the sound of the wind. Slapping the reins, he continued uphill, carefully hugging the side of the cliff to keep the wheels as far as possible from the precipice to their right. That’s when it happened.

As they were about to enter the curve they came face-to-face with the down stagecoach. Reacting quickly, Frank reined in the team and, being careful to avoid skidding,

²⁵ Hanchett, Leland. *Catch the Stage to Phoenix*. Phx, AZ: Pine Rim Pub, 1998

²⁶ This portion of the old stage road still exists and may be traveled by a four-wheel drive vehicle. The author recently traversed it and found it to be a “white-knuckle” route, not for the faint of heart.

gently applied the coach brakes. Cal could see that Frank was visibly upset, for his professional demeanor vanished as he erupted with a litany of curses directed at the down-stage driver. Securing the stage brakes in the locked position, he climbed down and strode toward the other stage.

Turning back to Cal, he shouted, "Tie your horse somewhere and get the passengers unloaded!" Then to the other driver, "Why didn't you use your horn?"

The other driver acted as though he didn't know what Frank was talking about. "Horn? I didn't hear no horn."

"Did you even stop to listen? Show me your horn!"

"What?"

"You heard me. Show me your horn."

The down-stage driver rummaged around. "It's here somewhere..."

"You fool! You don't know where your horn is! You didn't even stop to listen. You reckless jackass! Do realize the peril you have put us in and how much work you have created? How in tarnation did you get this job?"

"No one talks to me like that!" exclaimed the other driver angrily, while starting to climb down from his seat.

"You stay right there!" Frank commanded. "For once, think about the safety of your passengers. You stay where you are and hold your horses. Keep your brakes locked and keep your team calm. If you want to settle things with me, man to man, it'll be my pleasure to give you the opportunity, but only after we are off the side of this mountain."

Frank didn't wait for an answer but stomped back to his stage, where Cal had the passengers unloaded.

“Cal, here’s what has to happen. Escort the passengers up the hill and see to it they are all waiting behind the other coach, on the uphill side of it. If anything goes wrong, I want them out of harm’s way. Once you’ve seen to their safety, I want you back down here helping me. We have to unhitch the team and back this coach downhill to the pull-off area we just passed. Once we get the coach tucked in there, then the other coach can pass.”

Cal walked the passengers up the hill, past the waiting coach, and got them situated in the shade of the bluff. When Cal returned, Frank was placing a large rock behind one of the rear wheels of the coach. “Just tell me what you want me to do, Frank,” Cal said.

“I want you to find another large stone to chock the other back wheel, just in case the brakes slip. Then come and help me unhitch the team.”

When Cal finished blocking the wheel, he assisted Frank in loosening the trace lines. “Get the pry bar out of the rear boot,” Frank instructed. After Cal retrieved the bar, Frank pried the pins up that held the center pole to the coach and together they lowered the pole to the ground. “Disconnect the singletree on your side, Cal, and I’ll get the one over here.” With the team disconnected from the coach, Frank led the team forward a few yards.

“Cal, run up there to the other coach and see if there are a couple strong men to help us. And we also need someone good with horses to keep my team calm.”

Cal came back with two men and Lorena. Frank looked them over. “I said men.” Frank was blunt. “This is men’s work and dangerous to boot.”

Lorena’s eyes flashed as she gently stroked the nose of one of the lead horses. “You need someone to keep your team calm.” Lorena voice was serene but assertive.

“Nothing quiets horses better than a woman’s soft voice. I’ve trained horses all my life. Trust me.”

“Alright then. Hold the team.” Frank climbed up to the driver’s seat. “Remove the rocks from the rear wheels. I want you men to steer by pushing sideways on the front of the coach when I tell you.”

After the wheels were no longer chocked, Frank eased back slightly on the brake lever. Slowly the coach began to roll backwards. When they approached the pull-off, Frank strained hard on the brake handle and stopped the coach.

“Listen,” Frank said. “We have to turn the coach and bring it right up against the side of the hill. I want everyone on the near wheeler side.²⁷ When I let off the brake and roll the coach back, push with all you have on the coach’s left side to angle the front over a few inches to point the rear of the coach toward the cliff wall.”

While the men pushed, Frank eased off on the brake. The front skidded over an inch and refused to go any farther.

“Not enough!” Frank exclaimed.

“Hold on, Frank,” Cal said. “You got a rope?”

“Sure do.” He tossed down a coiled rope.

Cal retrieved his horse and tied the rope around the doubletree and front axle. Mounting up, he positioned his horse toward the side of the coach. Wrapping the rope around his saddle horn, he backed toward the precipice.

“Let’s do it!” Cal said, and the men pushed and lunged against the side of the coach while Cal’s horse backed up, attempting to pull the front of the coach sideways. Cal kept

²⁷ The horses closest to the stagecoach wheels were called “wheelers.” The driver sat on the left side of the driver seat. The horse in front and slightly left of the driver was the near wheeler and the horse on the right was the off wheeler.

a wary eye on the edge of the precipice just behind the back hooves of his horse. Frank eased off the brake and the coach crept backward down the hill. Cal backed a few inches while hearing rocks rattle down the precipice behind him. Gradually the front of the coach skidded sideways a few inches, allowing Frank to angle the coach into the pull-off, tucking it close against the hillside. Frank locked the brakes, climbed down and chocked the rear wheels.

“Now,” Frank said, “we need to back the team down and get them directly in front of the coach. I trained this team myself to back up harnessed for such a time as this. If they won’t back, then we will have to unharness them completely and lead them one at a time. I want two men on each side of the wheelers, and Cal and I will take each side of the leaders, and we’ll see if we can back them down.”

When Frank was at the right front leader, he instructed the men, “Alright, you men at the wheelers just hold their halters and speak calmly to them as we move. They’ll back up on their own as the leaders back. Cal, you do exactly as I do.” Frank pulled back gently on the right lead’s harness while saying in a low and soothing voice, “Back! Back!” Ever so slowly the team backed down the hill until they reached the pull-off. Once the team was hitched again to the coach, Frank said, “Cal, go tell the other driver he may proceed. If I go up there, I’m liable to have to give that fool driver a lesson in manners he won’t forget.”

Finally, the southbound coach passed, the passengers were reloaded and they were on their way. To everyone’s relief, they emerged toward evening from the rough country of the Bradshaw mountains and entered the fertile valley of the Agua Fria River. All were greatly relieved to have the precarious mountain track behind them. The level, wide road before them was a welcome sight.

As they pulled into the Bumble Bee stage stop, Cal told Frank he would help him with the team as soon as he saw

to his horse. A young boy appeared and showed Cal which corral he could use. After caring for his horse, Cal returned to help Frank but saw that some hands from the station were already assisting.

The stage station featured one large building with passenger accommodations and smaller outbuildings for livestock. Outside and in front of the main building, was a large firepit in which a fire had been started, its bright flames leaping and crackling in the cool evening air. He inhaled deeply, taking in the delicious aroma of food cooking over the fire. The stage passengers were seated around the fire pit, anticipating a tasty meal. Cal joined them, taking an open seat on one of the large logs placed around the fire.

Besides Lorena and her uncle, there were two other stage passengers. One was a heavy-set man, fond of his cigars, who said he was on his way to inspect some of his mining interests near Prescott. The other, a rather plain but friendly lady who had been hired to teach school in Prescott.

Settling himself, Cal greeted the others. Tipping his hat to Miss McKenzie at his immediate right, he bid her a good evening.

“Mr. Chandler,” she responded. “We all owe you a debt of gratitude for saving us back there. I saw the whole thing, and I do declare, I have never seen the like of it in all my days! Such bravery! You charged straight into that bandit!”

“Really, Miss McKenzie, it was all my horse’s idea.” Everyone erupted in laughter. Cal, who was trying to be honest, attempted to continue, “I wasn’t—”

“Now, Mr. Chandler,” she interrupted with a gracious smile, “stop trying to be so modest. We all saw what you did, and we thank God for it. You were like an angel on our shoulders. I was petrified with fear, and I’m so grateful you

were able to act with such prowess! I will never forget the picture of you, gun drawn, charging bravely right into that bandit! Please accept my thanks. I believe I speak for us all when I say you're our hero."

"Yes Ma'am," answered Cal with resignation. "If you say so."

"Do you think there will be any more bandits on the trail, Mr. Chandler?"

"From what I understand, that stretch we just went through is where most of the stage robberies have happened, so hopefully, we won't have any more trouble. And you can just call me Cal."

"Oh, I can?" she said while pretending to consider the matter. For a moment, Cal felt embarrassed and wondered if he was being too forward. He glanced at Lorena, and catching her gaze, quickly cast his eyes downward. Cal's usual demeanor projected confidence, yet he was feeling a bit unnerved in Lorena's presence.

"Well, Mr. Chandler," she continued, "I believe I can do that on one condition. If you will call me Lorena, then I will agree to call you Cal."

"Yes ma'am," Cal said.

"No, that's not correct," Lorena said with a mischievous smile. "It's not ma'am. It's pronounced L-o-r-e-n-a." She drawled the word out as though teaching him how to say it.

"Yes, ma'a—" Cal stopped himself, and Lorena frowned, pretending to be cross. "Yes, Lorena," Cal corrected himself.

"That's better," Lorena teased. Then, looking over at her uncle, she quipped, "I'll have him properly trained soon."

“I have no doubt you will, my dear,” her uncle replied, and then to Cal he added, “I suppose you’ve gathered by this time that my niece is a horse of a different color.”

“A right spirited filly, I would say,” Cal replied cheerily.

“You have a sharp eye and a perceptive mind then, young man,” said the uncle. “I take it you’ve already been subjected to my niece’s loquaciousness. I’ve often told her that her verbosity will be her undoing.”

“If the two of you,” Lorena spoke up, “are going to sit there and speak of me as though I were not here, I will simply have to remind you that I am.”

Without planning, her uncle and Cal responded in unison, “Yes, L-o-r-e-n-a,” to which everyone burst out in laughter, especially Lorena. Cal thought it was the loveliest laugh he had ever heard.

8

A Horse of a Different Color



IT WAS A COOL mountain morning. Cal was up before dawn, tending to his horse in the shed behind the stage station. “Easy there, old friend,” he said, calming the animal with a soft, gentle tone. He ran his hand over the horse’s shoulder, slightly swollen from yesterday’s collision with the bandit. “Is that hurting you?” He took the bottle of liniment Frank had given him, poured some on a rag, and rubbed it into the shoulder.

“There ya go. That oughta help. You know, Scout, I owe you. You’ve turned me into something of a hero. I tried to give you the credit, but they wouldn’t have it.” Scout nickered softly and leaned his head into Cal, seeming to enjoy the attention.

“So you talk to horses?” It was Miss McKenzie standing in the doorway.

“Reckon I do.” Cal continued rubbing the liniment on. “I talk to my horse and you’re the lady who talks to God – and interrogates Mormons. I guess we’re quite the pair.” Cal was peeved with her for being so preachy with him. Still, for reasons he didn’t understand, he found it impossible to stay annoyed in her presence.

“About that,” Lorena spoke soberly as she entered the small barn. “The first conversation we had – I want to apologize. I don’t want you to think...” She hesitated, considering how to continue. “I mean, I must have sounded sort of...what I’m trying to say is, I didn’t intend to offend you. It probably appeared, in fact, I am sure it appeared...it surely sounded...accusatory.”

“That’s all right,” Cal said. “Mormons are accustomed to persecution, which I can understand, as some of our ways appear strange to outsiders.”

“Oh my, the last thing I wanted to do was make you feel persecuted. The truth is, I think what we believe about God is most important, and I was sincere in wanting to know what you believed and why, but I am afraid I could have been more tactful. My uncle – my dear Uncle Henry – does caution me about my audacity, but I can’t help it. I care about these things.”

Lorena stepped closer and stroked the neck of Cal’s horse. “His name is Scout?”

“Yes. I raised him from a colt and broke him myself.”

“He’s a beautiful bay,” she complimented. “And smart too. He must be, for he knows how to defeat highwaymen and dangerous desperados!” She looked at him playfully.

“Yes, he’s my secret weapon.” Cal gave his horse a loving pat. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Of course, you may.” Her cheerful melodic voice gave Cal butterflies.

“When I asked why you came to this wild and untamed country, you said God told you to. What did you mean?”

“Well, there are many factors.” She hesitated and thought for a moment. “I believe God has a plan for my life, and as I prayed about it, I knew it was God’s will for me to come here.”

Cal was quiet for a moment before he answered. “Mormons have a prophet who shows us what God’s will is. So, do you have a prophet or someone who tells you what God wants?”

“No, of course not.” She stroked Scout’s satiny neck and admired the burnished copper color of his coat. “May I help you brush him down?”

“Sure. There’s a currycomb there on the wall.” Cal pointed.

“To answer your question, no, we don’t have a prophet and no one needs a prophet.” Lorena gently brushed Scout’s coat while she talked. “Anyone who knows Christ can learn how to discern the Lord’s will for themselves. We don’t need someone else to declare what God wants for us. Hebrews chapter one, verse one tells us that such prophets were only for Old Testament times. Today, under the New Covenant, they are replaced by the teachings of Jesus and His apostles, and by direction from the Holy Spirit within us.”

“How do you know all those scriptures off the top of your head?”

“I’ve been reading the Bible since I was a little girl. My mother says I have an amazing memory. I see something once and I don’t forget it.”

“You said God has a plan for your life. Do you believe God has a plan for everyone’s life?”

“No, just me. I’m special.” She gave Cal a mischievous grin. “Of course He has a plan for everyone.” Lorena looked up at Cal endearingly. He could hardly have described the sweetness of her expression. For some reason it reminded him of a childhood memory – the sweet maple syrup his mother used to make fresh from the tree. Lorena blushed and looked away.

She continued, “God is involved in all of our lives. Yours, mine, everybody’s. God’s plan was for you to be where you were yesterday to help us. I know that. I believe everyone we meet is put in our life by God’s purpose.”

“You sound like some sort of preacher.” Cal continued tenderly rubbing the liniment onto Scout’s shoulder.

“No, silly!” Lorena laughed. “Of course I’m not a minister. I’m just little ol’ me talking about what interests me. And that’s why I talked to you about what you believe as a Mormon. I try to always be aware that every acquaintance I make is someone who is important to God. I never knew if I would see you again, so I didn’t mince any words getting you to think about the ramifications of your faith.

“You matter to God. Therefore you matter to me. For all I know, you could be the reason God sent me out here or at least part of the reason. I’m sorry, but I can’t just sit around and talk about the weather. I prefer to contemplate things of consequence. And I know that God’s plan was for you to protect us yesterday. The Lord used you to save our lives.”

“Well,” Cal answered, “I don’t think that hombre would have killed anyone, leastways not on purpose. But he would have taken anything of value you and your Uncle Henry had.” He put the bottle of liniment away in his saddlebag. “But I savvy,” he continued, “you weren’t being brash and sassy. You said what you said because you really do care.”

“Precisely! Oh, you do understand! I knew if I could talk to you—”

“Well, then,” Cal interrupted with a wry grin. “I’m glad I decided not to let that bandit carry you off!”

“Oh! You incorrigible rascal!”

“We better go see if they have any breakfast rustled up for us,” Cal suggested.

“Yes, I do believe I smelled bacon and coffee when I came out past the fire.” She turned and rested her hand gently on Cal’s forearm, and when she spoke, her voice was smooth like silk. “Thank you for letting me explain myself. And thank you for what you did yesterday. I won’t forget.” Her eyes briefly met Cal’s steel-blue gaze. He found it hard to look away.

The eastern sky was brightening with predawn light as they exited the stable. Cal and Lorena walked together to the front of the stage station, where the cook was making breakfast. Cozied up at the warmth of the fire, they were joined by Frank and the rest of the passengers. Cal stole a glance at Lorena. Her face glowed in the firelight, her eyes reflecting the flames.

Frank addressed the group. “Today we head for the little settlement of Mayer. It used to be called Big Bug Station, but about seven years ago, Joseph and Sarah Mayer bought the stage stop and turned it into a little town called Mayer. Everyone eat hearty but do it as quick as you can. We’ve got over twenty miles to cover. We will have a short stop halfway at a place known as Antelope Station.”

After the stage was hitched to a fresh team, Frank hollered, “All aboard! Time to roll!” Cal was saddled up and ready. He headed down the road, and after the passengers boarded, the stage moved out behind him. Cal kept his eye on every shrub and tree for movement as they

proceeded, ensuring his presence would be evident to anyone watching the trail.

He was deep in thought while he rode. He reflected on Lorena and the things she had said. He considered her qualities – serious, caring, spiritual, intelligent, and bold, with a good sense of humor. Her uncle was right, he decided. She was a horse of a different color.

He thought about the moment in the stable when she laid her hand on his arm and he sensed her tenderhearted spirit. In that instant, a sensation he never felt before charged through him. He could not stop thinking about her. Cal had never in his life fallen in love. And now he didn't realize he was already falling.

9

Trouble on the Trail



AS THE DAY wore on, the harsh summer sun blazed unrelentingly, turning the rocky terrain into an oven. Cal pulled his hat low to shield his eyes from the sun as he kept a watchful eye on the stagecoach ahead. Although he was uncomfortable in the sweltering heat, he knew the passengers had it much worse. The jolting motion of the coach over the rough terrain was taking a toll on the already exhausted occupants.

Despite the fact that their route was slightly more forgiving than what they had already traveled, the weather had grown increasingly oppressive, leaving everyone parched and drained. To make matters worse, the dust kicked up by the team of horses swirled in great clouds,

billowing into the coach and choking the passengers. Last time they stopped for a brief rest, Cal noticed the pallor of Lorena's face and the exhaustion in her eyes.

They rolled along for another hour while the passengers endured the monotonous cadence of the rocking coach as it rattled over the rough and stony track. Interrupting Cal's thoughts, a sharp voice from among the passengers called out, urging the driver to rein in the horses. The stage slowed to a stop. The gray-haired uncle, ever helpful, stepped down and assisted Miss McKenzie from the stage.

It was not uncommon for the coach to stop for one reason or another, so Cal was not anticipating anything out of the ordinary. Cal swung off his horse and strode toward the stagecoach where Lorena stood in the hot sun. It felt good to walk and stretch after time in the saddle.

As Cal approached, he saw Lorena sway dizzily and reach out to the side of the coach to steady herself. Just as he reached her side she suddenly collapsed. He caught her just in time to cushion her fall to the dirt at the side of the road.

"Lord have mercy!" Uncle Henry rushed to her side. "What happened?"

"The heat is too much for her," Cal explained, as he knelt beside her. Cal's calm voice masked his worry. He gently picked her up and carried her to the shade on the other side of the coach. He knelt, setting her on the ground while cradling her head in his lap. Lorena's eyes were closed and her fair skin ashen. Cal felt her forehead.

"She's fainted from heat exhaustion. We must get her cooled down. Get the canteen from my horse," Cal instructed.

"I've got one right here," Uncle Henry said.

Cal took the canteen Henry handed him, poured some water into his hands, and sprinkled it on her

forehead. "Bring something to fan her with," he said quietly. Uncle Henry returned with a newspaper and fanned her while Cal wet her face and hair.

"I do pray she will be all right," her uncle worried. "I should have insisted we stop to rest sooner."

The other passengers exited the coach and gathered around, voicing their concern. Frank, the driver, set the brake and climbed down. "Oh, the dear girl," he said, while kneeling down to fan her with his hat.

Lorena's blue eyes fluttered open as Cal's fingers tenderly smoothed the water over her face and brow.

"Oh, I feel sick," Lorena moaned faintly. "My heart...my heart is racing."

"Easy there now. I got you." Cal's voice had the same calming inflection she had heard him use when treating his injured horse. "You've been overcome by the heat. Rest easy while we get you cooled down." Cal continued to gently stroke cool water over her cheeks and brow.

Lorena slowly revived and groggily apologized. "I'm sorry for being such a bother to everyone."

"Don't worry about it, my dear," Uncle Henry said with tender concern. "Perhaps we should get you back into the coach."

"I cannot. Please, no," Lorena implored. Looking up at Cal with pleading eyes, she begged, "Cal, help me..."

"Ma'am, I think—"

"I mean, help me up, please," she interrupted.

Cal assisted her to her feet as she leaned against the side of the stagecoach.

"I'm better now," Lorena said. "I don't know what came over me. Actually, I do. It is the constant motion of the coach, and it's so hot in there. And the dust. I must have

breathed in a bushel of it. I cannot get back in that awful contrivance.”

“I’m afraid there is no choice,” Frank interjected. “We had a late start so we mustn’t dally or we will not arrive before dark. We still have a few treacherous turns ahead, and we already had one rig overturn trying to run this stretch at night. We can rest a moment, but then we need to get a move on.”

“I will not get back into that miserable coach. I would rather walk the rest of the way.”

Uncle Henry protested. “My dear girl, have you taken leave of your senses? You can’t walk. Those shoes you’re wearing won’t last a mile. We will not leave you. You have to get back in. You heard the driver. We need to go now.”

Lorena's eyes flitted imploringly from her uncle to Cal. “I’m sorry. I can’t do it. I won’t do it.”

“Can you ride?” Cal asked.

“Ride? I’ve ridden every day since I was a child. If only I had a horse.”

Cal addressed her uncle. “I’ll put her on my horse. I’ll walk and lead her in. That way the stage can get there before dark.”

Before her uncle could answer, Cal was already helping Lorena onto Scout. “You can’t walk all the way while I ride like some royal princess,” she objected.

“Yes, I can. I’ve walked much farther many times, and my boots will hold up fine.” Cal took off his hat and put it on Lorena.

“I can’t take your hat too! I have a sun bonnet I can wear.”

“You’re not taking. I’m giving. And I’ve seen your bonnet. You need more shade than that can give. No

arguing now. Besides, you look right handsome in my hat.” Lorena would have laughed and thought of a smart answer, but she felt so miserable she could only manage a half-hearted smile.

“Mr. McKenzie, don’t worry,” Cal assured her uncle, “I’ll guard her with my life and see her safely to the stage stop. You have my word on it. We’ll see you there.”

After the passengers climbed in and took their seats in the coach, Frank hollered to Cal, “See you at Antelope Station. It’s only a few miles.” Frank slapped the reins across the horses, and the coach rumbled down the road in a cloud of dust.

Cal looked up at Lorena. “Are you sure you are feeling all right now – well enough to travel?”

“I’m tolerable. Please proceed.”

“Tell me to stop if you need to.”

With that, Cal began to lead them down the road. Lorena felt foolish for being so much trouble to everyone and being led along while Cal walked. Yet, she still felt sick and could do nothing about it. This is better, she thought. It was a relief to be away from the swirling dust and the interminable swaying and bouncing of the coach. She had to admit Cal’s solution had eased her suffering. Gradually the nausea passed and she began to revive.

It was rough and hilly country. They would descend into a ravine only to climb up a hill and then down into another rock-strewn arroyo, all the while gaining elevation. They ascended a long sloping ridge and stopped at the top where Cal helped her dismount. He handed her the canteen, insisting she drink more water. Silently they stood together, letting their eyes drink in the grand panorama before them.

Rolling desert hills stretched away to distant, forbidding mountains on the horizon. To Lorena, it seemed to be the most desolate land in the world, yet something

about its raw untamed nature stirred her blood. Rousing in its wildness and stimulating in its majestic vastness, this isolated high desert intoxicated Lorena. She closed her eyes and listened. The only break in the silence was the raucous call of two ravens overhead. Opening her eyes, she gazed upward, where a red-tailed hawk soared from a nearby pinnacle. Inhaling the fresh scent of juniper and sage, her spirit drank in the exhilarating primitive beauty of this land they called Arizona.

“Oh, Cal!” she whispered. She wanted to express what she felt but couldn’t find the words.

“I know,” he said. Words were not necessary.

Lorena climbed into the saddle and Cal led them down the trail. They descended the rocky ridge, ascended another hill and followed the track into a deep ravine. They approached a broad creek bed littered with rocks and sandy gravel. Several large mesquites formed a canopy above the draw. Captivated, Lorena looked up with inquiring eyes. “Cal, can we please stop and rest in the shade of those trees?”

“Most certainly we can. No need for us to arrive before dark. We are much safer than those in the stagecoach.”

“And a lot more comfortable!” added Lorena.

At the bottom of the ravine, Cal helped her down. “That sandy place under those mesquites looks like a pleasant spot. But don’t plop yourself down suddenly. Look around and make sure there are no rattlesnakes about. Normally they are not out during the day this time of year, but you can’t be too careful. I will give Scout some feed and join you in a moment.”

She looked up at him amiably. “Alright, and thank you. I’ll be cautious. Here’s your hat. I shan’t be needing it in the shade.”

“But you look so good in it.”

“Better, I dare say, than you would look in my bonnet! Now take your hat.”

After caring for his horse, Cal came over and sat beside Lorena. “It feels delightful to get out of the sun for a spell, doesn’t it?”

“Oh, yes, it does!” Lorena answered with enthusiasm. She reached up to adjust her hair which was fashionably secured at the crown of her head with hair pins and a tortoise shell comb. She undid her long tresses, loosening her hair and letting the graceful curls fall to her shoulders.

“I hope you don’t think me indelicate. My mother would have a conniption. I can hear her now, *‘Lorena, for goodness’ sake, tie up your hair! What will the neighbors think?’*”

Cal chuckled at Lorena’s imitation of her mother.

Lorena continued, “I know it’s the proper thing for a lady to have her hair done up when in public, but for the life of me, I cannot understand why women are to have long hair and then not ever let it show?”

Cal nodded. “I agree. You have lovely hair and there is no reason to hide it away.”

She took a long drink from the canteen. “I feel so much better. I do believe that stagecoach was going to be the death of me! I’ll never ride in one of those infernal contraptions again. I’m buying a horse the first chance I get!”

Cal lifted his hat skyward with a flourish. “*A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!*”

“Oh! You’ve read Shakespeare!” Lorena was delighted.

“Why yes, my dear. We do have schools in the West, you know.”

“Of course you do. I didn’t—”

“It’s all right. Truth be told, the reading of Shakespeare was not done in our school. My mother was a schoolteacher before she converted to Mormonism. She had some volumes in our home. I used to read them, that is, until a church elder confiscated them, saying we should be reading the words of our prophets instead of the silliness of Gentiles.”

Lorena gazed thoughtfully at Cal for a long quiet moment. She relished the intellectual discussions, but at times his handsome face distracted her thinking.

“What?” Cal asked.

“It’s just that for two people with such different backgrounds, we seem to have many things in common. It’s too bad that your mother—”

“*The lady doth protest too much, methinks,*” Cal interrupted with one of his favorite Shakespearean passages.

“Oh, stop it, clever boy!” Lorena teased.

Lorena brushed dust and sand from her dress. “Poor Uncle Henry,” she lamented. “I’m sure I gave him quite a fright, but nothing compared to the anguish he is going through now. He will be worried sick about leaving me with a stranger in the middle of the desert.”

“He needn’t worry. You’re in good hands.”

“Oh, I know I am.” Lorena sat up. Her lovely blue eyes searched Cal’s face. “I know you are a trustworthy man. I wouldn’t be here with you otherwise. And you always seem to know just what to do. Frank would have been in a fix without your capable help today on the side of that mountain. That was a terrifying predicament! And your idea to take me on your horse was quite astute. This was truly the only course of action, and I am quite refreshed now. You have saved me once again! And what’s more, I

needn't even be concerned for bandits when you're around." Lorena tilted her head sweetly and smiled at Cal.

"Oh, is that so?" Cal asked.

"Yes, that is so," Lorena declared sprightly.

"And why is that?"

"It is clear to me," she replied happily, "that if any bad men come around, you will simply shoo them away."

"Oh, is that a fact?"

"Yes, that is a fact."

"Shoo them away with a wave of my hand, as one does a fly?" Cal waved his hand as if swatting at an insect.

"Yes. That's right. You catch on fast."

"And supposin' they will not shoo?"

"Why, then you will run over them with your horse!" Lorena gave Cal a playful grin and batted her eyes. "And if that doesn't work, I suppose you will have to shoot them with your gun." She aimed her finger as if shooting a pistol. "But last I checked, you're an expert at running over outlaws, so shooting them probably won't be necessary."

"Yes ma'am! That's me, Cal Chandler, fly shooer, highwayman exterminator, and rescuer of damsels in distress – at your service, your highness." Cal removed his hat with a flourish, feigning a bow as he bent over, hat in hand.

"Oh, you are such a tease!"

"I believe you can dish the teasing out better than you take it, my dear!" Cal quipped back.

Lorena laughed and Cal chuckled, as he observed how her beautiful long eyelashes accented the nuances of her sentiments.

“The boys in Bon Air were a bit intimidated by me,” Lorena said, with feigned condescension. “But I do believe, in you I have met my match.”

“Bon Air?” Cal asked.

“Yes, Bon Air, Tennessee – the loveliest land in the world. That’s where I’m from. Bon Air means ‘good air.’ It’s on top of a mountain. But not mountains like here in the desert. This mountain has a top as spacious as a county, all covered with gently rolling hills, trees, meadows, and crystal-clear streams. It’s a little bit of heaven on earth.”

“I bet you miss it.” Cal offered her the canteen again.

“Oh, how do I!” She took a drink and handed the canteen back. “I would love to dangle my feet in one of the cool mountain streams of Bon Air right now. I’ve had enough desert dust to last a lifetime!”

“Did you live in Bon Air all your life?”

“No, I was born in Kentucky, but we moved to Tennessee after my father left the Army. We settled in Bon Air. It’s a coal mining town.”

“Your father is a coal miner?” Cal asked.

“Oh no, not at all. Colonel McKenzie – that’s what everyone calls my father – is no miner. Risking life and limb underground is not his calling, though he always said he respects the men who can do that.”

“So, your father is a military man, then?”

“Not anymore. He was a colonel in the Army and rode with the cavalry. But his real passion is not the Army. It’s horses. He resigned his commission and moved us to Bon Air because it is prime country for a horse ranch. Plenty of green grass and water and located where there is an excellent market for livestock.

“My father knew the best way to help the miners of Bon Air would be to provide them with quality horses and mules. And his military contacts were instrumental in landing a contract to sell animals to the Army. He always said, ‘Don’t worry about being wealthy. Just find a way to help others and supply what they need. The wealth will come along on its own.’ And he was right. It did.”

“Your dad sounds like a good man.”

“Oh, the best!” Lorena beamed. “And he was right about raising stock in Bon Air. It takes mules to pull the coal carts out of the mines. It requires horses or mules to haul the coal wagons to the trains. Bon Air was the perfect place to raise and sell livestock.

“If you think about it, the whole world revolves around horses. Mounted cavalry are the eyes and ears of an army on the move. Mules haul coal from the mines. Men on horses drive cattle to the stockyard where coal-fired trains take them to feed far-off cities. And right now, your horse is taking us to our destination. My father had a saying, *‘This nation may run on coal, but horse and rider are its very soul.’*”

Cal chuckled. “That is a great axiom.”

“Yes, it is,” agreed Lorena. “Horses are God’s gift to mankind. And the Bible says Jesus will return from heaven mounted on a white horse. I like that – horses in heaven! Indeed, heaven wouldn’t be heaven without horses. How sad and difficult life would be if there were no horses. They bear our burdens, help us with our work, take us where we please, and when we want to play, they will take us flying like the wind through a mountain meadow at full gallop. That is the best and freest feeling in the world!”

“*Hast Thou given the horse strength? Hast Thou clothed his neck with thunder?*” Cal quoted dramatically.

“Shakespeare?” Lorena queried. “No, it can’t be. Where is it from?”

“So, I know things thou knowest not of?” Cal gave her an impish grin.

“Oh! You are just full of vinegar and spice today,” Lorena scolded. “Now, stop teasing and tell me where it’s from.”

“It’s from the Bible, the book of Job, I believe. My father used to quote it.”

“I love it! Lorena twittered happily. “It’s my new favorite verse!”

“I’ve got a confession to make,” Cal said. “When I first met you, I mistook you for a city girl. I see now you are nothing of the sort.”

“Country girl extraordinaire, at your service.” Lorena feigned a curtsy and continued, “Kentucky born and Tennessee raised, leavin’ the city boys dazed!”

“I don’t doubt that for a minute, Miss McKenzie, you’d tie ’em in knots and leave ’em in a frenzy!”

“Oh, Cal! You are clever!” They laughed together, and Cal thought how good it was that they were able to talk easily with each other.

“Poor Uncle Henry,” bewailed Lorena, “He must be worried sick about me. I know him. He will berate himself for leaving me with you and worry himself to death. We really should be hurrying on. But I cannot have you walking. I know horses as well as I know myself, and your horse can carry us both, so don’t tell me he can’t. I insist we ride together.”

Cal pondered her words. “Well, that would put us in sooner. Alright, but only if you are sure you don’t mind riding double.”

“My mother would say it would give an improper appearance to folks,” Lorena opined. “But I don’t care. What do appearances matter in the middle of nowhere where there is no one to appear to? I don’t want you walking another step on my account. You must ride with me. I won’t have it any other way.”

They walked over to Scout. Cal launched into the saddle and helped Lorena up behind him.

“Comfortable?” Cal asked.

“Oh yes, quite. I’m at home on horseback.”

They rode on as the shadows grew longer. Soon the sun was setting behind the Bradshaw Mountains to the west. The heat of the day was over, now replaced by the refreshing evening chill of the high desert. Cal felt Lorena’s warmth as she snuggled up close behind him.

If Lorena’s velvety touch on his arm that morning in the stable had been thrilling, the intoxication of her perfume and the feeling of her arms around his waist was pure ecstasy. For weeks he had suffered from the loneliness of losing his home and family. Now he was experiencing the most comfortable companionship and joyful camaraderie he had ever known. He didn’t want it to end. Not ever.

He didn’t know if she felt the same. He hoped so. But what could he ever be to her? They came from different worlds. Had she not made that clear when she asked him at their first meeting, “How many wives do you have?”

Still, he couldn’t help but begin to imagine a life with someone like Lorena. Yet he realized if she knew his dark secret, if she found out he was an outlaw, she would want nothing more to do with him.

She must never find out. But sooner or later, if they were together, she would. His past would catch up with him someday. He knew it. So how could it ever work? He

berated himself for imagining a future with someone he had just met. How silly I am, he thought.

Cal turned the question over in his mind as they rode along in silence. Finally, he reached a conclusion of which he was certain. The one thing he was beginning to want more than anything in the world could not be. He could never be with Lorena or anyone like her, and that realization pierced his soul with profound sadness.

Antelope Station



THE WESTERN SKY above the Bradshaw Mountains was aflame with the setting sun's fiery red glow. Wispy clouds, tinged with the pink and gold of a spectacular Arizona sunset, crowned the blue-gray peaks to the west.

“I would have never thought a desert land could hold such beauty,” Lorena remarked as she gazed at nature’s dramatic display. Riding double on Scout, they followed the wagon road toward Antelope Station. “So tell me,” she asked, “I’ve talked on and on about me. I want to know about you. Where are you from?”

Cal’s heart beat faster. There it was – the trouble he had worried over. Poses were scouring the countryside for anyone suspicious from the Pima area where the gold heist had occurred. What should he say? He didn’t want it getting around where he was from.

“I took the train from Willcox, Cal said. “I worked in a silver mine in the mountains north of there. It was an apprentice position, so once I figured I’d learned enough, I headed up here to try to get hired on at one of the large

mines near Prescott.” That was the truth, just not the whole truth. He hoped it would suffice. But then, it came.

“Where do you hail from? Where is home?” Lorena asked.

He could not bring himself to lie to her, no matter the cost. “I’m from Pima,” he said.

“Not being from here, I have no idea where that is.”

“It’s north of Willcox,” Cal replied. “It’s a Mormon settlement. Farm and ranch country.” He decided to change the subject. The less she knew about him, the better. He knew how to distract her. “I gather from what you have told me you are quite religious. What church do you belong to?”

“Religious? Which church?” She repeated the questions rhetorically. “I prefer to think of it another way. I belong to Christ. Which church one joins doesn’t matter much, so long as one attends and the teachings come from the Bible. But to answer your question, my grandfather was Plymouth Brethren, but we attended a Baptist church in Bon Air. I guess you might say we are basic Bible Christians.”

“That’s different from my upbringing,” Cal said. “I was taught being part of the right church is everything. All my life I’ve been told there is only one true church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is it.”

“Well...” Lorena paused and considered. “There is only one true church, but it isn’t Mormon, Baptist, or anything else. The one true church isn’t a human institution. Christ’s church is built by Christ, and it is much grander than what man can put together. It consists of all Christian believers from every Christian church in the world. Think about it – on Judgment Day, God isn’t going to go look to see what the sign on the front of your church said, as if that even matters. Judgment will be based on whether one knows Christ, not on what church was attended.”

She continued. “Jesus said, ‘I will build my church.’ He didn’t say someone else would build it. Not Joseph Smith, not anyone, only Jesus. And He builds it by changing people from the inside out. Those who repent their sins and come to Christ are born again and added to His church. Then they are forgiven and assured of being in heaven when they leave this world.”

Cal’s plan had worked. He had Lorena discussing something besides his past. He certainly didn’t relish a religious discussion. Indeed, religion was the last thing he wanted to think about. Plus, he was not accustomed to people bluntly discussing their religious beliefs. Lorena’s zealous preachiness sometimes made him uneasy, though he would never have admitted that to her. Nevertheless, this was better than dealing with questions that probed his personal history.

They rode on in silence while Cal considered her words. These were new ideas for him, and some of what she said caught his interest. After a time he said, “I was always told we had to obey and follow the church’s ordinances before we have a glimmer of hope of going to heaven. But it sounds like you are saying a person can be forgiven in a moment without earning it.”

“That is precisely what I am telling you. No matter what we have done, God can forgive us instantly if we repent, ask for forgiveness, and trust Jesus to save us. He shed his blood and died on the cross to take the punishment for us. If we put our faith in Him and believe He rose from the dead, somehow, his blood washes away our sins.”

Cal’s mind went to his criminal past. He felt doubly condemned. He was not only guilty by the laws of the land but he was an apostate according to his church’s standards. “What if we have done something terrible?” Cal asked. “God cannot forgive everything. Our prophet Brigham

Young taught that some sins are so bad that only the shedding of one's own blood can save a person. Brigham Young declared that Christ's blood won't wash all sins away, and being in rebellion against the Mormon church is one of those unforgivable sins."

"Cal," Lorena stated emphatically, "don't be offended, but what you were told is a lie from the pits of Hell. Jesus will forgive anyone who turns to Him, no matter what they've done. It is written in the Scripture, 'A bruised reed He will not break and a smoldering wick He will not quench.' God forgives anyone who comes to Him through Christ. Are you familiar with the story of the thief on the cross?"

"No," Cal answered, "I don't believe I am."

"When Jesus was crucified," Lorena explained, "two criminals were crucified next to him. One expressed sorrow, saying he deserved to suffer and die because of his sins. I don't know what he had done, but it must have been some grievous act for him to think he merited such a torturous death. Nevertheless, the Bible says he showed his faith in Jesus, and the Lord promised they would be together that day in paradise.

"So, if God can save someone as evil as that, and do it instantly, without that person doing any good works, then He can and will save anyone who turns to Christ. And Cal," Lorena's soft voice was filled with sincerity, "you need to think about whether you have ever turned to Christ in repentance and put all of your trust in Him. Please think about it. Those who trust in their church for salvation are lost. Only Jesus can save a soul."

"There is something I would like to clear the air on," Cal said quietly. "I hate polygamy. Always have. I saw it destroy my mother's life. Recently I have found reason to doubt many things I've been taught. The Mormon way is

all I've known, so I appreciate you sharing your perspective with me."

"You're welcome, Cal. I appreciate your interest." She suddenly squeezed his free hand and exclaimed, "Cal, I see lights up ahead! Could that be Antelope Station?"

"It should be." He peered into the dusk. "Frank said it was only a few miles, and we've come a good way." As they drew nearer, they began to make out corrals and some outbuildings through the darkness.

Then came a call. "Thank God! There they are!" It was Lorena's uncle, who came running to them.

"Uncle Henry!" Lorena cried happily. "I'm safe and sound! Cal took excellent care of me. My hero again."

"I was so worried," Uncle Henry said anxiously. "I was seeing about borrowing a buckboard to come for you."

Lorena noted the stress in her uncle's voice and she felt bad that he had worried so on her account. "I'm all right, Uncle Henry," she consoled. "All is well."

"I am so relieved, my dear. Come inside and enjoy some hot food and a warm fire. The stage is staying here for the night instead of going on to Mayer, so no rush. There's a small hotel and plenty of rooms with comfortable beds. I want you to get lots of rest. Cal, you can put your horse in the corral across the way. You'll find water and hay. I'll see to it they bring some grain."

"Much obliged," Cal said. Lorena deftly slid off the horse, and Cal dismounted. Uncle Henry put his arm protectively around Lorena and urged her inside.

Turning to Cal, she said, "Cal, please join us for supper."

"I'll be along directly," he said, walking his horse to the corral.

Cal listened to their joyful words as uncle and niece entered the hotel. He faintly overheard Lorena's voice through the night air: "Oh Uncle Henry," she chided, "Don't be a silly goose. You needn't have fretted. He is as honorable and trustworthy a man as any I've ever met."

Cal unsaddled Scout and led him to the watering trough. As he stroked Scout's coppery neck, he considered Lorena's words. 'Honorable and trustworthy,' she had said. If she only knew, he thought to himself. She had spent the afternoon alone in the company of an outlaw, who was right then being hunted by the law, the Army, and the Mormons.

He stood in the corral for some time, contemplating what Lorena told him that day. Long ago an outlaw had hung next to Christ on a cross, and the Lord redeemed and forgave him – a man who didn't belong to a church, was never baptized, and had lived sinfully. Yet, turning to Jesus had saved him. Could it be as simple as that? It would be wonderful if it were so. Cal pondered the matter and wondered, was God still in the business of saving outlaws?



He crossed the dusty street, stepped onto the boardwalk, and entered the Antelope Station hotel. The amber glow of lamplight revealed several tables. Lorena, her Uncle Henry, another passenger, and Frank the driver were seated at a table beside a wood-burning stove that was warming the room.

"Cal! Come over and join us," Uncle Henry called out. "Yes," Lorena chimed in. "Grab that chair and bring it over." She slid her chair to the side, making room for Cal. He pulled a chair to the table and sat down next to her.

"Young man," Uncle Henry beamed, "I want to thank you for caring for my precious niece. I am indebted to you. And I must beg you to overlook my doubts about leaving her with you. Please understand, I've been charged by her

father with seeing her safely to Prescott, but I can see now I needn't have had any concern."

Frank chimed in, "Chandler, you can ride shotgun for me anytime. We can use people who think on their feet and handle men as well as they do their horse. Let me know if you are interested in working for the stage line. I can put in a word for you at the stage office in Prescott. I'm sure they would put you on."

"Thanks, Frank," Cal replied, and then to Henry he said, "Your concern was understandable. Think nothing of it."

"I told you he was true blue," Lorena said, smiling while giving Cal's hand a quick squeeze.

"Evening, folks." A tall, distinguished-looking gentleman with a substantial but well-groomed mustache strode over to their table. "Name's John Henry Cordes. Welcome to Cordes Station. I'm afraid at this late hour all we have to serve is chicken vegetable soup."

"I think I speak for us all," Lorena's uncle replied, "when I say that we're all too hungry to be particular. We'll have soup all around and put it on my bill."

"Cordes Station?" Lorena was puzzled. "I thought this was Antelope Station?"

"Yes ma'am," the gentleman said. "It is, or rather it was. A feller by the name of Otto Bolin owned it before me, and he called it Antelope Station on account of Antelope Creek bein' right out the back door. Anyway, he died a while back and—"

"I'm sorry to hear that," Lorena interjected. "Did he fall ill?"

"Well, little miss, falling ill would be the polite way of putting it. He got into a fracas with one of his drunken

customers. The man stabbed poor Otto in the heart. He felt mighty poorly until he died the following day.”

“Oh!” Lorena, speechless and appalled, covered her mouth.

“John Henry!” An attractive blonde-haired lady wearing an apron bustled over to their table, her face flushed with displeasure. “John Henry, how many times do I have to tell you not to tell that horrid story to our patrons!”

“You can always tell when my wife is displeased with me,” Mr. Cordes declared with a rascally smile, “for I cease to be ‘dear’ and become ‘John Henry.’ ‘Tis a miracle of metamorphosis. Meet my affectionate wife, Lizzie.”

“John Henry!” Mrs. Cordes was apoplectic.

“Lizzie, our guests will all have a bowl of your delicious soup.” Mr. Cordes turned back to his guests. “You will find it the best soup you have ever had. No one can cook like my Lizzie.”

Mrs. Cordes hurried off, muttering things which, if heard, would not bear repeating. Affable John Henry continued enjoying the sound of his own voice. “You’ll see I have no bar. Not smart servin’ hard liquor in the middle of nowhere. Food and fodder are all you’ll get here, though I confess, I do like my beer and cheese at ten every morning, our custom from the old country.” Turning toward Lorena, he said, “My apologies ma’am if I’ve offended thy sensibilities. I’m afraid life in this wild territory has rendered my manners a bit rough around the edges.”

“No offense taken, Mr. Cordes.” Lorena smiled sweetly. “I perceive from your accent you were not born in America. Tell us, how did you come to this land and what circumstances brought you to become owner of this station?”

“A perceptive one, you are, and I thank you for asking. I’ll be happy to tell ya, miss. I hail from Germany. Left the fatherland, in ’69 it was, and arrived in New York. It was there—”

“*Sprechen Sie Deutsch, Herr Cordes?*” Lorena asked.

“*Ja! Und Sie auch?*” Mr. Cordes was jubilant.

“*Nur ein bisschen, Herr Cordes,*” she replied, while Cal looked at her with surprise. Lorena continued in English, “I’m afraid that exhausts my lexicon of German. I studied it a bit in school. Languages have always fascinated me.”

Mr. Cordes beamed with appreciation. “Likewise with me! I was learning the English before I left Germany. ’Tis so sweet to hear my native tongue spoken. Brings back memories, it does, and I thank thee for it, *sehr geehrtes Fräulein*. Now, as I was saying, New York is where I met my Lizzie. We both being from Germany, and feeling like a pair of lost pennies tossed into this new land, we took to each other right off. But alas, I was a poor immigrant with no prospects and nary two nickels to rub together.

“Leaving New York, I came west to seek my fortune so as to be worthy of asking for the hand of my darling, *Mein Schatz Lizzie*. I worked a time in Prescott, and when you see the courthouse there, know that I myself mixed the mud for the bricks of that majestic building. After that I procured a burro and prospected for gold all over the Bradshaw Mountains.

“Not finding my El Dorado, I ended up working at the mill in Gillett. Figuring I was as rich as I was ever to be, I wrote the love of my life to join me there. Thanks be to God, she was sufficiently in love to make the daring journey. But our future was nearly undone when she got off the train here in the territory and laid her eyes upon an Indian, naked except for a breechcloth. *Mein Gott!* It gave her such a scare she ran back into the train!” John Henry

slapped his knee and let go a hearty laugh. “Lucky for me, love overcame fear. So me and my Lizzie, we settled in at Gillett.

“But I desired more for my family than what toil in the mill could provide. My ship finally came in when my co-worker, Augustus, told me his murdered brother, Otto, had left him Antelope Station, which he wanted to sell. He agreed to hold it for me while I gathered the money. I worked the day shift at the mill and tended bar at night for a year to save up to buy this place.

“Anyway, to answer your first question. I applied for a post office under the name Antelope Station, and can you believe it, there’s already an Antelope Station here in the territory. So, I named the place Cordes, after yours truly. But all the stage drivers still call it by its old name. No matter to me, so long as they keep bringing me customers.

“This is where the good Lord has planted us, and we’re raising our family here. I pray our descendants live in this lovely spot for ages to come.”²⁸ I’ve found my El Dorado: it’s my precious Lizzie and the kids you’ll see scampering about. That’s real gold, and we call it Cordes, but you can call it Antelope Station if you prefer.”

“Thank you, Mr. Cordes,” Lorena said. “I’m confident that’s a history lesson we won’t soon forget. I’ll be happy to call it Cordes. I’m glad for you. The Lord has brought good out of evil and blessed you for your thriftiness and hard work. Yet, I do hope Otto’s killer met justice.”

²⁸ Four generations of Cordes family members have lived at Cordes. Though the Cordes store has long since closed, some of John Henry Cordes’ descendants still live on the land. John Henry Cordes and Elise (Lizzie) had seven children. John passed away in 1919 and Lizzie died in 1929. The late Cathy Cordes, great, great granddaughter of John and Lizzie, recounted some of her family history to the author.

“*Ja, ja!*²⁹ They caught him alright. He did four years in Yuma prison for the killing and was then released. Not sure that should be called justice, though.”

“I should think not!” Lorena said.

“Well, *mein Fraülein*, you must understand that was seven years ago. They weren’t as civilized in these parts as we are today.”

“Hear, hear,” Frank chirped, holding up his cup of coffee. “Let us toast to civilization in these parts, such as it is!”

“You all drink to that,” John Henry said. “I’ll venture into the kitchen and check on your soup. No worries about me – I know when to tread lightly around my Lizzie.” He winked at them and marched away.

Cal put his hands over the wood stove and sleepily enjoyed the warmth while the others engaged in general conversation. It had been a long day. He was finding Jessica Lorena McKenzie to be full of surprises. He admired her outgoing nature and liked how she related with people, always showing a sincere interest in their lives, even when they were total strangers. She had been that way with him when they met.

His pensive moment was shattered when he heard someone mention something about a holdup of a gold shipment. “Near Pima is where it happened. Right here in the territory,” Tom, another passenger, was saying. “I read about it in this here newspaper.” He waved a paper at them. “The Army was moving some gold for payment to the men at Fort Thomas, and they were ambushed as they came through the mountains. The soldiers guarding the gold put up quite a fight, but they got massacred. They just shot them poor boys to pieces.”

²⁹ Ja, ja! German: “yes, yes!” It is pronounced “Ya, ya!”

Lorena looked horrified and lamented, “Oh, how terrible! Such barbarism!”

“Do they know who did it?” asked Henry. “Have they caught them?”

“They’re hot on their trail,” Tom answered. “It says in this paper there was a dozen or more of ‘em. They made off with about thirty thousand in gold. The Army and local law officers have launched the biggest manhunt in the territory’s history. They’re offering a fifteen hundred dollar reward. Anyone with information can make a pile of dough.” Cal swallowed hard and pretended to be uninterested.

Tom continued, “They ambushed the Army and caught them in a crossfire. Eight soldiers were badly wounded – arms and legs shattered, and a couple fellows got shot through the middle.”

“Oh dear!” Lorena’s voice quavered. “How terrible. What a lawless land – people stabbed and shot!” She shook her head in astonishment.

“It was a squad of black soldiers that were guarding the gold shipment,” Tom explained. “They put up quite a fight and held off the robbers for nearly an hour. The amazing thing is that the soldier shot through the belly stayed in the fight and was returning fire as if his terrible wound didn’t bother him. Just incredible. But I don’t see no way he can live. Never seen anyone that’s gutshot do anything but die a slow and painful death.”

“I can’t fathom such wicked callousness,” Lorena said with sadness. “What evil and twisted people these are, doing such horrid things to others! And just for money!”

Cal felt his face flush in shame. He looked down, trying to hide his feelings. His thoughts condemned him. He was one of those “evil and twisted people” Lorena was talking about. She would surely hate him if she ever found out what he had done.

That night, alone in his hotel room, he tossed and turned. The image of Jeff Whitlock's face, the wounded Mormon boy that the band had murdered, was continually before him. He could not forget the boy's cries for help or stop seeing the agony on his contorted face. He also thought of the terrible wounds inflicted on the desperate soldiers who had fought so bravely.

The horrible gun battle had lasted interminably long. So much blood, suffering, and death – and he had been a part of it. Who was he supposed to hate for drawing him into this mayhem? Gilbert Webb, the Mormon leader who coerced him into it? His own religion? But he knew who he hated the most. Himself.

He contemplated his situation. He was being hunted by the Army and every law officer in the territory. Anybody who suspected him would be eager to report him and collect fifteen hundred dollars. Lorena knew he was from the area. Would she begin to be suspicious he was involved?

If any Mormon robbers were arrested, they might tell who the others were. For all he knew, his name had already been reported. Things could not be any worse, Cal thought. But the following day, he would find out they could be.

A Horse for Lorena



WHEN THEY GATHERED for breakfast the next morning Tom was bursting to share the most recent update on the holdup of the Army Payroll. “They got ’em!” Tom announced when the other passengers were seated. “The information I had last night was from an old newspaper. This morning I got my hands on a recent one. They’ve arrested seven people. Turns out the robbers were all Mormons from the local community of Pima. Several of them were positively identified by the soldiers. The bandits were quite brazen. They didn’t even bother to wear masks.”

“That’s good they caught them,” Cal said, trying to appear only mildly interested while his insides twisted in apprehension. He was alarmed by all this, and he also wondered why Lorena was not at the table with her uncle. Had she heard about this? “I guess things will calm down now,” Cal added, trying hard to appear unperturbed. “I know people have been worried the lawlessness would interfere with the territory becoming a state.”

“Oh, things aren’t calmed down at all!” Tom seemed pleased with himself to be the purveyor of the latest news. “If anything,” he continued gladly, “the manhunt has intensified. They believe there were twelve to fifteen members of the gang. They’re still hunting the others. And the Mormons of the area are having a fit, screaming discrimination. They locked up about half the people involved, including the ringleader, a Mormon named Gilbert Webb. And get this, he’s the mayor of Pima! There’s a great fuss over it.

“It’s turned into a partisan fiasco with all the politicians choosing sides. The Republican newspapers are calling for justice, and the Democrat papers are screaming this is an unjust persecution of Mormons. It turns out this Webb guy is well-connected politically and has some influential friends in the Democratic Party. And the leading actor in this circus is the presiding judge, William Barnes, who just so happens to be a friend and former business partner of Gilbert Webb. And as if that ain’t shenanigans enough, the primary investigator who arrested Webb is Marshal Meade, Judge Barnes’ avowed enemy!”

“How true the proverb is,” Uncle Henry added sagely, “*A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom to pervert the ways of justice.* The less my niece hears of this lawlessness, the better. She is already thinking the Arizona Territory is too wild for civilized folk.”

“Oh, it gets crazier,” Tom said. “Judge Barnes ordered that Webb be released, but then he was re-arrested by a different marshal. Another judge directed that he be held under a \$15,000 bond. But then the matter went back to Judge Barnes, who significantly reduced the bond and freed Webb again! Now Webb has hired some high-dollar lawyers to defend the whole lot of ’em.”

From the start, when Cal saw that Lorena was not at breakfast, it gave him an uneasy feeling in the pit of his

stomach. As others at the table listened to Tom recounting the latest news, Cal leaned over to Lorena's uncle and asked quietly, "Is Miss McKenzie feeling all right today? I don't see her this morning?"

"Oh, I'm sorry," Henry apologized. "I forgot. She asked me earlier to tell you she wanted to speak with you. Last I saw, she was headed for the horse corral."

"Never keep a lady waiting," Cal said, pushing his plate away and getting up from the table.

His calm demeanor was a façade to hide the trepidation in his heart. As he walked down the street to the corral, many questions assailed his mind. Had Webb or any others who were arrested given up his name? What did Lorena want to talk with him about? Did she know this latest news that the bandits were local Mormons from around Pima, where she knew he had lived? Did she suspect he was one of the robbers?

He found her leaning against the corral fence. "Isn't he gorgeous?" She smiled joyously as she gazed admiringly at a spotted horse in the corral. Cal was watching her more than the horse. He took in her lovely smile and relished how the sun danced on her hair as it blew in the wind.

"That is a magnificent horse. Your uncle said you wanted to talk to me."

"Yes, I certainly do. What do you think?"

"Think? About what?"

"Haven't you heard the news?"

"Well, I..."

"Didn't my uncle tell you?"

"All he said was that you wished to speak with me."

"So you don't know the latest development?"

Cal was sweating. With a lump in his throat, he asked, “You mean about the robbery?”

“No. Of course not. Didn’t he tell you I am buying a horse today?”

“No. He only said you wanted to talk to me.”

Lorena sighed. “I guess he’s getting forgetful. So what do you think about him and me?”

“About you and who?”

“The horse, you silly goose,” Lorena laughed.

“He’s magnificent.”

“You already said that.” She gave Cal a perky smile. “I am asking, what do you think about him for me. I’m going to buy him.” Her eyes sparkled with delight.

“Oh really?”

“Yes, really! I said I was going to procure a horse as soon as possible. No more stagecoach for me. I asked Mr. Cordes about him, and he’ll sell him. He says he’s well broke, has a smooth gait, and can run like the wind. That’s why he calls him Tornado, but just Tory for short.

“Anyway, he will sell him with a saddle and bridle if I want him. He apologized that he didn’t have a sidesaddle to sell me but I told him that a regular riding saddle suits me to a T. Oh, how my mother used to scold me for riding astride! She was forever telling me what was proper and what was not. Will you take a quick ride with me while I see how he handles?”

“Sure.” Cal could see that Lorena was in good spirits and he was greatly relieved she did not seem concerned about the latest robbery news. But perhaps she had not heard yet. What would her reaction be when she did? “Do you want some help saddling up?” he asked.

“No, I can handle that,” Lorena said while ducking through the fence into the corral. “Why don’t you get your horse and meet me back here? We don’t have much time before the stage leaves.”

“Okay, see you shortly.”

Cal headed to the corral across from the hotel. He felt better, seeing that Lorena didn’t seem to suspect him. At least she didn’t yet, Cal thought as he saddled up. If she did have any doubts about him, she wasn’t letting it be known. He trotted over on Scout to the other corral, where Lorena was leading her horse into the roadway. Placing her left foot into the stirrup, she sprang nimbly into the saddle.

“Shall we?” she asked cheerily.

“Lead the way,” he answered.

Riding side by side down the road, Lorena turned to Cal, her voice showing her happiness. “So far, so good. He is smooth. I can’t stand a horse that jars your insides.”

“I’ve never seen such markings on a horse before,” Cal said.

“Unusual, isn’t he?” She patted Tory’s strong neck. “I’ve seen only one other like him. The breed is called Appaloosa, coming from the name of the Palouse River. They were bred by the Nez Perce Indians, who only allowed their best stock to reproduce, so they had some superb horses. The Army obtained most of them in ’76 when they confiscated the tribe’s herds after the Nez Perce War.”

“Did they breed them for their color?” Cal inquired.

“Yes, and for other good qualities. Doesn’t he have an interesting coat? Many Appaloosas have all these spots like Tornado does. And so many have a roan coat, the mix of dark and white hairs, like he has. I think he is so pretty!”

Not nearly as pretty as you, Cal thought, as he watched Lorena deftly handling her horse. She appeared as much at home in the saddle as if she were in a rocking chair. “You are quite impressive,” he said. “I hope you know that.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Last night you were speaking in German. Today you are explaining military history and rare horse breeds while expertly handling an unfamiliar horse. How did you get to be so talented?”

“That’s easy,” Lorena tittered. “It’s because I was born at a very early age!”

“Oh, were you now!” Cal laughed with her.

“You forget, my father was a colonel in the cavalry, and he’s a horse breeder. He had one of these Appaloosas. He wanted to breed them, but he could never find another one. When I tell him I have one, he will be green with envy.”

“I wonder if this one is Indian-broke,” Cal said.

“Indian-broke? What’s that?”

“You mean I know something you don’t?” Cal grinned. “Indians train their horses to be accustomed to the rider mounting from the right. Of course, white men know the only proper way to mount a horse is from the left.”

Lorena laughed out loud at Cal’s satirical statement. “That is silly, isn’t it, to think that there is only one proper side to train a horse to accept a rider from.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Indian-broke,” Lorena repeated. “I’ve learned something new. We don’t have so many Indians in Tennessee as y’all have here. I suppose that’s why I’m not familiar with the term. But it’s been over twenty years since the Nez Perce lost their Appaloosas, and from looking at the teeth of this one, I’d say he’s no more than five years

old. He's a descendant, so I suspect he's not Indian-broke. He gave me no trouble mounting from the left."

"He's plenty of horse." Cal studied the Appaloosa. "I would estimate him to be at least sixteen hands.³⁰ I bet he can fly like the wind."

"Let's find out," Lorena challenged him as she loosened the reins and nudged him with her heels. The horse broke into an easy lope. As Cal caught up, she gave her mount another soft kick and felt Tory's power as he launched forward into a fast gallop.

"Yee-Ha!" she shouted with glee as she flew down the road. She pulled the big horse to a quick stop, and as Cal trotted up, she beamed joyfully. "Let's go back. I've got to close the deal and make him mine!"

"It's clear to me," Cal said as they rode back to the station, "that you know your way around horses."

"That's one of the advantages of being raised on a horse ranch," she said as she urged Tory into a slow lope. "Now you don't have to be a lone outrider," she yelled back at Cal as he was catching up. "You'll have my company," she called out with a happy grin, "But just remember, running down outlaws is your department!"

"Yes ma'am," Cal replied with a smile, but inside he wondered how long he could keep her from finding out she was riding with an outlaw.

³⁰ A horse's height is measured in "hands," from the ground to the highest point of the withers, one hand being four inches. A horse sixteen hands and two inches would be described as a sixteen-two.

12

Outriders



THE FOLLOWING DAY a new team was hitched to the coach. As everyone prepared to leave, Frank addressed the group.

“Listen up. A few words before we head out. It’s just a short little run today. Only eight miles to Big Bug Station. We’ll get in early and spend the night, so it will be an easy day for all. But tomorrow we are running the last twenty-five miles into Prescott, so be ready to start early.” Looking at Cal, he said, “We’re in the flatlands now, and we got no reason to expect any trouble. We’ve never been held up in this part of the route, so don’t feel you must stay close and eat our dust. We’ll see you at the station.”

The passengers boarded the stage, Frank climbed up on his seat, and the coach rolled out. Lorena and Cal followed.

Lorena was lighthearted and thrilled with her new horse. Cal still felt apprehensive that she would ask for more details of his life, so once again, he started the conversation with questions of a religious nature. He knew she would have plenty to say on the matter and perhaps not think to ask any more about his past. This was not entirely disingenuous, for he did have some sincere questions. Although Cal had determined he was done with his parents' religion, he was finding it difficult to put it out of his mind.

"Lorena," he began, "I am troubled by some things that I would like to talk about with you."

Lorena reined her horse closer alongside Cal and smiled kindly at him. "I'll be happy to listen," she said.

"According to my parents' religion," Cal continued, "I'm under God's condemnation for leaving the Mormon Church. Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde said that those who did not obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question, should have their throats cut from ear to ear.³¹ Prophet Brigham Young said that apostates from Mormonism become angels of the devil and are sent to the bottomless pit.³²

"Although that is troubling, I have seen too much within that church to simply believe as I used to. Yet, these teachings have been ingrained into me from my youth. I have to settle these matters one way or another in my mind. I have to find the truth. So, let me ask you, do you believe the Bible is accurate and trustworthy?"

"Absolutely, I do," Lorena replied. "The Bible is God's word, and as such, it is without error. Jesus and his apostles made numerous statements showing they trusted the

³¹ Sidney Rigdon letter to Apostle Orson Hyde, October 21, 1844, in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, December 4, 1844. See also Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, p. 94

³² Prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, v. 8, p. 179

Hebrew scriptures implicitly. If it was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me.”

Cal thought momentarily, pondering her words. They were riding across level terrain, a good place for a deep discussion. The horses ambled side by side, their heads nodding with the rhythm of their walk. Cal continued, “And you don’t believe it was altered down through the centuries?”

“No, I don’t. Jesus said his words would never pass away. Never means never. If the Bible was corrupted and lost for a time, then Jesus was wrong to trust it and wrong to say his words would never pass away. I choose to trust what Jesus trusted and to believe what Jesus said.”

“That’s a valid point,” Cal said. “I’ve always been taught the Bible became corrupted, and God gave a new revelation to Joseph Smith to restore the truth. But I can see what you mean. That would contradict what Jesus said.”

“That’s right, Cal. And Isaiah 8:20 says, *‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’* In Jude 1:7 we are admonished to *‘remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.’* This command is also given in 2nd Peter. Of course, that is what the New Testament is. It is those words spoken beforehand by the apostles.

“Not once does the Bible ever say to look for new apostles or new revelations. Rather, the Bible says repeatedly to hold tight to what they had already been taught and to watch out for false apostles and teachers who disagreed with what the Scripture teaches.

“For example, in Jude 1:3 we are told to *‘defend the faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints.’* Now how can the faith be once and for all delivered if new

prophets are going to be coming to deliver it over and over again?”

“Whew!” Cal exclaimed. “You have an incredible memory to remember all those scriptures. You’ve given me a lot to think about. I haven’t studied the Bible closely. Since I was taught it was inaccurate, I didn’t see the point in paying attention to it. I was taught specific passages from it, ones that seemed to support what the Book of Mormon teaches, but as far as reading it daily or in depth, I’ve never done that.”

“I’ve been studying it all my life,” Lorena said. “Oh, that reminds me – Let’s stop a minute. I have something for you.” They halted and dismounted while Lorena got something out of her saddlebag. “Here you go.” She stepped close to Cal and handed him a small package. “It’s a New Testament. I recommend you read a little bit of it every day. Start with the book of John and read forward from there.”

“Thanks.” Cal removed the wrapping paper and held the testament in his hands. “I’ll start reading it. That is very thoughtful of you.” Cal looked down to see Lorena’s lovely, big blue eyes gazing up at him. Cal was finding her irresistibly beautiful.

“It’s the least I can do after all you’ve done for me.” She put her hands on his while he held the Bible. “You know, you’re my guardian angel.” Then, quickly stretching up on her tip-toes, she kissed Cal on the cheek. Cal was undone but hid it best he could.

“We better go,” she said excitedly. “They’re leaving us behind!”

“Right!” Cal said breathlessly.

Lorena sprang into the saddle. “Race you!” she challenged, and with a leap, she and Tornado were off at a gallop. Excited by the other horse’s rapid exit, Scout began

to prance. “Easy there, boy,” Cal said. “We’ll catch up.” In one smooth motion, he vaulted into the saddle, whirled Scout around, and raced off in pursuit.

Leaning forward in the saddle and crouching low, he loosened the reins and nudged Scout with his heels. The powerful horse lunged forward and stretched into a full run. “Go Scout, go!” he urged as they flew down the rocky road after Lorena. Galloping at breakneck speed, he rounded a curve, but try as he might, he could not overtake her mighty Appaloosa. He caught up with her at the coach, and they slowed their horses to a walk and stopped, laughing with the exhilaration of the wild run.

“My, but he can run like the wind! I couldn’t catch you!”

“I’ve never had a faster horse!” Lorena exclaimed. “And I was holding him back!”

Scout pawed the earth, impatient to run some more. His sides heaved as he snorted and tossed his head.

“I think these horses love running together,” Lorena said.

“Yes, they sure do,” Cal agreed. “Scout didn’t like being left behind back there. He was chomping at the bit to catch you.”

“Yes, I have that effect on boys too!” Lorena’s eyes sparkled mischievously. When Cal didn’t answer, she giggled, “Why, Cal! I have never seen you speechless before! The look on your face!” She laughed harder, and Cal could not help but join in.

They rode on together. The day was warm but not too warm. The breeze blew lightly, scented with sage. It seemed to Cal the colors of the desert landscape were brighter, the sky bluer, and the air fresher than he had ever experienced.

His pulse quickened. He felt like a wild stallion running free across the prairie. Taking a deep breath, he was more alive than ever. Then he gazed longingly at the alluring young lady from Tennessee riding next to him. He considered her attributes – beautiful, talented, educated, and smart as a whip. Cal had never felt this way before, and he wondered, is this what love feels like?

“That’s the first time I’ve seen you look like that.”

“Look like what?” Cal asked.

“As if you don’t have a care in the world. You usually are deep in thought with a furrowed brow, like you are trying to solve a difficult problem.”

“I guess it is too lovely a day to worry about anything.” Cal didn’t want her overthinking what he worried about, so he asked, “Tell me again, why are you going to Prescott?”

“My mother has breathing problems in the summertime. It’s not consumption.³³ The doctors aren’t exactly sure what the problem is. But summers in Tennessee are hot and humid, and my mother has trouble then. Everyone says the dry climate of Arizona has helped a lot of people.

“Uncle Henry and his brother Jim own a hardware store in Prescott, and they tell us we ought to move there. But my mother is not sure about it. My dad is busy tying up a deal to sell a herd of horses to the Army and can’t get away. My mother trusts my judgment on whether or not a lady would like it in Prescott.

“And I wanted to come anyway, to see the world, as I said. I wanted some excitement, and it was something I could do to help my folks. That’s pretty much it. If my parents make the journey to Arizona, my father will turn

³³ Consumption was the 19th century moniker for tuberculosis because the disease appeared to consume the affected person through substantial weight loss and wasting.

over the running of our ranch to my two brothers, and my parents will start a new ranch out here. He's already working on the possibility of a contract to supply horses to the Army in Arizona. And you're going to be a gold miner, right?"

"Yeah, that's my plan," Cal answered. "I was lucky to have an old timer take me under his wing and teach me all he knows about mining. He said I knew enough to get on at one of the large mines in this area."

"You should talk to my Uncle Henry. He owns a gold claim in the mountains south of Prescott. He told me he hasn't worked it for a while because he's too busy with the store."

"Oh really? He bought a claim?"

"You'll have to ask him. I'm unsure if he bought it or staked the claim himself. He did some prospecting, so he may have found it himself. By the way, I thought the next stop was the town of Mayer. Frank said we were headed to Big Bug Station."

"Same place," Cal explained. "Frank was telling us earlier that Big Bug Station and Mayer are the same. Frank says the Big Bug Stage Station was purchased by a fellow named Mayer, and it has grown into a small town. So it's not called Big Bug anymore. It's Mayer."

"Apparently many places here have two names," Lorena commented. "But Mayer is a better name than Big Bug. That was a strange name. I wonder why it was ever called that."

"Frank told me there are two stories on that," Cal said. "One is there are some large bugs that live on the bank of the creek, which led to naming the creek Big Bug Creek. The other story is that one of the first miners in the area said the gold nuggets they were pulling out of the creek were as

large as big bugs, so they named their claim the Big Bug. So I guess we can pick whichever story we like better.”

“I suppose so,” Lorena said. “I’m glad we have an easy day of it today.”

“I’m surprised at the leisurely pace,” Cal responded. “Only eight miles today. It doesn’t make sense.”

“Oh, that’s my uncle’s doing,” Lorena explained. “Typically, the coaches from Phoenix to Prescott travel night and day and make it through in about thirty hours. But that’s a bit rough on the passengers. My uncle paid a good bit extra to have this coach take its time.”

“Oh, so you’re the slow one holding up the show!”

“Don’t look at me,” Lorena tittered. “I didn’t make the arrangements. And now,” she continued with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, “let’s see who is the slow one!” With that, she leaned forward and yelled, “Go, Tory!” The big Appaloosa leaped forward and bounded past the stage, leaving Cal in a cloud of dust.

He spurred his horse and galloped after her, but after a few hundred yards, he gave up trying to catch her. He slowed to an easy lope and as he came around a bend, Lorena was waiting for him.

“I’m impressed!” Cal exclaimed. “Tornado is an excellent name. He’s a whirlwind! You could win some races with him.”

“I just love him,” Lorena beamed, her eyes sparkling as she patted his neck.

“I’m glad you have a horse you are pleased with,” Cal said as he eased his horse into a walk. “Look there. I do believe we are coming to Mayer. There’s a little settlement up ahead.”

“Where? I don’t see it.”

“To the left of that ridge and down, about a mile off.”

“Oh yes, I see it now. Let’s get there ahead of the coach so I can have some time without my uncle’s ever-watchful eye.”

They continued at a steady pace toward Mayer. Their ride together that afternoon had felt like the beginning of something new. A friendship – no, more than a friendship. Was he foolish to think so? As they followed the road up and down the desert hills and arroyos, Cal’s heart warmed to Lorena as he listened to her chatter about her life on Bon Air Mountain.

Lorena’s cheerful voice was a comfort, and her happy disposition made her easy to be with. He could not stop thinking about the touch of her small hands on his, and the feel of her lips on his cheek. If not for the worries in the back of his mind, he would have been in heaven.

It is often said ignorance is bliss. Cal didn’t know the joy of that afternoon would one day become a bittersweet memory.



CAL AND LORENA arrived in Mayer, and after speaking with Mr. Mayer at the hotel, they turned their horses loose in the corral. Lorena suggested they take a walk down by the creek. As they stepped from stone to stone across the small creek, Cal steadied her as she teetered on a small rock. After they crossed the stream, Lorena continued holding on to Cal’s hand as they strolled along the bank.

“Cal, did you know this Gilbert Webb?” Lorena asked.

Cal’s heart skipped a beat. “Webb?” he asked, while trying to think what he would say. “You know,” Lorena said, “the man they arrested who is supposed to be the mastermind of the robbery of the U.S. Army payroll.”

“Everyone in those parts knows who Gilbert Webb is,” Cal answered. “He’s high up in the Mormon Church, locally anyway. He owns several businesses around Pima, the local stagecoach line, a general store, a freighting business, and the Webb Cattle Company, which has a contract to supply beef to the Army.”

“With all of that,” Lorena said, “you would think he wouldn’t need to rob the Army.”

“One would think. But Webb has a history of overextending financially. About twenty years ago he defaulted on a loan to Brigham Young.”

“Brigham Young, who used to be the head prophet of the entire Mormon church?” Lorena asked.

“Yes, that’s right. Brigham Young died about a dozen years ago. But anyway, Webb’s parents were cosigners to a loan from Brigham that Webb was defaulting on. Hence, his parent’s family fortune was in jeopardy.

“Fortunately for Webb, he had a beautiful sister by the name of Ann Eliza. Brigham Young wanted her as a wife, so they made a deal. Ann Eliza would marry the aging prophet in return for him not ruining the fortunes of the Webb family. So, she became the prophet’s nineteenth wife, and the loan was marked paid in full.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Lorena. “The women are being treated like cattle to be traded! Don’t the Mormon people question such behavior?”

“Ann Eliza certainly did, but only after she was safely away from Utah. In 1875 Ann Eliza left the prophet and wrote the book *Wife No. 19: The Story of a Life in Bondage*. But for the average Mormon, questioning the prophet is not something that is done or even thought about. We are warned against questioning anything. But I have come to question everything recently.”

They continued walking along the side of the creek. Still holding hands, Cal found it difficult to think of anything other than the tender touch of her delicate hand in his.

“Do you think Webb did the robbery?” Lorena asked.

“Well,” Cal carefully considered how to answer. “It was common knowledge he was having financial difficulties. But the real question is, can he be convicted? He is very well-connected. Besides being chairman of the church’s building committee, he’s also the mayor of Pima, a kingpin in the Graham County Democratic Party, and a close friend of Judge Barnes of the local district court.”

Lorena shook her head. “It’s a travesty when the rich and powerful evade justice.”

“Yes, it is,” Cal answered. “And I think Webb’s been getting away with things for a long time. And I’ve buried my head in the sand for too long, but no more. I heard Webb was involved in the Mountain Meadows Massacre.”

“What massacre?” Lorena asked.

“The Mountain Meadows Massacre. You haven’t heard of that?”

“No. Tell me what happened.”

“In 1857 a rich wagon train came through Utah, laden with gold, cattle, and horses. Brigham Young ordered everyone to be killed – men, women, and children over eight years old. It happened in Utah at a place called Mountain Meadows. The Mormons dressed like Indians and killed everyone except the younger children, keeping the goods for themselves. There was a congressional investigation into the matter. Anyway, the rumor was Webb was in on that.”

Lorena was aghast. “I can’t believe religious people would tolerate such wickedness.”

“The people only know what they are told. They don’t have all the information, and if they do hear something, they are conditioned to obey their leaders, no matter what. So their eyes are closed. That’s how the leaders get away with such things.”

“So,” Lorena began, “now that you have your eyes opened, are you considering what I have said about God?”

“Yes, I am,” Cal answered. “I am thinking about that. But I just got out of a religion and am not too eager to get back into one.”

“What I want you to see,” Lorena answered, “is that I am not talking about a religion or joining a church. I’m talking about a personal relationship between you and God. That’s all. At the end of your life, it won’t matter what church you went to. You won’t be asked how religious you are. Only one question will matter, and that question is, do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ?”

“Okay, I promise,” Cal said as he began to chuckle. “I will think about it and read the New Testament you gave me.”

“Why are you laughing?” Lorena asked. “I am being serious.”

“Sorry,” Cal replied while trying to stifle a snicker. “I’m not laughing at your words. I’m laughing because sometimes when we’re discussing these things, you get such a serious and intense look, but then you stop and—”

“I look serious because it is a serious matter,” Lorena interrupted.

“Yes, I know it is, but let me finish. Then you stop and ask me a question and you tilt your head in such an adorable way, like a dog does when trying to hear a sound.”

“Like a dog! I look like a dog?”

“No, no, like...” Cal searched for the right words. “Like a cute little doggie, like an adorable puppy tilting its head to try to hear something. It is really quite endearing.”

I am not trying to be adorable or endearing!”

“Oh, you don’t need to try. You just are. You’re my adorable puppy!” Cal could not hold back his laughter.

“I am *not* your cute little doggie,” Lorena pouted, looking ever more enchanting.

“Oh? Then what are you? You must be *my* something. Am I not *your* guardian angel?”

“*You* are being a bad angel. I am not *your* adorable anything. And even if I was your...your...whatever, and I’m not saying I am, mind you, I am certainly not your...what was that you called me?

“An adorable puppy.”

“I am no such thing!” Lorena pretended to be more offended than she really was.

Cal put his hand to his heart. “Then, my fair maiden, I shall die of a broken heart!”

“And how do you imagine I am your fair maiden?”

“Well, if I am your guardian angel, you should be my something. That’s only fair. But whether you are my puppy or my fair maiden, I cannot say. I must give the matter some thought.”

“Oh, stop it! How can you be such a bad angel!” Lorena deliberately tilted her head to let on she was being playfully facetious.

“Oh, that settles it. Definitely my adorable puppy,” Cal said with a grin.

Lorena gave him a pretend slap on the arm and then, turning around, said, “Look, there’s the stage!”

“We better get back. Your uncle will be looking for you.”

“Yes, I know. He still hasn’t figured out I’m an adult. Come along, my bad angel.”

Lorena skipped on ahead, but at the stream crossing, Cal took her by the hand and helped her across. They walked hand-in-hand back to the stage station. They had one more day of riding before reaching Prescott. Then the delightful days of being an outrider with Lorena would come to an end. Cal wondered what would happen then.

13

Prescott Passion



CAL AND LORENA rode into Prescott ahead of the stage, both weary from the long ride. When the coach rolled up to the station, Cal inquired as to the location of the livery stable.

“Why don’t you let me see to your horse,” Cal offered.

“Oh, you are a dear!” Lorena handed her reins to him.

Lorena’s uncle spoke up, “Cal, we are eating at the Bellevue Hotel. It’s on Cortez street, just across the Plaza on the other side of the courthouse. Supper is on me tonight. Please, you must come and join us after you put the horses up.”

“Thanks.” Cal tipped his hat. “A hot meal would sure be grand. See you shortly.”

Frank came out of the stage office and hollered to Cal, “The safe is locked up for the night, but come on back here in the morning. Ask for Jake. He’ll see to it you get your outrider pay. In the meantime, here’s a voucher for a night at the hotel.”

The evening meal was delightful. Lorena had freshened up from the long ride and her sparkling blue eyes were enhanced by a lovely aqua evening dress. Her hair flowed luxuriantly over her shoulders and she looked ravishing, as always. The superb food and fine conversation had everyone in high spirits, and to Cal’s relief, nobody said anything about the paymaster robbery. Lorena’s uncle asked Cal to stop by his hardware store the following day.

“I’ve got something for you,” Henry said. “Drop on by tomorrow.”

“I’ll be there first thing in the morning,” Cal replied.

After dinner Cal and Lorena walked out onto the boardwalk while waiting for her uncle to settle the bill. Cal was wondering where their relationship would go now that they had arrived at their destination.

For a few moments, they stood together in awkward silence. Cal held his hat in hand, his eyes turning to the mountains as he contemplated what to say. Lorena found herself admiring his wavy brown hair, the steel blue eyes, and the subtle cleft in his chin.

“Would you let me buy you breakfast tomorrow?” Cal asked.

“I should think you would have had enough of me by now,” she replied playfully.

“No ma’am.”

“Then, I’d be delighted to have breakfast with you, Mr. Chandler. I’ll meet you here.”

“Are we back to mister?” Cal smiled.

“If we are back to ma’am, we are back to mister.”

“Yes ma’am,” Cal grinned.

“Okay, mister,” Lorena replied with a frisky tilt of her head.

“Alright, Lorena,” Cal laughed. “I surrender! How about we meet here at nine tomorrow morning?”

“Sounds wonderful, Cal. It’s a date.” She stepped closer to him, lightly touching his arm while turning her charming face up to his.

Cal had the overpowering urge to kiss her, but he resisted. As his willpower was failing, Uncle Henry strolled out on the boardwalk, breaking the spell.



EARLY THE FOLLOWING DAY, Cal walked into the hardware store.

“Good morning, Cal!” Henry called out cheerfully. “Come in and meet my brother. This here’s Jim.”

A tall, thin man with a black mustache and a large smile stuck out his hand, “Pleased to make your acquaintance, young man. I understand you saved the day on the trail.”

“That’s the rumor,” Cal replied, shaking Jim’s hand. “I can’t seem to change it.”

“Well, they said you were modest and unassuming. Sounds like it was an accurate report.”

“Say,” Henry said, “the six-shooter you were carrying – what caliber is it?”

“It’s a Colt, chambered in .44-40.”

“Excellent. And it has a 7.5-inch barrel, right?”

“I believe so.”

“Alright. Hold on a minute. I’ve just the thing for you.”

Henry bent down and rummaged around in a cabinet while Cal wondered what he wanted to sell him. After a moment, he stood up and asked, “Do you prefer to wear your gun on your hip or on the front of your belt for a cross-draw?”

“I can’t really afford to buy anything today,” Cal replied.

“Never mind about that. I’m not selling you anything. Now, on your hip is handy if you’re on your feet, but cross-draw is better if you’re on horseback. It puts your free hand right near your gun, and you’re much less likely to have it falling out of the holster. I like cross-draw myself.”

“I suppose cross-draw. But I don’t—”

“Here ya go then,” Henry interrupted as he handed Cal a leather holster and cartridge belt. “I saw you carrying that big iron stuffed in your pants. A man needs a proper holster, and this here is a high-quality cross-draw. Now, this is a gift. I want you to have it and something else as well.” Henry reached up and took a Winchester lever action rifle off the wall. “This one here is what you want.”

“I can’t take—”

“Yes, you can take it.” Henry laid the rifle on the counter. “Listen to me, Cal. I was carrying a considerable amount of money with me on the stage. If you hadn’t foiled that robber, I would be out a lot more money than the price of a rifle and holster. Not only did you save our bacon, you also looked after my niece when she was ill, and you saw her safely through the day. One cannot put a price on the value of your actions. Now, I know you’ve got that single-shot Sharps rifle, and that’s a fine piece of artillery, but this is a rough, untamed country. You need a repeating rifle. So, this is yours. It is the least I can do. Please accept it as a token of my gratitude.”

“Alright, Mr. McKenzie, if you say so. I’m mighty obliged. It’s very generous of you. I owe you.”

“You owe me nothing. Don’t think a thing of it. Now that Winchester takes .44-40, same as your six-gun. Here are a few boxes of cartridges.” Henry slid a package across the counter.

Wiping his hands with a rag, Jim picked up the Winchester from the counter and handed it to Cal. “I went through this rifle myself. It’s cleaned, oiled, and sighted in, though you may want to take some practice shots and set the sights how you like ’em. Now I’ve heard tell you’re a miner. That so?”

“Yes. I worked for a fella in a mine in the Pinaleno Mountains. I can timber, drill, and blast.”

“Well, listen now, Henry and me, we got us a gold claim up in the mountains south of here. We had grubstaked³⁴ a prospector, a real old-timer. He filed the claim long ago and was working it until he died. It’s ours now. It’s a lode claim with a tunnel following the vein into the mountain. We planned to work it, expose more of the ore vein and sell it to one of the large mining companies.

“But we don’t have the time or inclination to work it. The store keeps us extremely busy. Besides, we’re getting a bit too old for strenuous work. Henry told me you were a miner, and we’ve talked it over. If you would like to work it for us and expose more of the vein to make it more presentable to buyers, we’ll make it worth your while. We’ll provide the supplies and stock you with grub. There’s a small cabin there, so you can stay right there by the mine. The ore is free-milling, so we can haul it down to the

³⁴ Grubstaking: Giving supplies free of charge to prospectors in exchange for an interest in any mining claims filed was a common practice by merchants.

smelter in Mayer.³⁵ We'll give you fifty percent of the gold you bring out."

"Sounds like a mighty generous offer. Give me some time to think it over, and I'll let you know."

"Alright, young man," Jim said. "Let us know, and if you want to work it, we'll tell you how to find the claim and load you up with dynamite and blasting caps."

Cal thanked them again and headed to the stage office to pick up his pay. While there, Jake offered him a job riding shotgun. He told them the same thing he told Lorena's uncles: he would think about it. Then he hurried to the hotel to meet Lorena for breakfast.

Lorena was her usual cheerful self. They sipped their coffee, waited for their orders, and chatted about their plans. Cal told her of her uncles' offer.

"Are you going to take them up on it?" Lorena asked.

"I'm not sure. Either that or ride shotgun for the stage line."

"So, you're going to ride off and rescue more damsels in distress?"

"Not likely," Cal answered. "I'm still busy rescuing the last one."

"Oh, are you? And I suppose you think I need rescuing?"

"Of course you do. I have to keep you from throwing yourself after some no-account drifter."

Lorena was momentarily speechless. "You think I need to be saved from a drifter!"

³⁵ Free-milling ore has gold that is more easily recovered with standard gravity and/or cyanide processes. Complex ores, such as sulfides, that are not free-milling require a more expensive and complex chemical treatment process to extract the gold.

“No, I was thinking of the drifter. He would need to be saved from you!”

“Oh! You are still a bad angel!”

“Do you think? It’s just that some of these young cowpokes try to lasso a young foal and break ’em and they end up bein’ the one that gets broke. They don’t understand that some young fillies are born to be free and are at their loveliest when they are running under a free rein.”

“Oh, I see.” Lorena cocked her head and gave Cal the look he found so charming. “I think then that I shall decide to forgive you. Besides, you have already rescued me twice, so I owe you.”

“Actually, I think I’m the one that’s getting rescued. I’ve been reading the Bible you gave me.”

“Oh, that reminds me,” Lorena said, “Will you come to church with me Sunday?”

“Sure, if you’re not afraid the Lord may strike the place with lightning for allowing a Mormon-turned-apostate through the doors.”

“Stick close by me, and we’ll be safe,” Lorena laughed.

After breakfast Lorena wanted to visit with her uncles. Cal walked her to the hardware store and, tipping his hat, thanked her for the enjoyable company, saying he looked forward to seeing her again soon.

Lorena grasped Cal’s hand and squeezed it. “I hope you know how much you are appreciated. Bye!”

The rest of the week, Cal considered his options. He had learned that employment at one of the big mines would take him far out of town, perhaps as far away as Crown King. This was no longer desirable. Lorena had changed everything.

Working for the stage line would also have him gone most of the time. Working the McKenzie mine would as well, but he would at least be closer to town and closer to Lorena. She was never out of his thoughts now. Such thoughts were premature. He knew that, but he couldn't help imagining a future with her, even though he was in no kind of position to support a wife.

He didn't even know if Lorena felt about him as he did about her. How could she? They were so different. She was a Christian, and he was...he didn't know what he was. But he had started reading the New Testament she had given him, and he was discovering the Jesus he had been taught was entirely different from the Jesus described in the Bible.

Sometimes it seemed to him that Lorena regarded him as only a good friend. They were good friends, there was no doubt about it. But Cal had to admit he was head over heels in love. Still, he didn't know if she felt the same. He came to a decision: Tomorrow he would ask her.

Shattered Dreams



LORENA WAS NOT at the hotel dining room the next morning. He had assumed she would be there. Now he was kicking himself for not having offered to buy her breakfast. After eating he headed over to the hardware store. Henry was busy helping someone when he walked in, so Cal browsed around, looking at the myriad of guns, farming tools and prospecting paraphernalia.

“Good day to you, Cal,” Henry said after he finished with his customer.

“And to you, Mr. McKenzie,” he responded. “I’ve come to talk to you about your offer. If it still stands, I would like to work your mine.”

“Outstanding! Yes, of course, the offer still stands. We were hoping you would take us up on it. That gold does no one any good sitting in the ground. I can have your supplies

ready within the hour. Let's see, you're going to need a pack animal. We have a pack saddle and a mule you can use. You can pick him up at the livery. I'll write a note for you to give the hostler. Now, for grub, go over to the general store and tell them to give you a grubstake pack. He'll know what to give you. Tell 'em to put it on the McKenzie Hardware account. I'll give you a note for that as well."

"What's the water situation at the claim?" Cal asked.

"There's a spring nearby where you can get drinking water. I'll be giving you a map to get to the claim, and I'll mark on there where the spring is. And there's a creek to water your livestock from. There's grass there for the horses but I'll pack some grain for them as well. You'll see the corral next to the cabin. There's a half-finished shed for your horse to get out of the weather. You'll find it needs some attention."

"Alright," Cal said. "I'll get the mule from the livery and come back and get loaded."

"Once you get everything out there," Henry continued, "you can bring the mule back in. One less animal to care for. When you get some ore stockpiled, we'll come out with a wagon to haul it to the smelter. Now, here's the thing. It's high-grade ore but a small vein. That's why the big mining outfits aren't interested. But we believe that vein is only a stringer of a bigger vein deeper down. If you can expose the larger vein – eureka! The mining hotshots will be beating down our door wanting to buy us out. If that happens there will be a generous bonus in it for you."

"I'll do my best to find the mother lode for you," Cal said. "By the way, have you seen Lorena today?"

"She left the house early this morning," Henry answered. "Said she had things to attend to. I'm not sure where she is right now."

“Okay. I’ll see you in a bit,” Cal said, while he headed for the door.

Cal went first to the general store to let them know to get the grubstake pack ready. Then he walked toward the livery, cutting across the park-like area known as the Plaza surrounding the courthouse, which was in the center of the business district square.

He had been hoping to see Lorena before he headed out, but he figured he could always come back in to see her after he got everything delivered to the mine. She had invited him to church Sunday, and that was in five days. He would have to bring the mule back into town and he could see her then.

He was almost to the livery when he heard it. It was Lorena’s distinctive laughter. He scanned the boardwalks in front of the stores until he saw her. She was crossing the street, headed toward the courthouse with – who was that? A sick feeling hit him in the pit of his stomach as he saw Lorena’s arm hooked into the arm of a smartly dressed gentleman who was escorting her across the street.

Cal stood transfixed. The pair strolled over to the courthouse steps where they stopped and conversed. Cal was too far away to hear what they were saying, but phrases drifted to him on the wind. Suddenly he heard Lorena exclaim, “You’re a dear!” Cal was shocked as he saw her stretch up and give him a kiss.

Cal was startled, then bewildered, as his mind grappled to comprehend what he had seen. But what was it that he had just seen? The woman he was so fond of, who occupied his thoughts more and more . . . He had seen her arm-in-arm with another young man, and then she kissed him! His stomach clenched as a sick feeling swept over him.

Cal's world shattered. First, he felt betrayed. Why had Lorena led him on? Then he felt foolish for thinking he had a chance with someone of her caliber. He was an outlaw. A nobody from nowhere with no future. Why should he even imagine she would want him?

The days ahead that had looked so bright were now clouded in his mind. He forced himself to block it out for the present. He would deal with the intense hurt by denying to himself that he felt it. He would bury it as deep as he could. He would resist the impulse to confront Lorena about it. What would that accomplish? It would only solidify his anguish. He would do what he always did. He would escape. He would bury himself in his work.

There was business to attend to. Cal turned and walked to the livery, his face hot with emotion. He tried to suppress his feelings but questions assailed his mind. How could he have misread her signals? While he had been falling in love, had she not seemed to reciprocate his feelings? But then he remembered her confident words: "Leavin' the city boys dazed." He had taken it as a whimsical joke, but perhaps it revealed more. Was she flirtatious by nature?

He felt foolish and angry at the same time. He silently brooded while saddling his horse. Mechanically, he went through the motions to complete his plans, but his heart was not in it. He rode to the hardware store, leading the mule while hoping he would not run into Lorena and her gentleman friend.

After Henry helped him pack the supplies on the mule, he stopped by the general store and picked up the grubstake package of food staples. As he finished loading the mule, he saw two people walking in his direction down the boardwalk. They seemed oddly familiar. With a start, he realized it was two of Webb's men from the holdup. One was Ed Follett and Cal was certain the other man had to be Cyclone Bill, for he recognized his distinctive limp caused

by an old bullet wound.³⁶ There was no question in Cal's mind why they were here. They had surely been sent by Webb to find him and the bag of gold coins he had buried.

Cal's horse was between him and the men. He pulled his hat down low. Instinctively he felt for his holstered six-gun on his belt. He would not go down without a fight. He watched them carefully while hunkered low behind his horse. The two men's footsteps clomped noisily on the boardwalk, while Cal's heart pounded. He saw them turn into a store halfway down the block.

Cal pulled his Winchester out. Reaching into his saddlebags, he retrieved the package of cartridges and quickly loaded the Winchester before sliding it back into its scabbard. He looked down the boardwalk. No sign of them. They had not come out of the store yet. Keeping a wary eye on the storefront, he mounted up and rode away.

Heading out of town on Scout and leading the mule loaded with supplies, he traveled south into the mountains on the stage road called Senator Highway, so named because it was originally built to reach the Senator Gold Mine. After a couple of hours, he turned off into a canyon thickly wooded with tall ponderosa pines. Following the map Henry gave him, he turned into another side canyon that descended into a remote ravine. When he came to the creek marked on the map, he followed another drainage that led higher into the mountains.

As he rode, Cal pondered how Webb's men had managed to trail him to Prescott. That was a puzzle he had no answer for. Nevertheless, his past was catching up to him, just as he had feared. No matter, he reasoned. He was losing himself in the wilds of a vast mountain range. They

³⁶ William Ellison Beck, aka Cyclone Bill, was implicated in the holdup of the Army payroll, along with Ed Follett. Cyclone Bill reformed himself, became a model citizen, opened a law practice in Clifton, Arizona and eventually became a justice of the peace.

could never find him here. Since there was no reason for him to spend time in town anymore, he could remain hidden here indefinitely.

Away from civilization now, he allowed himself to sink into a melancholy reflection of his ill-fated circumstances. His future dreams had been burnt to ashes, and the pain he felt was unspeakable. He could not make sense of Lorena's actions. He knew some girls were like that – having the propensity to be flirtatious with all men. He had not thought Lorena was that kind of person. It didn't add up. But after all, Cal thought, what did he know about women?

He had been foolish, he concluded, to have fancied that he, a wanted outlaw with no finances and no future, could win the hand of a young, beautiful rich girl. Had he misread the signals? He had wanted to ask her if she loved him. Now he only wanted to ask another question: Why? He could never do that now. With Webb's henchmen looking for him, going to town would mean risking a gunfight.

As he climbed higher and deeper into the forested mountains, he struggled to block out memories. Recollections that once gave him pleasure now stabbed him with a sadness that cut to the depths of his very soul. He thought about the words old Chester had said to him: *“Runnin’ ain’t necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it’s smart to run.”*

Yes, it was, he thought. He would run. He would make the mountains his home. He would be a recluse. He had wondered why Chester wanted to live alone in the wilderness. Now he understood. Sometimes the world just hurts too much.

His entire life had been ripped away. He had lost his home, his parents, his religion, and been forced to be an outcast on the run. He had stupidly thought he could find a new faith in God, and maybe build a future with Lorena. He berated himself for not having known better.

Chester, he said out loud to himself. *You're right. Sometimes it's smart to run.* So, he would run. Run from civilization, run from his memories. He would erase Lorena from his mind. He would blot out the memory of her smile, her laugh, her touch, her kiss!

He crested a small rise, and down below a green, grassy valley came into view. Through the middle ran a sparkling brook, and nestled among the trees was a small cabin. This would be his valley. A valley of solitude – his new home.

At the cabin Cal unloaded the supplies and turned his horse and mule into the corral. He poured out some grain for each of them and brought water from the creek to fill their trough. He carried the dynamite and other mining equipment into the mine tunnel, which was a short way up a side ravine behind the cabin.

He noted the sky had turned black with storm clouds. Evening was approaching. Thunder rumbled in the distance and echoed through the mountains. He brought his saddle, bridle, and two rifles into the cabin. He unbuckled his gun belt and hung it on a nail on the wall.

It was a small one-room log cabin with a porch on the front. He surveyed the interior. There was a bed, table and chairs, and a wood-burning cookstove. There were windows on two of the walls. It was small but cozy and clean. He carried in some firewood that was stacked in a corner of the horse shed. After getting a fire going in the woodstove, he pulled up a chair and warmed himself by the stove. It felt good to soak in the warmth. He stayed a while, looking at the burning red coals.

Suddenly there was a deafening crash and the room was lit bright as day with a flash of lightning. Cal grabbed his rain slicker and went out to the front porch to watch the light show. Pulling his slicker over him like a blanket, he sat down on the porch bench and watched the raindrops dancing on the water of the creek. He noted his horse and

the mule had gone into the shed. Tomorrow he would make repairs on the shed, as Henry had suggested.

Without warning, the gentle rain turned into a downpour. Night fell. The blackness was punctuated with frequent flashes of lightning, accompanied by thunderclaps that reverberated through the valley. Cal took comfort in the storm. It matched his melancholy mood. He listened drowsily to the comforting sound of the rain pelting the roof and the thunder as its echoes rolled through the mountain canyon. He pulled his rain slicker up to better shield himself from the spray of rain the wind occasionally blew onto the porch.

Cal felt sorry for many things. He felt sorrow for his mother, who must be worried sick about whatever had happened to him. There was no way to contact her. He felt sorry for the soldiers who were shot up during the robbery. He felt sorry for the young Mormon boy who died so tragically. Most of all, he felt sorry for himself.

He felt alone in that remote place, but at least he was safe. Unless someone had a map, they could never find this beautiful secluded valley. For the first time since the robbery, he was in a place where he didn't have to worry. He felt grateful to the McKenzie brothers for setting him up here.

The gurgling little brook was now a roaring rapid. The air was cold but Cal felt warm, snuggled in his jacket and rain slicker. He sleepily watched the water cascading off the porch. The rhythm of the rain on the roof lulled his mind.

Then he saw her. Lorena was there. But how? She was standing in the rain, crying. How did she get here? She was wearing the same dark green dress with lace trim she wore when they first met. In a moment Cal was beside her. She laid her hands pleadingly on his chest.

“Oh, Cal!” She entreated. “Why? Why did you leave me?”

She slid her arms up around his neck while Cal put his arms around her slender waist. He pulled her close to him and he felt her warmth as they embraced. They pressed their lips together passionately – their first kiss! All the love he had tried to suppress welled up within him. She was all he ever wanted.

They stood together in the rain, holding one another, gazing into each other’s eyes. Not even the cold drenching rain could dampen the fiery love burning within them. Cal looked at her lovely, perfect face.

“Cal, I must leave now,” Lorena said gently.

“Why? No, please stay.” Cal held her more tightly.

“The stage is leaving, Cal. We have to follow the stage. We have to ride. Please, come find me.” She pulled away from him.

“Find you?” Cal asked, stepping back in confusion.

He felt overcome by her radiant beauty. The sunlight dancing on her hair dazzled him with its auburn brilliance. The impossibility of the sun shining at night in the middle of a rainstorm somehow seemed perfectly normal to Cal.

A blinding flash of lightning, accompanied by a crash of thunder awakened Cal with a start. His heart pounded. He had been asleep. It had all been a dream. A cruel dream. The realization stabbed him with exquisite heartache. He would have preferred to never wake up and live in that moment forever. Despite his attempts to banish Lorena from his thoughts, she still haunted his dreams and he was powerless to stop it.

Fool's Gold



CAL WOKE UP at sunrise the following day and fed and watered the livestock. After a quick breakfast of salt pork and oatmeal, he stepped out onto the porch and stretched. The storm had passed. It was a bright and cloudless day. The summer rain had cleansed the mountain air, infusing it with the aromatic scent of ponderosa pine. The birds sang their happiness while squirrels scurried among tree branches.

He was eager to examine the mine. He headed up the canyon and entered the portal into the side of the hill. Grabbing a pick hammer from the mining equipment at the entrance, he followed the tunnel. He noted the timber shoring at the front, but most of the workings didn't need it, as it was in solid rock. A small rail track ran along the floor.

He found an ore cart on the track about a hundred feet in. Farther on, the passage intersected with the ore deposit, which appeared to dip into the earth at an incline about

twenty-five degrees from vertical. The quartz vein carrying the gold was about a yard in width. Cal knocked out a piece of quartz with the pick hammer and examined it. He was pleased to see it was laden with visible specks of gold. He knew ore this rich was a rarity.

Cal noted the vein widened slightly as it plunged into the earth. Following it deeper would reveal whether it continued to broaden. If it did and held sufficient assay values, larger mining outfits might be interested. That's the sort of circumstance the McKenzie brothers hoped for.

He appreciated the many evenings Chester had spent with him, diagramming on paper how to access and extract ore with drifts, winzes, raises, stopes, and shafts. He would have been at a loss for how to proceed without such training. Days turned into weeks as Cal drilled, blasted, loaded the ore into the mine cart, and rolled it out of the mine by hand. The strenuous work had him exhausted at night, which is what he wanted, for it put him into a deep, dreamless sleep where memories could not haunt him.

The ore dump at the portal to the mine grew day by day. Some of the ore was high-grade, with visible gold stringers in the quartz. He took some of these rich specimens, crushed them, and panned them out to retrieve the gold. Cal's hands grew calloused and his muscles hardened like steel under the strain of the hard labor. He understood why the McKenzie brothers didn't want to work it themselves. Clerking a hardware store was an easier life.

Day by day his cache of high-grade accumulated, and the pile of quartz to be milled grew larger. He had nearly enough for a wagonload, though no wagon would reach this place without a road being built. Perhaps someday a mining company would buy the claim and build a road. The thought of it saddened Cal. It seemed shameful to desecrate such a peaceful valley with men and machines. For now he would have to pack the ore out by mule, making multiple

trips to the Senator Mine road. From there it could be taken by wagon.

As he worked, it was not merely his body that hardened. His mind grew in strength and confidence as well. And though he didn't realize what was happening, his spirit was also maturing, for with no one to talk to, he had plenty of time to think and sort matters out.

As he toiled, he considered the religious matters he was struggling with. Religion had always been an important part of his life. He was now a man with no religion, and that left him with an uncomfortable void inside. He was on a search for answers to fill the emptiness. He had been reading the New Testament Lorena had given him. He read all of it, then started over at the beginning. Whenever he took a rest break from the strenuous labor of mining, he would sit down and read it some more.

He found what he had been told about the Bible being changed or corrupted in places was problematic, for he perceived the New Testament contained a consistent message throughout. Someone would have had to change not only passages here and there, but they would have had to rewrite the entire New Testament. This seemed improbable to Cal.

Another thing he realized was that the nature of God, as presented in the Bible, was foreign to what he had been taught. His leaders preached that God was one of many gods, and Jesus was only a good man who became a god by adhering to Mormon principles. This Mormon Jesus had attained godhood as any Mormon could. All Mormons, he had been taught, could also become a god, have many celestial wives, and rule over a planet filled with people who would worship him as God. He had often heard the Mormon maxim: *"As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be."*

But the Bible presented a different reality. It presented one God and Jesus as that eternal God who came into the world to save mankind through His death on the cross. But in the Mormon Church, salvation seemed to be somehow linked with polygamy. Through plural marriage, men become gods in heaven where they continue their polygamy. Mormon women, as part of their husband's heavenly harem, could anticipate being perpetually pregnant for all of eternity.

Cal noted that none of this squared with Jesus' words, which stated, "*in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*"³⁷

Cal considered what some of his leaders had taught about polygamy. George Q. Cannon, one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church, said, "*If I had not obeyed that command of God, concerning plural marriage, I believe that I would have been damned.*"

He recalled that their founding prophet, Joseph Smith, had written as a prophecy from God that plurality (polygamy) was an everlasting covenant that must be obeyed and those who did not accept it would be damned, particularly Joseph's wife, Emma, who was objecting to her husband's many wives.³⁸ Smith wrote:

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned...and I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide...but if she will not abide this commandment she shall

³⁷ Matthew 22:30

³⁸ Joseph Smith had a minimum of thirty-six wives. Of those, seven were children ranging in age from fourteen to seventeen. The youngest was Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of LDS apostle Heber C. Kimball, who was fourteen. Nancy Winchester was fifteen. Fanny Alger and Flora Ann Woodworth were both sixteen. Sarah Ann Whitney, Lucy Walker and Sarah Lawrence were seventeen. Some of the others were wives of other Mormons.

*be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.*³⁹

How convenient for Joseph Smith, Cal thought. *God will destroy and damn his wife if she doesn't accept his many young wives?* This seemed suspect to Cal. It sounded as though Smith was just making stuff up to support his philandering.

Cal considered what Heber C. Kimball, another of the twelve apostles of Mormonism, said:

*"It is the duty of a woman to be obedient to her husband, and unless she is, I would not give a damn for all her queenly right and authority; nor for her either, if she will quarrel...about the principle of plurality."*⁴⁰

Mormon prophets spoke for God, or so Cal had been told. Was this God's attitude toward women? If a wife doesn't want to share her husband with other women, then he should not "give a damn" for her?

Cal recalled a time when he had been going through his mother's books and had found a book concealed behind all the others. He had taken it out and read the title: *Wife No. 19: The Story of a Life in Bondage*. Cal recognized the author, Ann Eliza Young, sister of Gilbert Webb and an ex-wife of Brigham Young.

Cal paged through it and read where Mormon apostle Kimball said, *"I think no more of taking another wife than I do of buying a cow, and if you want to build up the kingdom you must take more wives."*⁴¹ He realized if his mother was discovered with such a book, harsh

³⁹ Doctrine & Covenants 132:54

⁴⁰ Journal of Discourses 4:82

⁴¹ *Wife No. 19: The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Expose of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* by Ann Eliza Young.
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/wife-no-19-ann-eliza-young/1121487981>

consequences could ensue. He had quickly put the book back in its hiding place.

Cal continued to mull things over while working the mine. He picked up a star drill and slid it into the hole on the rock face he had been working. Taking his four-pound hammer he struck the end of the carbon steel rod, then gave it a quick twist with his left hand, rotating it a quarter turn in the hole, and then struck again with his right. Over and over, he pounded and twisted the steel as he thought about Apostle Kimball's words: "*I think no more of taking another wife than I do of buying a cow.*"

Cal felt disgusted. *I could never think of Lorena that way*, he thought. *Women nothing but cows?* Anger rose in his chest as he beat the drill steel harder. He felt cheated. He resented being defrauded of a normal upbringing that should have taught respect and appreciation for women. The thought flashed through his mind: *No wonder I struggled to relate to Lorena!*

Cal considered the full implication of his indoctrination: *A woman was nothing but a cow to be damned and destroyed by God if she didn't acquiesce to being a member of her husband's harem!* The more he thought about it the angrier he got. Sparks flew between hammer and steel as Cal drilled into the hard rock face. Righteous indignation surged through him. *Surely that could not be God's attitude!*

The denigration of women within Mormonism stuck in Cal's craw and infuriated him. He couldn't stomach it. But what the Bible said about women was something entirely different and what he read pleased him. There was no mention of polygamy having anything to do with salvation. And women, instead of being treated as livestock to be traded, were given honor and respect.

He read wives were considered equal and co-heirs with their husbands of eternal life. It even said if a husband was

not tender and understanding toward his wife, God would not hear his prayers,⁴² and if he did not do his best to provide for her, such a man was worse than an unbeliever.⁴³

When Cal read, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”*⁴⁴ it dawned on him how radically different the biblical way of relating to women was from how he had been taught.

In Acts Chapter 18 Cal read about a man by the name of Apollos who was preaching the Gospel with eloquence, but was missing some crucial doctrinal points. He read, *“When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”*⁴⁵ Cal was astounded. A husband-and-wife ministry team? He knew that would never happen in the Mormon Church!

He finished drilling and removed the steel. Retrieving two sticks of dynamite, he inserted cap and fuse, tamped the explosive gently into the hole, lit the fuse, and exited the mine. After the blast he took out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat from his brow while waiting for dust from the explosion to settle.

A glint on the ground caught Cal’s eye. He picked up the sparkling stone and noted the golden glitter of iron pyrites. “Fool’s gold,” Chester had called it. “It glitters beautifully,” he had said, “but all that glitters is not gold.” Cal shaded the rock with his hand and the gold shimmer disappeared.

He remembered Chester’s instruction: “Real gold is gold colored, in sun or shade, and it doesn’t sparkle. Fool’s gold only shines and sparkles in the sunlight.” Chester had told him that many a fool had purchased worthless claims

⁴² 1 Peter 3:7

⁴³ 1 Timothy 5:8

⁴⁴ Ephesians 5:25

⁴⁵ Acts 18:26

that had nothing in them but fool's gold. Cal picked up a dull-looking specimen from the ore dump, cracked it open with his hammer and shaded it with his hat. He smiled. Inside were specks and stringers of dull yellow gold, real gold.

Cal sat down on a boulder to rest and his mind drifted back to a time in Utah when he was a young lad. His father had taken him along on a trip to deliver a load of coal to a Mormon family. When they arrived, Cal was appalled at the squalid living conditions. The man had three wives and more kids than could be counted.

They lived in a sparsely furnished one-room clapboard cabin on the edge of a dusty half-plowed field. The unkempt children playing on the dirt floor stared with dirty faces that had the distant blank look of malnourishment. Furnishings consisted of a wooden table, two chairs, a wood stove and one large bed. There was barely room to move about in the tiny shack.

Two of the wives were bickering with each other while the third sat idly by. The man sat on the edge of the bed, head in hand. He barely acknowledged their arrival. "Just put the coal there," he said dully, staring at them with dead eyes that had the look of a caged animal.

As Cal remembered the sad scene, he realized the man's income had not been able to support his sexual desire. Too late came the realization that deception had played him for a fool; the glitter of polygamy, as it had been presented to him, did not match the reality. Like fool's gold, it only glittered in the sunlight of a fanciful and clever presentation made by a slick talker, but the reality found in daily life exposed its empty promise.

Cal removed his shirt, tied a handkerchief around his face, and re-entered the mine without waiting for the dust to settle further, as he normally might have. He loaded the debris into the mine cart and with sweat running down his

face and back he shoved the loaded car down the track, his muscles bulging and straining under the load.

At the portal he continued to the end of the track where he always dumped the worthless country rock that carried no gold. Throwing the lever, the cart swiveled onto its side, dumping the rock. He pensively watched it tumble down the hillside.

He imagined he was doing the same with his indoctrination. As he watched the worthless rock slide into the ravine below, he decided to do the same with Mormonism – dump it as so much worthless rock.

But what of the Bible and Christianity? As he had told Lorena, he was not eager to get into a new religion. He didn't want to be deceived again. He didn't know if he could trust the Bible, but he increasingly found that he liked what he read there.

When Cal had left Pima, he was a boy on his way to becoming a man. But that boy didn't exist anymore. No longer was his mind accepting of ideas that others had put there. From now on, he decided, he would test everything and only believe those things that proved true. No fool's gold for him. Cal didn't consciously think about the changes happening in him, but nevertheless they had come and they were real. He had become a man.

Cal pushed the empty cart back into the mine. His thoughts revolved around what he had read earlier that day about the Apostle Paul, a man who had once hunted Christians, arrested them, and dragged them off in chains to be tortured and killed.⁴⁶ But the resurrected Christ had appeared to Paul and then he was not only forgiven for his terrible sins but was given a ministry of spreading the good

⁴⁶ See Acts Chapter 9

news of how people can have a new life filled with love and forgiveness from God.

Could it be true, Cal wondered? Is it possible that if he came to the Christ of the Bible, he could be forgiven for his sins, even the sin of being mixed up in the theft of the Army's gold? If this were true, he thought, it would be a truth worth more than all the gold in the mountain in which he toiled. He wondered, were his former beliefs nothing more than fool's gold? Were the Bible's teachings the real thing, real gold?

The Visitor



CAL LOST TRACK of the weeks as they rolled by. He took a day off from working the mine to do some needed repairs to the cabin and the corral. He was relaxing on the front porch, thinking about making lunch, when he spotted a horse and rider coming down the trail to the valley. He felt a rush of adrenaline. Who had found him?

Reaching inside the doorway of the cabin, he took his gun belt off its hook on the wall. Stepping down off the porch, he strapped on his holster while keeping an eye on the slowly approaching rider. Soon Cal noticed the colorful dress of the rider and realized it was a woman. There was only one woman he could think of that would be coming here. But how? Why? And this time he was not dreaming.

Lorena rode up to the cabin and reined her horse to a stop. “Hey, stranger!” she said cheerfully.

“Good day,” he answered. “You are the last person in the world I expected to see way out here. How did you find this place?” He had other questions that begged for answers but having misread her feelings, he didn’t want to reveal his own. Reticent by nature, Cal kept his churning emotions to himself.

“Finding it was easy,” Lorena stated. “The hard part was getting one of my uncles to give me a map and directions. Uncle Henry said it was too dangerous, that I might get lost, and that this was no country for a young lady riding alone. He wouldn’t tell me the way. It took weeks of hounding and begging, but I finally got Uncle Jim to draw me a map.”

“They’re right,” he said. “One can get lost in all these arroyos and canyons.”

“Well, I’m not lost. I’m right here. Aren’t you going to invite a lady to come and sit a spell? It has been a long ride.”

“Yes, of course,” Cal said while wondering why she had come. “Please do. I’ll see to your horse.” Cal’s bottled-up feelings made his hands tremble as he took hold of the bridle. He hoped she didn’t pick up on his inner turmoil.

Lorena dismounted, and Cal turned Tory into the corral and poured out some grain for him. As he returned to the cabin, he found her still standing by the porch. She was dressed exquisitely, as usual, in a long blue dress with ruffles on the collar and sleeves. In the golden sunshine, with her auburn hair cascading over her shoulders, she was a vision of beauty.

“It feels good to stand and stretch after being on horseback for so long,” she said. “I left early this morning.”

“Are you hungry?” Cal asked.

“Yes, I am. I packed lunch for both of us. Can we sit somewhere and have a picnic?”

“Sure. We can walk over to the spring. It's a perfect spot.”

Lorena retrieved the food from her saddlebags and Cal grabbed a blanket from the cabin. They followed the creek a short way up the canyon. Cal was sick inside. The stress of acting as if all was well, when he actually felt betrayed, was taking its toll. Yet, what could he say? She had broken no promises. She had never said she loved him. His mind said he had no right to be hurt but his heart disagreed.

“We need to cross the stream here,” he said. “My boots are already wet and muddy, so let me help you.” With one smooth motion, he swooped her up in his arms. She gave a little yelp of surprise, and as he carried her over the shallow creek she encircled his neck with her arms, feeling safe with him as she always had. Cal felt her warm breath on his neck and he fought hard to feel nothing but was failing.

He set her gently down on the other side of the brook and they meandered alongside the creek, finding a faint trail that wound its way through the pines. A sparkling trickle of water bubbled over moss, fed from uphill by a freshening spring. The shadowy forest path led them into a tiny clearing, where water gurgled from the ground into a little pool. Here was a sheltered hideaway of grass, shaded by tall trees.

“Oh, you are right!” Lorena was delighted. “It is a perfect spot for a picnic!”

Cal spread the blanket on the ground and Lorena set out the sandwiches on the handmade patchwork quilt. As they sat together in this idyllic spot, enjoying the tasty lunch, Lorena felt a sense of serenity in their romantic retreat under the towering ponderosas.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,” she commented softly.

“What’s that? Cal asked.

“It’s what the Bible says about God planting the Garden of Eden. This reminds me of that. So lovely.” She gazed at the delicate wildflowers here and there and the bubbling stream of cool, clear water flowing from the spring. “It’s a little Garden of Eden.”

The setting was perfect and the weather delightful. She wanted this to be like old times, where they would laugh, tease, and chatter away about whatever topic came up, but she sensed a slight awkwardness between them that had never been there before. There was something amiss. She decided to address it head on.

“Cal,” Lorena said, “Why...?” She hesitated, looked down at her fidgeting hands, and then continued, “Why did you leave the way you did? I had expected you to come with me to church that Sunday. That was weeks ago. You just...disappeared. Why didn’t you tell me you were coming here to work the mine? I had to find out from my uncles.” She gazed into Cal’s eyes, searching for an answer.

“I figured you were busy.” His voice was tense. He looked down, avoiding her gaze.

“Busy? You thought I was busy? Cal Chandler, that is *not* an answer.”

“Busy...with someone else,” Cal said flatly.

“What is *that* supposed to mean?”

“I saw you.” Cal looked up at her as he stated the simple fact.

“You saw me? You are making no sense, Cal. What are you saying?”

“I saw you with *him*.”

“Him? Him who? Please speak plainly!” Her voice expressed her exasperation. She sat up rigidly, her face flushed with indignation.

“You were by the steps of the courthouse that day,” he said. “The day after we had breakfast together. You were walking arm-in-arm with that fellow. The man you kissed.” Cal felt vulnerable revealing his feelings to her, but she was leaving him no choice. Their eyes locked and Cal felt shaken under the stress of the confrontation.

Lorena looked at Cal, speechless, her eyes wide with astonishment. “For heaven’s sake, Cal! That’s why you ran off? That was Travis!”

“I didn’t need his name,” he said sullenly.

“Travis McKenzie! His name is Travis *McKenzie!*” She said the last name with emphasis.

Cal stared in confusion and didn’t answer.

“He is my cousin!” Lorena said emphatically. “My first cousin! He’s Uncle Jim’s son. We grew up together. He’s like a big brother to me. He calls me ‘little sister.’ He was only escorting me across the street.” Lorena spoke faster as her face flushed. She took a deep breath to calm herself.

“I am not acquainted...” she said, then stopped and took another breath. She smoothed her dress and shifted her position. After composing herself, she stared Cal directly in the eye and said assertively, “I am not acquainted with your customs here, but in Tennessee, it is customary and proper etiquette for a friend or family member to escort a lady across a busy street.”

Cal sat dumbfounded.

“I was asking him for a favor,” Lorena continued. “He’s the town marshal, and I was asking him for a particular favor – a favor for *you!* And he agreed. And the kiss was nothing but a quick peck on the cheek in gratitude. I couldn’t wait to find you and tell you about it. But you were gone. And you thought...” She paused and shook her head. “How could you? How could you think such things of me? I thought you knew me better!”

Cal's head was spinning. He let out a sigh as his relief was replaced by embarrassment and mortification at his terrible miscalculation.

"Your cousin?" Cal said with chagrin.

"Yes! My cousin!" she flamed.

"Oh, Lorena. I'm sorry! How foolish I have been! I misinterpreted what I saw. I was a considerable distance away. I didn't realize it was a kiss on the cheek. I guess I'm a senseless fool. I should have asked you about it. I should have, but I didn't think I had the right."

"The right? Well, of course, you had the right! Why would you think you hadn't the right to ask me about it?"

"Who am I to you, to ask you about your private affairs?" Cal asked.

Lorena shook her head. "Who am I to you, you ask? You don't know?"

"I don't suppose I do," Cal said, as he turned his hat round and round in his hands.

"Then let me make it clear," Lorena said, leaning forward. "When I first met you, you were just a handsome man who made me feel safe. I was glad you were protecting the stagecoach. I was grateful and impressed at how you took command during the attempted robbery. But even then you were just someone I looked up to.

"Then you took such gentle care of me when I was ill. You looked after me all day. My respect for you grew. After that, we rode together, day after day, and became good friends. The best of friends, I thought. I got to know you and I began to secretly hope that perhaps we could, someday...be more than friends. I thought you must surely realize how I felt, but I didn't know what your feelings toward me were."

She hesitated, wiped her misty eyes and continued, “Who am I to you? You are my best friend and I am the woman who loves you. That’s who I am to you. You certainly have the right to inquire into my private affairs. I give you that right. You have had the right ever since you captured my heart.”

Lorena paused and looked down while she considered what to say. Cal started to say something but she interrupted.

“I’ve hurt you,” she said softly. “I should have been more conscious of my actions. I didn’t know you were there, that you would see, that anyone would see. But that does not excuse it. I was not properly aware of my manner and how it might be misread. It was only an innocent kiss on the cheek of a family member, but still, others wouldn’t know that. You didn’t. I’m afraid I’m the senseless one.”

“My mother used to caution me against being excessively demonstrative. I hurt you,” she said again, quietly and thoughtfully. “And that means...it means you do care, or at least you did. You must have, or it would not have hurt you. And that means we could be more than friends or could have been.”

She reached over and placed her hand tenderly on Cal’s hand. She tried to continue, but her voice quavered as tears welled up and ran down her cheeks. Then, finally, she managed to speak again, and when she did, her voice was soft, barely more than a whisper. “Do you still...still care for me, Cal?”

Cal looked at Lorena sorrowfully as he intertwined his fingers with hers. “Lorena,” he said, “we have joked and laughed, yet always been coy about our true feelings for each other. No more. I’m going to be completely honest and transparent with you. The truth is, I have loved you almost from the moment I first saw you. And that love deepened

and grew day by day. I love you with all my heart and there is nothing, nothing at all, that I would not do for you.”

Cal had planned to say more, and he was starting to speak when Lorena suddenly sprang into his arms. Instinctively he embraced her. She threw her arms around his neck. “Oh, Cal!” she whispered, while her heart melted in his embrace. He leaned over and kissed her on the lips while lovingly caressing her hair.

“You do love me,” she breathed tenderly. “And I love you too.”

“Lorena,” he said, and there was a serious sadness in his voice that troubled her. “There is more that I must say. How I have longed for such a moment as this. To have you forever in my arms has been my dream and my heart’s desire. How wonderful it is to hear of your love.” Cal’s voice shook with emotion. “But I have more to say. Much more. I have to tell you, to explain to you, why we can never be together.”

Lorena’s joyful countenance faded into worry. “What do you mean, we can never be together? We are together now. What are you saying?”

“What I am saying, my darling, is there is no future for us. I have to tell you things that I hoped you would never find out. But I refuse to live in fear and secrecy any longer. You must know my past. To hide it from you would not be fair. I love you too much to do that to you. I won’t ruin *your* future. I’m going to put my life in your hands and tell you all. When I finish you will see that I am a man beyond redemption. A man with no hope. And when I have my say, you will never want to see me again. And I won’t blame you.”

Outlaw Past



CAL TOLD HER everything about the robbery, how he was coerced into participating, that some were forced at gunpoint to help. He described how disobedience to authority in Mormonism was considered the ultimate sin. He explained that Webb had said there would be no shooting, but how that turned out not to be the case. Although it was hard to talk about, he recounted the killing of Jeff Whitlock, the wounded member of the group, and how he himself had been knocked unconscious for refusing to assist in ending the young man's life.

While Cal talked, Lorena seated herself on the blanket, listening attentively without interrupting as Cal gave her the horrid details. When he finished, she sat frozen in

shock and disbelief, tears streaming down her face as she silently wept. When she spoke, her voice quaked.

“Oh, Cal!” she cried. “I can’t believe this about you. How could you? Do you mean to say you helped shoot all those innocent soldiers? How could you do something...something so wicked and cruel?” Her lovely blue eyes, blurred by tears, searched his face. “Are you...are you evil?”

“Whether I am evil or not, you must decide.” Cal’s voice was subdued. “I didn’t shoot anyone. I’ve never shot anyone in my life. Yes, I fired my rifle, for if I hadn’t, Webb’s men might have killed me themselves. But I was careful not to hit any of the soldiers.”

“You didn’t shoot anyone then?”

“No, I fired over them. Webb’s command was for everyone to fire at once and intentionally miss, hoping the soldiers would see they were outgunned and surrender the gold without resistance. The plan fell apart when the soldiers immediately returned fire. When their gunfire became so intense that some of our people were being wounded, I aimed at the rocks near them to force the soldiers to keep their heads down, but only to prevent them from killing us.

“Not that this excuses anything,” Cal said with shame. “I was wrong to be there. I know that. I was a naïve Mormon who had been brainwashed into blind obedience. I’m not that person anymore. But this will mean nothing in the eyes of the law. I’m a wanted man, and not only by the law; Webb’s men are hunting me too. They want their gold. I saw two of them in town. It’s only a matter of time until I have a run-in with them or the law catches up with me. You see, my dearest love, there is no future with me.”

“Gold?” Lorena asked. “You said they want their gold. You have the stolen payroll from the robbery?”

“No. Webb has most of it. But there was too much for one person to carry. Webb tossed me one of the bags and told me to put it in my saddlebags. When I regained consciousness, I rode off into the mountains. I just wanted to get away – to get away from Webb, from Mormonism, from all of it. The next morning I buried the coins. I wanted nothing to do with the money. I’ll never touch it. But that’s what Webb’s men are after. They want the gold I discarded, and they will never believe I don’t have it.”

“I don’t know what to believe myself,” Lorena said, and the words cut Cal to the quick. She stood up and smoothed out her dress. “You should walk me back to the cabin now.” Her voice was cold and detached.

They walked together in silence. When they reached the creek crossing, she did not wait for Cal to carry her across but splashed through the water unaided. He got her horse from the corral, saddled and bridled him, and handed the reins to Lorena. She stood by the cabin as if frozen, holding Tory by the bridle and looking sadly at Cal.

His heart felt like a dead, cold stone. He thought she was going to say something, but she never did. She mounted her horse, turned, and rode away. He watched her ride up the trail, out of the valley, and out of his life forever. He continued watching until she disappeared into the trees. He stood there a long while. Occasionally he would catch sight of her colorful dress through the foliage, but then, after a time, nothing. He strained his eyes but saw only trees. She was gone.

Finally he turned and trudged slowly up the ravine to the mine, fighting to suppress the emotions swirling in his breast. Mechanically he stepped into the tunnel and did what he had done a hundred times before. Taking hammer and steel, he pounded, turning the drill while striking repeatedly until he had drilled a hole to the proper depth.

Breathing heavily from the exertion, he roughly shoved a blasting cap into a stick of dynamite, slid the charge into the hole, cap end first with the fuse running along the side as Chester had taught him. He put two more sticks in after the first and tamped them in with a wooden pole. It was a heavier charge than he normally used.

He lit the fuse and walked out of the mine. The explosion was deafening, and the ground shook as smoke and dust belched from the mine. He marched back into the portal, ignoring the dust and smoke stinging his eyes. He filled the ore cart with rubble and pushed the heavy load along the track, dumped it, and rolled it back into the mine. He picked up the hammer and drill and started the process over.

Exhausting toil was the only balm he knew for his heartache. That day he worked far into the night until his muscles ached and his body was exhausted enough to let him fall into a dreamless sleep. He did the same the next day, the next, and the day after. There was one other solace besides the hard work: the knowledge he had done the right thing and saved Lorena from a life of trouble and misery.

Though he tried not to think of it, often his mind drifted to remembrances of the joyous times with Lorena. Racing their horses, laughing together, the deep meaningful conversations, the touch of her hand on his, her blue eyes looking up at him, all once precious memories that were now bittersweet and exquisitely painful to recall. He would resolve to think of her no more, but then a memory would flash through his mind – her tender kiss on his cheek – and he would be undone. The joy he felt with Lorena in the past contrasted sharply with the lonely, hard, and empty life he was living now.

Weeks rolled by until the day came when Cal realized he was running low on supplies. He was running out of blasting caps and food stores were getting depleted as well.

Besides, he figured Henry and Jim deserved an accounting of how things were going with the mine. He would have to go to town and run the risk of running into Ed Follett and Cyclone Bill.

He strapped the pack saddle on the mule, saddled Scout, secured his gun belt, and slid his two rifles into their scabbards. He gathered the gold he had panned from the crushed high-grade ore specimens and packed it into his saddlebags. Sliding his foot into the stirrup, he swung into the saddle, and leading the mule, rode out of the valley toward Prescott.

As he entered the town square, he kept a wary eye out for Ed Follett and Cyclone Bill. He also watched for Lorena. He couldn't stop from hoping to see her. He longed to see her, yet feared to see her at the same time. There would be no point, he told himself. Seeing her would only cause more pain.

When he walked into the hardware store, Jim greeted him enthusiastically. "Howdy, Cal! I'm happy to see you. How are things going at the mine?"

"They're going. I got something to show you." Cal emptied the leather satchel he was carrying onto the counter, spilling chunks of gold across the countertop.

"Will you look at that!" Jim was jubilant.

"That's just the big stuff. There's a good bit of gold dust as well. This is only what I panned out from crushing some of the high-grade. I've got a large pile of medium-grade ore ready to haul. I'll have a wagonload soon. But I figured I'd give you this to help with operating expenses. I will need some more dynamite and caps and some star drills."

"There has to be at least five hundred dollars' worth of gold here!" Jim said excitedly. "I'll get this to the assayer's office and turn this into cash. Half of it is yours. I imagine you can use it."

While Jim was speaking a tall man with a mustache strode into the store. Jim smiled happily and said, “Son, come on in and meet our gold miner!”

“You must be Cal Chandler,” the man said.

With trepidation Cal noted the badge on the man’s vest. He appeared to be about fifteen years older than Cal and had an air of authority about him.

“Cal,” Jim said, “This here’s my son, Travis. He was voted in as city marshal last year, and I am sure proud of him. So, Cal, meet Marshal Travis McKenzie!”

“Hello, Marshal,” Cal said evenly.

“I’ve been looking for you,” the marshal's voice was flat with no emotion.

“That so?” Cal said warily.

“Yes, Lorena told me some things about you.”

Cal felt the marshal's eyes sizing him up. His pulse quickened and his thoughts raced. *She told him I was in on the paymaster robbery!* He had not expected Lorena would betray his trust. Yet she must have. But how could she? Why would she? She surely had told everything to her cousin, the marshal, and now the moment he dreaded was upon him.

Cal’s thoughts went to the worst. No doubt he would be hung for participating in the brutal attack on the soldiers. Knowing his death would be due to her betrayal was the worst hurt of all. He could accept dying, but dying at the hand of the woman he loved was too much to bear

There was nothing he could do. He could not draw on the marshal. It was Jim’s son and Lorena’s cousin. He would not harm, could not harm, anyone that Lorena cared for, not even to save his life. He closed his eyes and sighed. He would go peaceably.

“She told me,” the marshal continued, “about how you handled the attempted holdup of the stage and how you took care of her when she had heat stroke. We are all in your debt. It’s good to meet you.” The marshal stuck out his hand. Cal shook it while trying to hide the whirlwind of feelings rushing through him. *She had not betrayed him!*

The marshal looked at Cal's face intently for a moment before speaking again. “Lorena knew I was looking to hire a deputy. A few weeks back, she told me about you and asked that I consider you for the position. I told her I would discuss it with you. It seems you’re someone who can handle himself when it counts. That’s precisely the kind of man I need. If you’re agreeable, we should sit down somewhere and talk.”

“I’d be happy to talk.” Cal tried to control his breathing. “But I don’t know how being your deputy would work out with me working the claim. It’s a long ride from here.”

“Cal,” Jim cut in, “You do what’s best for you. Don’t feel obligated. You and Travis talk and you do what you want. Don’t worry about the mine. It’s not going anywhere.”

“Thanks, Jim,” Cal said, “I appreciate it.”

“By the way, Cal, did Lorena head to the house?”

“She’s not with me.”

“So I can see,” Jim said with a chuckle. “Is she at one of the stores, or did she head to my place?”

“I haven’t seen her, Mr. McKenzie.”

Jim looked suddenly worried. “She didn’t ride back in with you today?”

“Ride in with me?” Cal was puzzled. “I haven’t seen Lorena for weeks.”

“She rode out to see you this morning.” Jim sounded concerned. “I assumed she was with you. She stopped in here this morning, rather distraught. She wasn’t making sense – said something about abandoning someone in their time of deepest need. I don’t know what that was about. Not my business anyway, I suppose. She was in a terrible tizzy. I’ve never seen her that way. But she was heading out to see you. You must have missed her coming in.”

“That’s impossible,” Cal said. “There is no way we could have missed each other. There is only one way in and out of that valley. I would have seen her. She has to be somewhere here in town.”

Jim was about to say something when Henry came rushing into the store. “We got trouble!” Seeing Cal, he added, “Oh good, you’re here. Someone just tossed a rock through my living room window with this note tied to it.”

“What does it say? Read it!” Jim exclaimed.

“I’m afraid someone’s taken Lorena,” Henry lamented. “Here, read it for yourself.” Henry handed the note to Jim.

Jim read the note aloud:

“If you ever want to see the young lady again, tell Cal Chandler to come to the twin peaks south of town tomorrow at noon. He is to climb to the top of the western hill. Tell him to come alone and bring the gold, or else.”

Moment of Truth



JIM LOOKED UP from the note. “What gold is he talking about? Are they after the gold you just brought in?”

“No. The gold they’re after is a lot more than what is sitting on your counter.” Cal was having to answer questions faster than he had time to think what to say.

“Chandler,” the marshal asked, “who is after you? What’s this all about?”

With a sinking feeling, Cal realized he was caught, but his main concern was for Lorena and he realized he had to tell all. “They want the gold from the U.S. Army payroll robbery that happened near Pima a few months ago. They believe I have some of it.”

“And why would they think that?” The marshal stepped closer to Cal and put his hands on his hips.

Cal met the marshal’s cold stare. “Because I was in on the robbery.”

“Oh God help us!” Jim exclaimed.

“Travis, what are we to do?” Henry asked.

Cal spoke up before the marshal could answer. “I’ll turn myself over to them. It’s the only way. It’s me they’re after. Lorena knows nothing of the gold. They have only used her to get to me. I’ll trade myself for her. That’s what they want.”

“Chandler, who are these men and how many are there?” The marshal’s voice was stern.

“They’re from the band that robbed the payroll. I saw two of them in town a few weeks back. It’s only the two of them as far as I know, but there could be more.”

“If they figure you double-crossed them on the gold, they are liable to kill you. Are you ready to trade your life for hers?”

Cal looked the marshal in the eye while everyone waited for his answer. When he spoke, it was matter-of-fact, but with a tone that left no doubt he meant it. “*I would die for her,*” he stated quietly. There was silence as his words sank in.

The marshal looked at Cal thoughtfully for a moment before speaking. “If they don’t kill you, when this is all over, I’ll be turning you over to the Army to be locked up with the rest of the bunch over at Fort Thomas.”

“Understood. I’ll give you no trouble.”

“Okay. The first thing is, you need to get the gold packed up. We’ll hope and pray once they have you and the gold, they will turn Lorena loose.”

“There’s a problem,” Cal said.

“Another problem?” the marshal was nonplussed. “As if we don’t have enough already. What is it?”

“I don’t have the gold.”

“Oh! Lord have mercy!” Jim exclaimed.

“Explain.” The marshal demanded.

“I discarded the gold near the robbery site. It’s buried where no one could ever find it, not even with directions. I’m the only one who could locate it, and it’s a month’s hard ride there and back.”

“Oh, good heavens!” Henry exclaimed while wringing his hands.

“Let me get this straight,” Jim said. “You robbed the Army payroll and threw away the gold. Seems to me you’re not very good at this outlaw thing.”

The marshal picked up the ransom note and studied it. “The note says to bring the gold, or else. So, you’re willing to march up that hill without the gold and see what the ‘or else’ is going to be?”

“No other choice,” Cal said. “They ain’t gonna like it none. All I can do is promise I’ll lead them to the gold if they first set Lorena free.”

“Might work,” the marshal said. “It’s about the only play we have. But it is entirely likely they’ll keep both of you.”

Cal shook his head. “If they do that, I won’t take them to the gold. I will insist they let her go first.”

The marshal tapped his fingers on the table while he considered their plan. Then he spoke. “We need to be ready in case they keep you both. They sure planned this out. That hill they want you to climb has no trees. It’s steep. You may have to climb to the top on foot. They’re doing that to make sure you aren’t followed. No doubt they’ll be nearby, likely on top of the sister hill to the east. From there they will be able to see anyone coming out from town with you.”

Henry started to say something but the marshal held up his hand. “Hold on. To the south of those hills is a long bare

ridge. From there we can look down on both hills. They'll be looking north to see who rides out of town with you. They won't be looking south. Cal, you ride south out of town, straight to the hill they want you on. We'll swing wide to the east and circle in behind the ridge and come up to its top from the south. That way they will never see us and only see you riding out of town alone. We'll ride out before daybreak and be in position with plenty of time to spare. Cal, you head out of town at eleven and ride straight to the hill. If they keep both you and Lorena, as I figure they will, we'll be following your trail."

"And what then?" Jim asked

The marshal looked at his father and shrugged. "We'll play it as it goes."

"Cal," Jim said. "I'm going to give you some bright red fabric, cut in ribbons. If you're able to do it without being seen, leave some behind from time to time as you're able. It will help us follow your trail."

"That won't hurt," the marshal said, "but don't let them catch you doing it. We don't want them knowin' they're being tracked. I'll get Itza-chu. He's the best Indian tracker I've ever seen. Let's pack for a long trip, just in case. And we best pack a lot of cartridges and pray we don't need them."



BEFORE SUNRISE Henry, Jim, the marshal, and Itza-chu were in position on the ridge to the south of the twin hills. They had left town while it was still dark enough to conceal their movements. Having tied their horses at the bottom of the ridge, they climbed to the crest on foot and lay prone overlooking the edge. They had a long wait until noon.

It was two minutes past eleven in the morning when Jim asked, "Do you think Cal will show up?"

“He has plenty of reason to vanish,” the marshal said.

“I think he’ll show,” Henry stated.

“What makes you so sure?”

Henry answered with a quote, “*For love is as strong as death, passion as intense as Sheol.*”

“Shakespeare?” Jim asked.

“No. From the Bible. And if ever I saw a young man in love, that one is. I think he’ll show up.”

“Well,” Jim said, “I guess we’ll find out if his love is stronger than death. It’s his own death he’ll be facing.”

“You know, I just can’t figure the man,” Henry said. “He was a perfect gentleman on the stage ride up here. I would never have figured him for a criminal. He took good care of us all and watched over Lorena when she was having a difficult time. And he has been working quite hard at the mine. Thieves are generally averse to hard work. It doesn’t add up.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Jim said. “What sort of robber throws away the loot? And from what I read in the papers, all the other bandits went back to their homes and ranches and that’s where they were arrested. But not this one, he high-tailed it, leaving his home and relations behind.”

“Look there,” the marshal said suddenly as he scanned the slopes with a pair of binoculars. “There’s a man watching from the eastern hill.” He handed the binoculars to Henry.

“Sure enough,” Henry said. “And south of the other hill, I believe I see horses tied, back in the trees.” He handed the binoculars back to the marshal.

“Well, I’ll be jiggered,” the marshal said. “There’s Chandler. He’s approaching the north side of the hill.”

“*The flames of love are flames of fire,*” Henry quoted.

“More Bible?” the marshal asked.

“Yep. Song of Solomon. That outlaw is head-over-heels in love with my niece. Lord have mercy! Her father is going to have my hide.”

“And just think what I did,” the marshal replied, as he continued peering through the binoculars. “I came close to making the most wanted man in Arizona my deputy.” And then, after a moment added, “Chandler is going up the hill.”

They continued to watch. After a time they saw Cal ride down the hill and go into the trees on the southern side. They watched as the man on the eastern hill scrambled down to his horse and rode toward the same area. The south side of the hill was heavily wooded and it was difficult to see what was going on there. Finally, they were able to make out riders heading into the hills south of Prescott.

“There they go,” the marshal stated. “Let’s get to our horses.”

19

Angel Eyes



CAL'S HEART WAS HEAVY as he rode to the top of the hill. Lorena was in danger and it was entirely his fault. He worried about her and how she was being treated. He could only imagine that she must blame him for all of this and she would be right, he thought. He was to blame.

Scout labored up the slope, planting his hooves carefully on the steep incline, at last summiting the crest of the big hill. Cal looked around but saw no one. It wasn't noon yet, so he waited. Then, noticing a small flag of cloth fluttering in the breeze, he drew closer and saw that someone had tied it to a stick and stuck it in the ground. Seeing a piece of paper wrapped around it, he pulled it loose and read:

“Chandler: Go to the bottom of the hill on the south side. Wait there in the pine trees.”

He descended into the pines as the note instructed. Suddenly Ed Follett stepped out from beside a tree with a cocked .44 pointed at him.

“Get off your horse, Chandler, and put your hands in the air,” Follett snarled.

Cal dismounted and stood with his hands raised while Cyclone Bill came from behind, removed his gun from its holster, and tied his hands in front of him.

“Now get back in the saddle,” Follett said as he rummaged through Cal’s saddlebags. Cal remounted while Cyclone Bill slipped the bridle off Cal’s horse and replaced it with a halter and long lead rope.

“Where’s the gold, Chandler?” Follett demanded. “There’s nothing here.”

“Where is Lorena?” Cal replied.

Follett began swearing. “Chandler, you’re a fool for coming here without the gold. Now where is it?”

Cal’s anger and indignation rose and he couldn’t hold his tongue. “Follett, if you’ve harmed her in any way, I swear, I’ll see you hangin’ at the end of a rope!”

“Big talk for an unarmed man with his hands tied,” Follett growled. “You know the deal. Give us the gold, and you get the girl.”

“Release the girl first, then you get the gold. That’s the only deal I’ll make.”

Follett swore at Cal again. Cyclone Bill interrupted. “Ed, we gotta get out of here before they find us. We can sort this out back at camp.”

“Chandler, you got a lotta nerve, showin’ up here without the gold, Follett complained. I’ve a mind to plug you right now.”

“You’ll get your gold,” Cal said.

Follett spat on the ground and climbed onto his horse. “Let’s go. Try anything and we’ll fill you so full of lead you’ll be dead before you hit the dirt.”

Follett led Cal’s horse by the lead rope. Riding south, they turned into a wash that wound higher into the mountains. As they gained elevation, the pine trees grew taller and thicker. Leaving the wash, they crossed a ridge and followed a faint trail deeper into the forest.

Feeling like a lamb led to the slaughter, Cal hoped and prayed that Lorena was unharmed and that he could convince them to let her go. If she wasn’t set free, he would never forgive himself.

They rode on for hours, and as the sun was getting low in the west, they worked their way down a ridge toward a wash with a small trickle of water running through it. As they crossed the bottom of the gulch, they came to a camp in a grove of gnarled pinyon pines on the far bank. Reining in their horses, the riders swung to the ground and a wiry young man who was tending a campfire stood up and greeted Follett.

“About time you got back,” the man said, his voice betraying his nervousness. “I’m tired of babysitting while you two go off on adventures.”

“Shut up, Nicky,” Follett snapped. “Take these horses and put ’em on the picket line.”

Cal ignored their bickering. His eyes were focused beyond, to a tree on the far side of the camp. Sitting and leaning against the tree was Lorena, her hands tied behind her back and her mouth gagged, her lovely eyes wide with fright.

“Nicky!” Ed Follett scolded, “What is the matter with you? Why did you gag her? I didn’t tell you to do that. Even if she screams, no one is gonna hear her except the squirrels.”

“You don’t understand, Ed,” Nicky whined. “That woman was a-gettin’ into my head, tellin’ me I’m going to hell for what I’m a-doin’ now.”

Ed let out a mocking laugh. “So, you’re afraid of a girl telling you to go to hell! Grow up and go take that gag off her.”

“No Ed, she didn’t tell me to go to hell. She told me God wants me to go to heaven, but I’m a-goin’ to hell for what I’m doing.”

“You mean she was a preachin’ at ya?” Ed laughed derisively.

“Yeah. She sure ’nough was. Started off by askin’ me about my parents and my childhood. Asked me if my parents ever took me to church when I was little and what my folks would think of what I’m doing. I’m tellin’ you, that girl has got the sweetest voice, like an angel. I told her to hush up, but then she asked me what it is like to lie awake at night, seein’ the faces of the soldiers we shot and hearin’ their cries in my dreams. I’m a-tellin’ you, she was gettin’ to me.”

“You’re pathetic, Nick,” Ed snarled, “lettin’ that little goody two-shoes get to you. She ain’t no angel, and she ain’t no better than any one of us.”

“I don’t know, Ed. If she’s no angel, how’d she know about my nightmares? Answer me that. I never heard no one talk like her. She said God loves me and will forgive me for everything I’ve ever done if I repent and come to Jesus.”

“Come to Jesus! Nicky, you are a simple-minded fool! Why are you listening to her religious tricks? And you went

and gagged her just because you couldn't handle her self-righteous preaching? Well Nicky, maybe you are going to hell – for bein' stupid! Come to Jesus, ha!" Follett's voice dripped with contempt.

"Now Ed," Nicky pleaded, "she just about had me talked into lettin' her go. She asked me if she could pray for me. She wouldn't stop, so that's why I gagged her. Then she kept watchin' me with those pretty eyes. Angel eyes, those are. Watchin' me, makin' me feel bad. I don't know what I'd done if you'd a-never come back when ya did. Either set her loose or blindfolded her."

"Nicky," Follett barked with exasperation, "You are a dim-witted idiot! She was trying to play you for a fool. You know we have orders, and obedience is where your salvation lies. Nowhere else. So pay no attention to what some godless Gentile woman says. But just the same, maybe you should keep the gag on her. Now quit sniveling. This place is for men, not whiners."

Fed up with Nicky, Ed turned and glared at Cal. "Okay, lover boy," he barked at Cal, "We've been watching the two of you gallivantin' about town. If you wanna save the neck of your little girlfriend there, you'll do exactly what we say. Sit down by the fire while we tie your feet. Now tell me, where's the gold? We warned you not to come without it."

"Let the girl go, and you can have the gold."

"Wrong answer! Now talk, Chandler. Tell us where the gold is."

"You want to talk? Take the gag off her."

"Fine then. Nicky, ungag her. But little miss, Sunday School is over. You say one word to anyone, and I'll have him put that gag right back on you. Now Chandler, where's the gold?"

“Alright. Here’s the deal. If I had the gold, I would have brought it with me. I buried it near the site of the holdup. I’ll draw you a map if you want, but you’d never find it. I’ll have to take you to it, and I will. But first, let her go.”

“You expect us to believe that? Why would you get rid of the gold and travel halfway across the territory without it?”

“I could ask you, why didn’t Webb take the gold back from me when I was unconscious? I got rid of it because it wasn’t mine to begin with. It was the Army’s. And after it was stolen, Webb considered the gold his. And if I took it with me, I might get caught with it. Besides all that, it’s blood money. It’s cursed. I wanted nothing to do with it.”

“I take your point about getting caught with it,” Follett answered. “But I say you’re as nutty as she is. Why did you run off in the first place? You left your people behind. Why?”

“Because I’ve had my fill of Webb’s lies. He said there would be no bloodshed. I’ve had enough of the Church’s deception. You might recall Webb knocked me unconscious. I wasn’t feelin’ too kindly to anything Mormon anymore.”

“Yeah, he knocked you a good one,” Follett snickered. “We thought you were dead at first. Alright then, you lead us to the gold and when I have it in my hands, we’ll let you both go.”

“No deal. You’ll likely kill us both once you have the gold. If you keep us both, you will never see the gold. I’ll never show you where it is. Untie her, let her have her horse, and let her go. Then I’ll take you to the gold. That’s the only way it’s going to happen.”

“Do you think I’m loco?” Follett squawked. “Turn her loose? Yeah, right. She’ll have all the law in Prescott on our trail in no time.”

“All the law in Prescott is already on your trail. And why is that? Because you took her. You kidnapped a lady. Something not even the wickedest of men do. And you didn’t take just any lady. You took a lady from one of the most prominent families in Prescott. And her cousin is the marshal. They will hound you to kingdom come. Now listen, no one cares about me. Let her go and they will have considerably less interest in chasing you. I’m the one you want, and you’ve got me. You’ve won, so let her go.”

Follett considered Cal’s words. Cal spoke again. “Kidnapping a woman. Now that’s news. Decent folk will be appalled. We’re talkin’ about a large reward for your capture. The news will be wired from Flagstaff to Tombstone and everywhere in between. Every lawman and bounty hunter in the territory will be out looking for you. Let her go.”

“Alright, Chandler. I’ll turn her loose. But if you don’t lead us to the gold, we’ll slit your throat and come right back here for her. Don’t you forget that.” He turned to Nicky. “Go untie her, saddle her horse, and bring it over here.”

“Give her a bedroll,” Cal demanded.

“A bedroll?” Follett was incredulous.

“Yes, a bedroll. Or at least a heavy blanket. It’s only a couple of hours till dark, and the nights are getting cold. It’s late October, and winter comes early in these mountains. If she freezes to death on the way back, they’ll hunt you to the ends of the earth.”

Follett started to say something, but Cal interrupted, “And they won’t give you no trial when they catch you either. They’ll hang you on the spot. They’ll have no mercy on a lady killer. You know that. And this won’t be no official street hangin’ where you die quick. No sir. They’ll put a rope around your neck, string you up to the nearest

tree, pull you up slow and let you dangle while they watch you strangle to death.”

“She can have my blanket,” Cyclone Bill said anxiously. “I ain’t a-killin’ no woman. I don’t want them hangin’ me.”

“Fine!” Ed exploded. “Good riddance to her for driving my men crazy. Give angel eyes a blanket. Next thing you know, she’ll be taking the shirt off our backs.”

“She can have my shirt,” Nicky quavered. “I got an extra.”

Follett rolled his eyes. “Shut up, Nicky! Now let the regal highness have her horse. Young lady, not one word from you. Get on your horse and get out of here before I change my mind.”

Nicky handed Lorena the reins. Lorena mounted Tory while Nicky tied a woolen blanket onto the back of the saddle. Lorena gazed over at Cal, a long, sorrowful look that he knew he would never forget. Cal watched her ride up the trail and into the trees, and then she was gone.

20

No Greater Love



LORENA GALLOPED UP the hill away from her captors, but she felt like a piece of herself was left behind. Her heart burned with mixed emotions as she rode away from the man who had just traded his life for hers. Tears streamed down her face from the torrent of feelings – relief at being freed, gratefulness to Cal for saving her, mixed with sorrow and worry for him, along with regret that she had left him, without a word, at the cabin after he had poured out his heart.

She wondered how she could have been so callous. She had no chance to tell him how sorry she was for not believing in him. Now she would never get the chance. She had tried to return to the claim to apologize and was on her way when they abducted her on the Senator Highway.

She must rally people to rescue Cal, she thought with determination. She would not abandon him. There was no time to seek shelter somewhere from the wind and wrap up

in her blanket. She must get back to town and enlist help. Riding quickly in the fading light, she followed the trail back the way they had come. Having paid close attention to where they had taken her, she was confident she was on the right track.

She had been riding for a couple hours when the trail dropped into a dry creek bed which she followed into a small valley. The air was growing colder now that the sun had set. Occasionally the darkened sky spit sprinkles of rain. Turning east, she climbed toward a bare ridge she remembered they had previously come down.

The frigid wind on the high ridgeline stung her face with sleet and wrenched at her soaked clothing. Strands of wet hair whipped in front of her eyes. Trusting Tornado to take her through, she huddled on his back until they reached the northern end of the escarpment, where they descended a steep trail and entered into tall pines.

It was completely dark now, and she let Tornado slowly pick his way along, hoping he could see the faint trail better than she. But, even though tightly wrapped in the blanket Cal had insisted they give her, she still shivered in the icy cold. She could not remember having ever been so chilled. She longed to find shelter from the biting wind. Nevertheless, she knew she dare not stop. With resolve, she plodded on.

Lorena found it increasingly hard to think, not realizing it was because she was in the early stages of hypothermia. How wise and thoughtful Cal had been, she thought slowly, to insist on giving her a blanket. Her confused and disjointed thoughts collided together. *Help me, Lord. Cal... where was Cal? Cal?* Did she say it or think it? In her increasing confusion, she didn't know.

Leaning forward and grasping the saddle horn, she made herself small against the wind. The pain from the cold slightly lessened as sleepiness dulled her senses. She tried

to fight off the drowsiness, but the cadence of her horse's hooves on the stony earth carried a monotonous rhythm that tempted her eyes to close. *Tot, ta-lot. Tot, ta-lot. Tot, ta-lot.*

Why was it so hard to think, she wondered? "*Oh God, please help him,*" she prayed repeatedly. Drowsiness continued to creep over her. She was in a half-conscious dream state when suddenly two forms loomed in the darkness on each side of the trail and a voice commanded, "*Halt!*"

Lorena's heart jumped. She didn't know how her captors had gotten in front of her, or why they had changed their minds. No matter. She wasn't going to stick around and find out. She was about to kick Tornado in the flanks and leap ahead when she heard, "*Stop and state your business! Keep your hands where we can see them.*" In her slow-working mind, she thought there was something familiar about the voice. Something warm and good, but she couldn't think what it was.

"Travis?" She heard her quavering voice ask.

"Oh, thank God! It's Lorena!" someone said.

She tried to dismount, but her legs wouldn't work. She couldn't understand why. She felt hands reaching for her, and she half slid, half fell from her horse into the arms of her two uncles and Cousin Travis.

"Oh! She is trembling from head to foot!" she heard a voice say. "Why, this girl is frozen nearly half to death! She's as cold as ice." She thought it strange that the voice sounded like her Uncle Henry. But he couldn't be here. Who else has that voice, she thought?

"Let's get her over to the fire."

Travis carried her through the trees to a level spot where they were camped. "Itza-chu! Throw all the wood on that fire and make it hot," Travis hollered as they approached.

Setting her down on a log by the campfire, he began helping to throw wood on the fire.

Henry took her wet blanket and wrapped a dry one around her while Jim brought a hot cup of coffee. She took the cup in her violently shaking hands. Itza-chu put more wood on the fire and fanned it into flame. Lorena's mind cleared slightly as her terrible chill lessened.

The questions came from everyone at once. Was she hurt? Who took her and where were they now? How and where did they take her? How did she escape? She answered their questions and assured them she had not been harmed.

"We heard you coming down off that ridge," Jim said. Horse hooves on that loose sliding shale make quite a racket. Luckily, we found you when we did, as cold as you were. Soon as you're good and warm, we'll head back to town."

"What do you mean?" Lorena asked. "Back to town? We can't go back to town." She took another sip of coffee through her chattering teeth.

"We came out here to rescue you," Jim said. "We've done that. No need to be out here in this weather any longer. All we want to do now is see you safely home."

"But you didn't rescue me. Cal did." Lorena was confused. "You're not making sense, Uncle Jim. We have to go after them." She couldn't understand why her mind was working so slowly.

"Lorena," Travis said. "You're so chilled that you're not thinking straight. I'm just a city marshal. I don't have jurisdiction outside of town. Cal Chandler is the Army's problem now. The federal authorities will hunt him down."

"No! You don't understand! If it were not for Cal, I would still be a prisoner. I don't want you to hunt him down and arrest him. I want you to rescue him!"

“Rescue him?” Henry was incredulous.

“Yes!” Lorena felt her face flush. She sat up straight and put her coffee cup down. “Cal traded his life for mine! They had no intention of setting me free. You should have heard him begging them to let me go. He talked them into it. He convinced them to turn me loose. Without regard for himself, he told them no matter what they did to him, he would never cooperate unless they turned me loose. He even insisted they give me a blanket.”

“Well,” Travis said, “that’s the least he could do after mixing you up in all his trouble, which I’ll point out is all his own doing. He’s a common thief. He told us about being in on the Army payroll robbery. Now he’s with his own kind.”

“They are not his own kind! Hot anger flashed in her eyes. He is nothing like them!” Lorena fairly exploded. “He’s a fine, decent man! Uncle Henry, you know that. You’ve seen it.” Lorena’s pent-up emotions erupted passionately as she turned to her cousin and let loose. “Travis, he was forced to go on that robbery. He was a nineteen-year-old youth, brainwashed his whole life to blindly do whatever the Mormon leaders told him.

“He didn’t shoot anybody. He threw away the gold they gave him to carry, and when he tried to stop them from murdering one of their own, they knocked him unconscious. He left his parents, his home, and his church to get away from the likes of them, so don’t ever compare him to them! He is *not* like them!” Lorena’s cheeks reddened and her whole body shook, but not from cold. “*Don’t ever say he is with his own kind!*” Her eyes flashed as she looked from one to another.

“I am pretty sure she’s warmed up now,” Jim quipped.

“That’s all news to us,” Travis said. “He told you all that?”

“Yes, he did.”

“And you believed him?”

“Yes. Well, no. Not at first. I didn’t know what to think when he told me. But I thought about it later, and yes, I believe him. I do! I believe him! He didn’t have to tell me anything at all. He didn’t have to tell me about his past. He only told me so I would understand why he couldn’t ever be with me. He didn’t want to ruin my life.”

“Might be too late for that,” Jim said laconically.

“Don’t you see?” Lorena continued, “Why would he lie about any of it when he didn’t have to tell me anything? So yes, I believe every word of it.”

Lorena looked pleadingly from one to the other. “They will kill him!” Her words were thick with emotion. “We have to go after them,” she pleaded. “Please! I love him!”

“Oh, Lord have mercy,” Jim exclaimed. “Our niece is in love with an outlaw!”

“No greater love,” Henry said.

“What’s that?” Travis asked.

“It’s what Jesus said,” Henry answered. “Our Lord said, ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ Cal was willing to lay down his life for her. He could have easily ridden off and escaped. Instead, he traded his life for hers. There is no greater love. That has to count for something.”

“If you won’t go after them,” Lorena said, “then give me a rifle and I’ll go after them myself.”

Jim stood up and tossed what was left of his coffee into the fire. Then, looking at Travis, “I don’t think we’re going to win this argument.”

Travis let out a big sigh. He looked over at Henry and Jim and then at Lorena. “Okay, little sister. We’ll see you home, and then go after them.”

“No.” Lorena was firm. “I’m going with you. I can ride and shoot as well as any of you. Maybe better. We’re not two hours away from their camp, and I know exactly where it is. If we waste time going to town, they’ll be long gone.”

“They won’t get away. Itza-chu can track them tomorrow.”

“Not if it rains, he can’t. And it’s already sprinkling, off and on.”

“She’s got a point there,” Jim interjected.

“I mean it. I’m not going back.” Lorena was defiant.

Itza-chu had been quietly sitting and listening. Suddenly he said something in Apache.

Travis turned to Itza-chu. “What’s is it, Itza-chu? Did you hear something?”

“I hear,” Itza-chu said.

“What’d you hear?” Travis looked back toward the trail.

“I hear the heart of a warrior,” Itza-chu said, looking at Lorena. “She make good Apache.”

“I reckon so,” Travis said, shaking his head.

“I hear heap more. Hear who real chief is.”

Henry and Jim laughed. “Itza-chu,” Henry said. “You are a man of few words, but when you speak your words fly straight as an arrow.”

“I wonder...” Itza-chu’s words trailed off.

“What?” asked Travis impatiently. “What do you wonder?”

“Wonder if...” Itza-chu paused again, and then said slowly, “Itza-chu wonder if man who owns her heart knows he has wildcat by tail.”

21

Wildcat by the Tail



IT WAS FOUR IN THE MORNING when they mounted their horses and cautiously picked their way through the dark, with Lorena in the lead. After they traveled more than an hour, the eastern sky glowed with a hint of the coming sunrise. Lorena indicated they were close.

“I’m not sure if it is over that ridge or the next,” she said quietly, as she reined her horse to a stop, “but their camp is down in a valley after a tall ridge like that one.”

“Alright,” Travis said. “Wait here. Itza-chu, come with me.” They galloped their horses up the incline and dismounted near the top. After tying their horses, Travis and Itza-chu cautiously approached the crest of the ridge, being careful to stay concealed. Looking down, they scrutinized the valley below.

“I don’t make out anything,” Travis said.

They studied the area meticulously. Itza-chu pointed. “Look there. White man foolish. No Indian so stupid to make fire when hunted by others.”

Itza-chu was pointing beyond the next hill. Travis looked closely, following Itza-chu’s outstretched arm. Then he saw it in the distance – a tiny waft of smoke, barely visible in the predawn light.

“Yes, I see it now. They are beyond that second ridge. Let’s go back.” Upon returning to the others and relaying what they had seen, they all rode on. Close to the next ridgeline, they dismounted, and once again, Travis and Itza-chu climbed the hill, scouted the view, and returned to the others.

“Their camp is over this hill,” Travis explained. “On the other side there’s a tiny creek at the bottom of the hill. Their camp is on the far side of that wash.”

“What’s the plan?” Jim asked.

“They all appear to be asleep around the fire,” Travis said. “We’ll leave the horses here and go on foot. We’re going to fan out. Uncle Henry, you go left and approach their right flank. Pa, you and I will go straight down and approach head-on. Itza-chu, Lorena, you two go right and cover their left flank. Be ready to block their escape in that direction.”

Travis glanced toward Lorena and gave Itza-chu a knowing look. “You know what your main job is.”

“Itza-chu understand. Protect little chief with heart of warrior.” Lorena wasn’t sure whether to be insulted or complimented.

“Sorry, little sister,” Travis said. “You follow his lead. My arrest, my rules.”

“Give me a rifle,” Lorena demanded.

Travis handed her his Winchester while Henry gave him a disapproving look. “That’s easier than having an argument I can’t win,” Travis said. “Besides, I’ve seen her shoot, and she’s safer with it than without it.”

“Listen,” Travis said, “I’ll wait till everyone is in position. Wait for me to call them out. Stay under cover. If I fire, then fire only if you need to, but be careful not to shoot Chandler.” Lorena gave Travis a nod of appreciation. “Everyone grab your rifle,” Travis added. “Let’s move, but go quiet.”

They climbed the ridge and split up, Lorena and Itza-chu creeping down the other side to the right. The sun was rising as they got into position. The Apache merged with his surroundings, his buckskin leggings blending against the sandy-colored rocks. Moving like a crafty fox, he lithely slunk behind a boulder. Lorena followed. Concealed behind the large rock, they waited.

Henry went left and covered the upstream side of the wash. Travis and Jim moved in behind a tree twenty yards from the camp. Pulling his pistol from its holster and cocking the hammer back as he drew, Travis hollered. “*Throw up your hands! The first one to make a wrong move will be the first to die!*”

As soon as Travis called out, Lorena worked the lever action of the Winchester, putting a round in the chamber. Itza-chu did the same with his rifle. The sound of Winchesters chambering rounds resounded through the small valley. Lorena and Itza-chu leveled their rifles toward the camp.

From Lorena’s vantage point beside the boulder, she saw everyone around the campfire give a start and sit up. Slowly hands were raised. She heard “Don’t shoot!” from the camp and recognized Nicky’s frightened voice. Henry moved down from the top of the wash while Uncle Jim and Travis stepped across the creek bed into the camp. Lorena

and Itza-chu walked up the wash, approaching from their side.

Travis' threatening voice rang out with authority, "This is Marshal McKenzie! If any one of you goes for a gun, we'll kill you all. We've got half a dozen guns on you. Don't move a muscle or twitch a finger." Travis walked up to the group of men sitting with their hands in the air. "Henry, Itza-chu, get their guns!"

Cal sat immobilized with his feet tied, and Itza-chu strode over, pulled his knife and cut the ropes. Cal gratefully rose to his feet, stretching his stiff and sore legs. A movement in the wash caught his attention, and looking up, he saw Lorena walking up the creek bed, rifle at the ready.

Travis was busy barking orders and helping Itza-chu disarm the three men and tie their hands. Nicky was whimpering, "Please don't hang me! I offered her my shirt!" Cyclone Bill chimed in, "I gave her my blanket!" What Ed Follett said can't be repeated.

Lorena was oblivious to all of it. She uncocked her rifle and handed it to Itza-chu. She was elated with joy and relief. All the tension and emotion of the past few days overwhelmed her.

Fighting back tears, she ran the last few steps and threw her arms around Cal. She didn't care who was watching or listening. Cal wrapped his arms around her and gently held her while she sobbed, "I'm sorry, Cal. I should have believed you." Tears streamed down her cheeks while she looked up into his face. "I'll never forget what you did for me," she cried, shaking her head for emphasis. "Never. I'll never forget. And nothing, nothing in your past will ever change my love for you. I will love you until my dying day!"

"Looks like she's falling in love," Henry said.

Jim quipped, "I'd say that ship has already sailed."

Lorena might have been oblivious to those around her, but everyone else could plainly see that Lorena was totally, completely, and irrevocably in love with Cal Chandler.

They stood silently watching while Lorena shook with sobs as she buried her head in Cal's chest. Travis looked over at Jim and Henry and dipped his head toward Cal. "What will we do with him? Am I supposed to tie him up and haul him into jail?"

Lorena lifted her head from Cal's chest long enough to say defiantly, "Then you'll have to tie me and lock me up with him!"

"Oh, God help us!" Jim exclaimed.

They stood there speechless, looking at Lorena embracing Cal. Finally, Itza-chu broke the silence. "White man not see. Itza-chu see. You *all* have wildcat by tail."

Deputy Marshal



AFTER FOLLETT AND HIS two accomplices were tied up, the marshal and Itza-chu placed them on their horses and led them over the ridgeline to where they had tied their own horses. From there they began the trek back to Prescott.

Nicky's tied hands grasped the saddle horn as he was led along. "You won't hang us, will you?" Nicky squeaked fearfully.

"You're going to jail," the marshal said. "You'll stand trial for abducting Miss McKenzie. Then we'll see if the Army has any interest in you. Sounds to me like you three are mixed up in the robbery of the Army payroll."

Itza-chu rode up next to Nicky and leaned over close to him, his dark brown eyes intense. "Marshal say, you try to escape, he let me make big fire and burn you." Horror spread over Nicky's face. Cyclone Bill crossed himself, looked heavenward, and began silently praying. Marshal McKenzie stifled his chuckle.

Jim and Henry followed behind the prisoners, keeping a close eye on them. Cal and Lorena brought up the rear,

riding side by side where the trail permitted. Chatting easily as they rode reminded them of their first days together as they followed the stagecoach as outriders.

“You were supposed to go home to safety,” Cal said.

“Would you have preferred we not come for you?”

“Since no harm came of it, of course I am glad. Going to jail is better than getting murdered by those louts.”

“You’re not going to jail if I have anything to say about it.” Lorena's eyes flashed with defiance. “And believe me, I would say plenty!”

“Your cousin has to do what he thinks best. I’m not going to give him any trouble.”

“That’s all right,” Lorena answered smartly. “I can make enough trouble for the both of us!”

“Somehow, I don’t doubt you can,” Cal said with a chuckle.

Riding in the lead, Marshal Travis McKenzie was in a pensive mood as he worried about what to do. Jailing Chandler would engender the ire of his cousin. They had been close their entire lives, and he didn't relish any strife between them. He also considered that Lorena had always shown good sense and been a good judge of character. He could not dismiss her viewpoint without considering the matter carefully.

Lorena’s rescue was due to Chandler’s efforts, and that fact was not lost on the marshal either. Cal had risked his life for her. Henry’s words echoed in his mind, “*That has to count for something.*” If what Lorena said was true, that he was dragged into the holdup against his will, perhaps that should make a difference. Still, he wasn’t so sure the law would read it that way, and he was commissioned to uphold the law. So how could he let Chandler go? As they approached Prescott, he realized he was going to have

to make a decision. He half wished Chandler would ride off and vanish. This was a problem he didn't need.

They rode into town and dismounted by a small outbuilding on the Plaza by the courthouse. After tying their horses, the marshal unlocked a door to the courthouse and they made their way down a hallway to the marshal's office where the jail cells were located.⁴⁷ The marshal put all three prisoners in one cell. Then, seeing only one remaining cell, Cal said, "Is that where you want me, Marshal?"

Lorena stepped over to the open door of the cell. "Travis, is that where you want *us*?"

"Now Lorena, look..."

"I mean it," Lorena interrupted. "You lock him up, you lock me up with him."

The marshal let out a tired sigh and went over to his desk and sat down. Lorena noticed for the first time how exhausted her cousin appeared. He drummed his fingers on the desk thoughtfully. He looked up at Lorena and was about to say something when someone burst through the office door. Travis recognized him as the city council member who had given him his badge.

"Marshal! Oh, thank heavens you're back. They've robbed the stage! Right outside of town on the road to Skull Valley!" He wrung his hands in agitation and then continued. "They – they killed a man. The varmints tried to grope his wife when they searched her dress for hidden money. The husband tried to stop them, and they just shot him dead. Killed him, and in front of his wife! Marshal, looks like rain is coming, but if you go quickly, you might

⁴⁷ In 1889 the jail was located on the 2nd floor of the courthouse which was in the center of the Plaza. This courthouse, built in 1878, was replaced in 1916 with the structure that exists today.

pick up their trail before the storm hits. They say there were three of them, so you best take at least four men with you.”

Marshal McKenzie looked at his two uncles. They had missed a night’s sleep, and their worn look showed they were played out from their excursion. In their sixties, they were getting too old for this.

“We’ll go with you,” Henry said.

“No.” The marshal was firm. “You’ve both done enough. Just keep an eye on the prisoners while I’m gone. See they’re fed and cared for. That will be enough.”

“As you wish,” Jim answered. “Don’t worry about anything here.”

The marshal knew Itza-chu would go. He needed him to pick up the bandits’ trail. But that was only two, against three or more of the stage robbers. He saw Chandler, standing tall, wearing his .44 in his cross-draw holster, waiting patiently to be told what to do.

The marshal walked over to his desk and removed something from a drawer. Walking back to Cal, he stepped before him and looked him in the eye.

“Chandler,” the marshal said flatly, “I can’t believe I’m doin’ this, but here’s the deal. You and I will sort out our business later. Right now, I need you.” He pinned a badge on Cal’s vest and said, “Let’s ride, Deputy Marshal Chandler.”

“Now that’s more like it,” Lorena exclaimed. “I’m game.”

“Oh no, you’re not going,” the marshal said.

“Now cousin,” she said. “Where he goes, I go. I am not about to have him ride off and maybe get shot dead and I never see him again. After all I’ve been through? No. I won’t have it. Besides, you heard what the fellow said. You need four men.”

“Right!” the marshal said firmly. “Emphasis on *men*.”

“You need four guns! Lorena fired back. “And you know I can shoot straight. I’ll follow your exact directions, as you have seen I can do. I know you don’t like it, but I’m going.”

“I’ll go!” Nicky’s high-pitched whine pierced the air. “I can follow directions too!”

“Shut up, you idiot!” Follett muttered.

“Little sister,” the marshal said with a sigh, “do you understand what’s going to happen out there? They killed someone, so those men understand if we take them, they’ll be hung. That means they won’t surrender, no matter even if they’re cornered. They will fight to the death. We’ll probably have to kill them all. We’re headed for a fight and lots of blood. You don’t need to see that, let alone be part of it. I know you can shoot, but firing at paper targets ain’t the same thing as shootin’ at a man who’s shootin’ back.”

“That clinches it,” Lorena said. “I’m going. Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war! We should ride. We’re wasting time here.”

The marshal looked at Cal. “Chandler, say something to your woman!”

Cal turned to Lorena and, with that teasing banter in his voice, said, “My dear, you’re not going.” He gave her a quick wink only she could see.

“Watch me!” Lorena glared defiantly at her cousin.

“I told her, marshal.” Cal quipped. “Just like you said.”

“Yeah, for what good it did. You could have said it like you mean it. Alright then, little sis. Be sure to do as I say when we’re on their trail.” With that, he picked up his Winchester. “Chandler, maybe you ought to marry my cousin so she’ll have to stay home taking care of babies.

Then maybe we can have some peace around here!”
Turning to Itza-chu, he asked, “You ready?”

Itza-chu nodded and said, “Problem worse. Now wildcat have *us* by tail.”

23

Skull Valley



THUNDER RUMBLED AND DARK clouds built in the northwest as the four rode out of town, following Iron Springs Road toward Skull Valley. They had hurriedly gathered provisions, including grain for the horses, food, more blankets, clothing, and two large canvases for shelter from the rain. These were tied onto a pack mule. If it took days to catch up to the highwaymen, they were prepared.

The stage driver's report said the robbery occurred where Spence Springs Trail intersected the road to Skull Valley. It took about an hour of fast riding to get to the scene. When they arrived, Itza-chu dismounted and asked everyone to stay back while he walked over the area,

studying the ground on both sides of the road for several hundred feet. He walked a short way down the trail to the spring and returned. Itza-chu conferred with the marshal.

“They choose this place to make track hard to follow,” Itza-chu explained. “Many horses on both roads make sign hard to read. Itza-chu say they went Skull Valley.”

“Alright then,” the marshal said, mounting his horse. The others followed suit. “Chandler, you and Lorena stay on the right side and look for tracks leaving the road. Itza-chu and I will watch the left. If they left the road, we must see it, or we’ll be chasing our tails.” Thunder echoed from the north and the marshal added, “Let’s move. After the rain hits there’ll be no trail to follow.”

They gained altitude as they climbed out of the Prescott valley. Lorena smiled at Cal, glad to be riding with him. *I could do this forever*, she thought. Lorena had always been happiest on horseback. Now that she was riding next to the man she loved, her heart swelled with joy.

“You do know I love you almost as much as I love my horse, don’t you?” Her playful smile betrayed her feigned condescension.

“Almost as much?”

“Yes, almost. You should be flattered. I love my horse a great deal, you know.”

“That’s good, then,” Cal said good naturedly. “Almost is fine. I wouldn’t want to be the cause of your horse getting jealous. I hear tell there’s nothing worse than a jealous horse.”

“Except for a jealous man!” Lorena jested. She was amused to see Cal’s face flush.

They rode along side by side, both of them happy and relaxed in each other’s company, while keeping a sharp eye out for tracks leaving the road. “Cal,” she said thoughtfully,

“I wonder why they call it Skull Valley. A rather foreboding name, I’d say.”

“Yes, it is. Someone told me two Indian tribes massacred each other there, long ago. No one knows who they were. When settlers moved into the area, they found their bones and skulls piled everywhere, and that’s how it got its name, Skull Valley.”

Lorena was pensive for a moment. “That’s sad. It’s terrible so many of the Indian tribes made war on each other.”

“Welcome to the human condition,” Cal said. “White men do the same.”

“Yes,” Lorena answered, “but with many of the tribes, it seemed to be at a whole different level. They celebrated killing. The rite of passage for an Indian youth to become a man was to steal a horse or kill or capture someone from a neighboring tribe. And the horrendous torture they would inflict upon their captives! It was so brutal everyone said to keep one bullet for yourself in case you are about to be captured.”

“That is true. I’ve heard rumors that General Custer shot himself when he saw he was about to be taken.⁴⁸ He wanted his death to be quick rather than by slow torture. Can’t say I blame him. But the Army will never admit a general as renowned as Custer took his own life. Such a

⁴⁸ There are accounts by Native Americans that Custer shot himself during the Battle of the Little Bighorn rather than allow himself to be captured. Left Hand was an Arapaho Indian who was with the Sioux when they were attacked by Custer’s men. He maintained that, upon orders from the chief, the Sioux did not kill Custer because he was to be taken alive. He further swore that Custer took his own life rather than permitting himself to be captured. There is evidence that some of Custer’s men committed suicide, though not as many as were formerly supposed. Rumors of Custer’s alleged suicide did circulate, but there is no conclusive evidence.

death would be considered dishonorable by politicians who know nothing of the horrors of war.”

“I’ve heard the Apaches were the worst,” Lorena commented. “When they weren’t fighting us, they were fighting each other.”

“And now,” Cal mused, “we are being guided by an Apache. Ironic. That goes to show not all Indians are the same, and neither are white men. There are good and bad in every race.”

“Yes, I agree. Consider the Cherokee. There were many in Tennessee. Christians, most of them. The Cherokee were one of the most peaceful and literate tribes in North America. They had schools, a newspaper, churches, and farms. But those running our government at the time stole their land and ran them out into the Indian Territory.”

“I’ve heard of that,” Cal said. “The Trail of Tears, they called it, because so many died on the forced march. So sad. I too heard they were good Christian people. I know there were many Indians who were vicious and cruel, but such was not the case with them.

“Now take Itza-chu, for instance. He appears to be a good man. I suppose he must have been a scout for the Army during the Indian wars. There was such animosity among the various Apache groups that many of them volunteered to help our soldiers root out other Apache tribes that had not yet surrendered.”

Lorena listened attentively and occasionally commented while Cal talked. Their conversation blended easily with the rhythm of the horses’ hooves as they continued on the trail. Although she would have preferred to be gazing at Cal’s handsome face, she had to keep her eyes focused on the roadside, watching for tracks.

Cal continued, “The Apaches were hated and feared by all Indians in the Southwest. The name Apache comes from

a Zuni word meaning “our enemies.” Originally, they called themselves Dine’é, which means ‘the people’ in their language.”

“You know a lot about the Apaches,” Lorena commented.

“We have a lot of them around Pima, where I grew up. I was wondering, why does Itza-chu also go by Indian Jim? I’ve heard people around town calling him that.”

“I talked with Itza-chu the other day,” Lorena said. “He explained it to me. He told me he uses the name Jim because, to work with the white man, he needed a name people could relate to and remember. His real name, Itza-chu, means Great Hawk. But people have trouble remembering and pronouncing Indian names. His people attach sacred importance to their names; it is a reflection of their character. He feels using his Apache name among people who lack understanding of its significance disrespects his heritage.”

“That’s interesting. Sounds like you and Itza-chu had a good talk.”

“Yes, we did. And you are right, he is a good man. He knows my family respects him, and he has permitted us to use his Apache name. That’s why you hear us using it while almost everyone else calls him Indian Jim or Injun Jim.”

“I’m afraid some white men haven’t made any effort at appreciating Indian culture,” Cal said, and then added sarcastically, “I guess they’ve been too busy proving how superior the white man is.”

“Perhaps understanding and harmony will come in time,” Lorena said. “Right now, there are too many on both sides still grieving the loss of loved ones massacred during the Indian wars.”

“Lorena, speaking of good men and bad men, the ones we’re chasing, they aren’t going to be like Ed Follett and

his two stooges. They were amateurs and not utterly wicked. These men we're after, I think they may be a whole new level of evil."

"I know. They killed a man just for protecting his wife from their probing hands."

"My point is," Cal went on, "I want you to be very careful when we catch up to those men. I want you to obey everything I say or your cousin says. This is dangerous and deadly business."

"I understand," Lorena said softly, with a submissiveness in her voice Cal had never heard before. "I'll do as you say. Just you be careful too."

"I will." Cal was touched by her compliance.

"I know we could die out here." Lorena's voice took on a serious tone. "That's why I wanted to come. I can't sit home and worry about you when I can be out here with you and maybe increase our odds. It's ironic. I'm the one who asked my cousin to make you a deputy. That's what I was doing when you saw me with him by the courthouse. As a favor to me, I was asking him to consider you for the position. I was thinking of it as a job to keep you in town, closer to me. I wasn't thinking of the danger. But I should have been."

"I love you too," Cal said.

"That's good," Lorena bantered. "I'm worth loving!"

A chilly wind blew out of the northwest while the sky darkened with approaching storm clouds. They rode on silently, carefully watching for any tracks leading away from the road. Finally the road crested over a ridge, giving them a panoramic view of the valley far below. Green rolling hills, interspersed with flat grassy meadows stretched away to the horizon. Tall cottonwood trees in the far distance dotted the landscape along a meandering stream. On the far side of the valley another range of

mountains rose up, shimmering dusky blue in contrast to the lush green of the basin.

“It’s beautiful!” Lorena exclaimed.

“It certainly is.” Cal stood in his stirrups and stretched while taking in the vista. “That’s Skull Valley. The name doesn’t do justice.”

The marshal had stopped also and was beckoning to them. As they rode up he said, “There’s a stage stop a short way ahead. It has a bar inside. Travelers frequently stop to eat and drink or play cards. I doubt our varmints are inside, but you never know. Criminals can be foolish. One of them might have gone there for food. At the least, we need to find out if anyone has seen anything. I don’t think it wise for us to all go riding up there. There’s a fight coming, but I want it to be at a place and time of our choosing.”

The marshal thought for a moment and then continued, “One of us needs to check it out, though. If I go, I’ll be recognized as the marshal right off, which isn’t good if they’re inside. I don’t want to walk into a gunfight and put innocent folks in harm’s way.

“Cal, if you’re willing, I want you to go in there. No one will feel threatened by you. No one knows you. You’re just another traveler. Keep your badge under your jacket. Find out who is inside. If you find no one of consequence, quietly talk to the station owner and ask if he’s heard or seen anything that might help us. Then get back here. We’ll turn off into this wash right here. It’ll be nearly dark when you get back, so we’ll be settin’ up camp for the night. Follow that wash, and you’ll find us.”

“Alright,” Cal said. He reined his horse around and glanced at Lorena. When their eyes met, Cal noted her worried look. “Stay here. I’ll see you soon.” He tipped his hat to her, gave a sudden nudge to Scout’s flanks, and horse and rider leaped forward.

Thunder rumbled in the distance, warning of the impending storm. Another storm raged in Lorena's heart as she watched her love ride away. She continued looking as he became smaller and smaller until finally, he disappeared over the hill.

She wished the place was not called Skull Valley.

The Fire of Love



LORENA TRAILED ITZA-CHU and her cousin Travis down the slope and into the arroyo. After riding the rocky wash a short distance, they clambered out of the ravine and over a low hill into a grove of aspens.

“We’ll camp here for the night,” the marshal said. “The storm will be on us in no time. Let’s picket the horses and get the tarps up.”

Ropes strung between aspens provided a strong support for canvas, making for a secure rain covering. Itza-chu showed Lorena how to cut small pine branches to make a pine bough bed. “Not just to make soft,” Itza-chu said. “Ground cold. Keep warm.” When she was done, she threw Tornado’s thick saddle blanket over the top of the pine-bough bed and set her saddle at the head for a makeshift pillow. As the temperature dropped, she was grateful her cousin had insisted on packing extra blankets.

Lorena finished her bed and built one with extra care for Cal. She rolled three blankets at the foot of each bed, but no sooner had she completed her work than the rain began tap-tap-tapping on the canvas. The rain steadily increased and the drumming on the canvas intensified. She was glad she managed to gather branches before the rain came so Cal would have a dry bed.

Itza-chu and the marshal had set their beds under the adjacent canvas and built a fire under the joining of the two tarps. Lorena saw they had brought out a bag of pinto beans and pork, so she plunked them into a sizzling pot to boil. Travis retrieved a package of Arbuckle coffee from his saddlebags, sprinkled some into a tin of water and placed it on the coals.

After camp was set and supper was cooking, they gathered around the fire for warmth. Lorena looked across the campfire at her cousin. “Travis, how long do you think Cal will be gone?”

“Another hour, I reckon,” he said. Lorena stared into the glowing coals of the fire and sipped her coffee. She resolved not to worry until an hour had passed. She worried anyway. The rain pattering on the canvas was a soothing sound that made her sleepy. She pulled her jacket tighter.

She was glad she had changed her outfit before they left. She wore her favorite cold-weather riding outfit, a buckskin dress and blouse with flannel sewn inside. In keeping with custom, her mother had arranged for small lead weights to be sewn into the hem of the skirt to keep it from billowing up immodestly with the wind while riding. Lorena didn’t think that was necessary with a heavy buckskin dress, but her mother had insisted, always endeavoring to ensure that her daughter was properly attired according to societal norms. Her matching buckskin jacket was flannel lined as well. It was warm and shed rain easily. Her father had it handmade for her as a birthday

present. She cherished it. Her mother didn't like it, as she said it made her look too much like an Indian.

Staring at the burning coals, she remembered when her Uncle Henry sat outside with her by the fire at the Bumble Bee stage station. That night seemed so long ago, but she remembered the meaningful discussion clearly. Everyone else had retired for the night, leaving them alone by the fire. Her uncle had taken note of her attraction to Cal and spoke of it to her.

“Lorena,” he had said, beginning slowly and carefully, “Cal is a handsome and dashing young man. I can see how he would stir the blood of any young lady.”

Lorena gave her uncle a plucky look. “So, you think I’ve had my blood stirred?”

Uncle Henry, picking his words judiciously, continued, “Well, you would know more about that than I. Perhaps my words don’t apply now, but they might prove of value another time. I can see he certainly does like you—”

“Do you really think so?” Lorena interrupted, then immediately cast her eyes downward in embarrassment for revealing the level of her interest.

“Yes, I do, and if there is a chance those feelings will someday be reciprocated, you need to consider that Mr. Chandler is not a Christian. You know the Bible says we are not to be unequally yoked, that believers are advised not to marry unbelievers.”⁴⁹

“Yes, I know...but he may become a believer.”

“He may, that is true. But you don’t know that. Not at this point.” Uncle Henry poked at the fire with a stick. “Lorena, have you ever seen a forest fire or a wildfire on the prairie? What starts as the tiniest spark can grow into

⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Corinthians 7:39

a raging tempest sweeping across the land, devouring everything in its path. It is a formidable and terrifying thing, awe-inspiring in its magnificence yet frightening in its wild power!

“My dear, love is like that. Love is a fire. It may start as a fun and flirtatious attraction, but before you know it, that little spark can grow into a raging fire, devouring all common sense, burning virtue and wisdom to the ground.”

“I’m not in love, Uncle Henry.”

“Not yet. But if there’s a spark, love can sneak up on you faster than you expect. You’ve seen hot summer afternoons without a cloud in the sky and not a breath of air. But then you hear thunder rumbling in the distance, and before you know it, the whirlwind is upon you. If you don’t think ahead and seek shelter, you can be caught amid the maelstrom. Love is a storm, a tornado. Scripture cautions us: *“Guard thy heart, for out of it flow the issues of life.”*⁵⁰ That’s why it’s important to keep your emotions in check until you know.”

“Until I know it’s true love?”

“No, that’s not what I mean. You want to hold your feelings in check until you know what kind of person he is. You want to analyze a person’s actions to see what his character is and keep love at bay until you know what a person is truly like. And that takes time.”

“So, I should watch to see if he treats me right?”

“Not exactly, though that is part of it. You see, any man falling in love will treat the object of his affection well. Even a wicked person may do that, at least for a time. What you want to watch is how he treats others, beside yourself. Observe how he treats his family. Does he honor his father and mother? Is he kind to brothers and sisters? How does

⁵⁰ Proverbs 4:23

he treat strangers? That's what matters, because how he treats others is how he will eventually treat you."

"And," Lorena asked, "if he passes the test and proves to be a fine person?"

"Then, if he is a Christian, proceed cautiously to make certain all is as it appears, for sometimes it isn't."

"So, don't let yourself fall in love until you know he is a good person. Is that it?"

"Yes, that's it, or an important part of it. Remember this, Lorena: How much a person loves you does not depend so much on you as it does on him. How much capacity a man or woman has for love depends on how good they are. A bad man can't love at all. He can only lust. A good man can love well, and an exceptionally good man can love bountifully."

Lorena sat quietly and considered her uncle's words.

"Dear one, if you want to get to the heart of things, you gotta look way down deep. We used to have a saying back in Tennessee. You've probably heard it: *If you want a good cool drink of water you gotta dig a little deeper in the well.*"

"In other words," Lorena said, "don't make lifetime decisions in a fortnight. Mother used to say that all the time."

"That's right. But what I have said thus far is only part of it," Uncle Henry continued. "The second part is crucial as well. And that is, he must know Christ. I don't mean just being religious and only saying he's a Christian. He must genuinely know the Lord. For if he doesn't, even the love of a good man is limited. It is restricted to natural earthly love."

"What do you mean, restricted to the natural?"

"You see," Henry explained, "a man who knows Christ has love that is supernaturally empowered, for Christ's love

shines through him. If you marry a man who isn't a Christian, you are cheating yourself out of ever knowing the joy of heavenly love from a Christian husband. You would miss out on the kind of godly marriage God wants you to have. Let me ask you something. What is the most important thing in your life?"

"Oh, that's easy. Jesus is number one. He is the most important thing in life."

"Very well," Henry said. "So why would you ever want to marry someone who does not share with you the one thing that is most important to you? Don't cheat yourself out of having God's best for you."

"I never thought of it that way," Lorena said. "I always considered it just a legalistic rule. I see it now. There is an important reason behind it. Ma and Pa tried to tell me the same thing. Maybe I didn't have my heart open to hear it, but the way you have explained it, I understand. Thank you, Uncle Henry."

"One last thing, my dear. When you do get married, the die is cast. You will gradually discover your husband is not exactly the perfect man you may have imagined he was when you were courting. And he will have the same disillusionment about you. Expect that. That's when real love must step in, the kind of love Christ teaches us to have. You learn to love the real person, the whole person, imperfections and all."

"Oh, Uncle Henry! How did you get to be so wise?"

"Well, I have an advantage. Like you, I was born at a very early age!"

"Oh, you have stolen my line!" she admonished.



LORENA SMILED AS SHE REMEMBERED the fatherly advice her uncle had given her that day. Cozy

under the canvas shelter with the rain pattering above, she was lulled into a pleasant remembrance of that day, as she fondly recalled her uncle's wise counsel.

She was startled out of her reverie when she heard horse hooves in the wash below. She scrambled to her feet to run to the sound, but her cousin stopped her. "Wait here, I'll go. Just in case." He disappeared over the side of the wash. Lorena was relieved to see him return with Cal following on Scout.

She stood up eagerly, welcoming him with a warm smile. Itza-chu led Cal's horse to the picket line, unsaddled him and made sure that he had feed, returning to the campfire with saddle and bridle. Cal spread his hands close to the fire while the marshal questioned him about what he had found.

"There was no one of any import at the station," Cal explained. "A fellow was there eating supper, but the station agent told me he was a regular who lived in the area. He did say a man had come in earlier and purchased some beef. The man wanted to buy more than he had available to sell. He thought that was odd, as people traveling don't typically want to buy that much meat when they are on the road."

The marshal's interest was piqued. "If he was one of them, he was trying to buy enough food for the rest of the gang. And if that's true, they might be camped somewhere nearby. The problem is, this rain has washed out the tracks by now. I'm afraid there ain't nothin' fer it but to give up."

"That's the other thing," Cal said. "I was headed back before the rain started, and I noticed horse tracks turning off into a wash that headed up into the hills to the east."

"Good work, Chandler. We'll take a look at that wash in the morning."

“The beans are ready,” Lorena announced. “Bowls and spoons are here. Gather round and I’ll dish everyone up.”

“Well,” the marshal said happily, “Maybe having a woman around ain’t such a bad idea!”

After they finished eating, Lorena said, “Itza-chu, do you think you can find those men after this rain has washed away their tracks?”

Itza-chu looked up from the campfire, his red headband and long black hair glistening in the rain.⁵¹ His dark eyes seemed more intense in the reflected flames. “Little warrior not worry. If they make big smoke like other white men, we see them long way. Maybe other sign. Broken twigs. Clothing on thorns. Many things. I am Itza-chu, Great Hawk. Have eye of hawk,” Itza-chu pointed at his eyes with two fingers of one hand and then made a sweeping gesture at the terrain. “Itza-chu see what white man not see.”

“Thank you, Itza-chu,” Lorena smiled. “We all appreciate your skill.” Turning to Cal, she said, “I’m tired. I think I’ll retire for the evening.”

“We all better turn in,” the marshal suggested. “We’ll head out at first light.”

Lorena crawled into her bed and snuggled comfortably under her thick woolen blankets. Cal was appreciative Lorena had made him a pine-bough bed. She wanted to chat with Cal, whose bed was next to hers, but she was so exhausted she fell asleep immediately. She began to dream she was trying to escape from Follett, riding through cold

⁵¹ Using distinctive colors to easily identify friendly Indian scouts goes back to the French and Indian War. The practice of using a red head band for the U.S. Army Apache scouts dates back to the 1880s. The distinctive red head band worn by U.S. Army Apache scouts made it easier for soldiers to differentiate between their Apache scouts and hostile Apaches during a fire fight.

wind and rain that was freezing on her until she was covered with ice.

She woke up shivering with cold. “Cal?” she whispered. When he didn’t answer, she called again.

“I’m here,” he said sleepily.

“I’m so cold! I can’t stop shaking.” She sat up and noticed the rain had turned to sleet.

Cal got up. “Let’s move your bed next to mine, and we can share our blankets.” Back under the covers, Cal felt her cold, shivering hands. “You’re like ice. It’s your size. You’re smaller than the rest of us, so you lose heat more quickly.”

Lorena snuggled up to Cal’s warmth. “Pa and Ma would say this isn’t proper.”

“And they’d be right,” Cal said, “except this is a matter of survival. It is dangerously cold. I’m not going to have you freeze to death to satisfy etiquette. I promise to be good.”

“You better,” she teased, “if you want to remain my guardian angel.” She laid her head on Cal’s chest and snuggled closer, deep in thought. She pondered her uncle’s words about being cautious in love. After a time, she said, “Love is scary, isn’t it?”

“Scary?” Cal asked.

“Yes. My uncle says love is like a raging fire, terrible in its unstoppable power. Sometimes I’m fearful of how much I love you. Does your love frighten you?”

“No, I don’t think so. I’m not sure I know what you mean.”

Lorena sighed. “I suppose that’s because you’re a man.”

“I think if I were a woman, you wouldn’t love me so.”

“Oh, stop it, you rascal,” Lorena laughed. “I’m trying to be serious.” She thought momentarily and then asked, “Why do you love me?”

“How could I not? You’re intelligent, beautiful, and caring, and...you cook a great pot of beans!”

“Oh, you’re a silly goose!”

“My turn. Why do you love me?”

“Why do I love you?” Lorena pondered the question. “Well, let me see. I love you because...because you’re you. Yes, that’s it. I’m sure of it now. I love you because you’re you!” She reached over to Cal’s hand, interlocking her fingers with his.

“So, if I were someone else, you wouldn’t love me anymore? My, my, but you are fickle!”

“You are worse than a silly goose!” Lorena scolded. “One cannot have an intelligent conversation with a goose. But at least you are my goose. Go to sleep, my silly goose.”

Lorena snuggled contentedly closer to Cal. She listened to his rhythmic breathing as he slept and felt her heart warming with the fire of her love. Thunder rolled in the distance. Love is a storm, her uncle had said. Suddenly the night momentarily turned to day as a lightning bolt struck close by with a thunderous crash. Gentle rain turned into a wild torrent, and wind whipped at their shelter. Lorena was not frightened. The tempest of her passion felt mightier than the storm.

Wind whistled through the trees while rain beat rhythmically on the canvas, lulling her into a warm sleepiness. She closed her eyes with a happy smile. Then her uncle’s words floated across her mind like a dark cloud: *You can be caught amid the maelstrom. Don’t cheat yourself out of having God’s best for you.*

The smile faded from her face.

25

Dead or Alive



THE FOLLOWING DAY THE RAIN had stopped, the sun was shining, and fluffy white clouds drifted lazily across the sky. Cal led them to the wash, where he had seen the tracks that were now obliterated by the previous night's downpour.

“No tracks,” the marshal commented. “That means whoever went up there hasn’t come back down. At least not this way. Lorena, I want you following behind us. Stay close but not too close.”

The marshal led as their horses picked their way up the wash. Cal followed behind him. They climbed in elevation as the dry creek bed wound upward through gently rolling hills. The marshal stopped and listened. He pulled his Winchester from its scabbard and continued on.

Lorena brought up the rear, following behind Itza-chu. It was a cool day, bright and crisp, and the only sound was the crunching of hooves upon rocks. They frequently halted while her cousin listened carefully and studied the terrain ahead. This would have been a delightful trail ride if it were not for the deadly business at hand.

They rounded a bend in the arroyo and halted again while her cousin conferred with Cal. With interest Lorena watched Itza-chu as he intently studied the ground for sign. Tory stretched his neck down, wrenched some grassy weeds from the ground and chomped away on them. She heard a raucous rattle overhead. High above in the blue sky was a circling hawk being harassed by two ravens.

They began moving again, working their way up the wash, walking their horses slowly and frequently stopping to listen. When they spoke it was in low, quiet tones. Finally, they approached the crest of a slight rise in the dry creek bed where the wash curved slightly to the right.

That's where it happened. Suddenly the marshal came face-to-face with two riders coming down the wash. The lead rider yanked a pistol and fired. Startled by the sudden shot, Lorena instinctively crouched low on the back of her horse.

The marshal yelped and tried to work the lever action on his Winchester, confused that his arm wouldn't work. Cal was next to him in an instant, firing rapidly with his .44 while the riders retreated up the wash.

"Marshal, you're hit!" Cal exclaimed.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are. Your right shoulder."

The marshal looked down at the blood soaking into his shirt. "I don't feel it."

"You will."

The marshal's eyes darted here and there as he surveyed the terrain. "Following them up this wash would be suicide. They'll be waiting to ambush us. Let's circle behind that hill and come to the top from this side. We might be able to see where they're headed."

With a grimace Marshal Travis tried to put his Winchester in its scabbard. "Chandler, take my rifle. My arm doesn't want to cooperate." Cal took the rifle and secured it. With his left hand, the marshal reined his horse around and told Itza-chu, "When we come out of the wash, I want you riding next to Lorena. Stay between her and them. Shield her." Itza-chu nodded his assent.

They skirted the hill and cautiously guided their horses, switchbacking up the rocky slope, picking their way between scrubby junipers while avoiding the claw-like thorns of the aptly named wait-a-minute bush. When they neared the top of the rise, Cal instructed Lorena to wait below the crest. Cal and the marshal dismounted and cautiously worked their way to the top. From there they had a bird's-eye view of the area.

"There they are," Cal said. The riders had left the wash and dismounted in a grove of cottonwoods, far in the distance.

"I'll bet that's where their camp is," the marshal replied. "I only saw two riders. The other one must be waiting for them there."

One of the bandits spotted them, stepped out on a rock outcropping, and began firing at them with a rifle, the bullets going harmlessly astray. They crouched down in the sagebrush. "We're out of his range, and he's out of ours," the marshal mused.

"He thinks," Cal said and headed over the brow of the hill toward his horse. He came back carrying his Sharps

rifle. Working the action, he loaded a cartridge into the chamber and closed the breech.

The marshal looked at Cal doubtfully. "Even with that cannon, it's an impossible shot. It's almost three quarters of a mile. It can't be done."

"Not quite that far," Cal said. He lay prone on the dirt where there was no vegetation. Picking up some dust, he let it sift from his fingers as he noted the wind direction. He raised and adjusted the rear sight. Leveling the gun, he lay still for a long moment. He pulled the back trigger, which set the front trigger for a hair pull. Taking a deep breath, he began letting his breath out slowly, while gradually squeezing the front trigger.

Their horses lunged in fright at the sudden crash of the large caliber Sharps. The man who had fired at them tumbled from the rock. The other two bandits leaped onto their horses and galloped farther up the mountain, disappearing in the junipers and pinyon pines.

"That's some bully shot, Chandler!" The marshal rose from his knees to stand but immediately sank back down. "Well, thunderation. Everything went black on me."

Cal knelt next to him. "You're losing a lot of blood, marshal. Let's get you off this hill." He helped the marshal to his feet and steadied him while they returned to the horses, where the marshal collapsed again.

"Chandler," the marshal said between clenched teeth, "we need to check the man you shot, see if he's dead or alive."

"Alright, I'll take care of it. Now lay back." Cal checked for an exit wound and didn't find one. "The bullet's still in there. Just lie still." He pulled a bandana from his saddlebags. Lorena unbuttoned her cousin's shirt, exposing the wound, and Cal pressed the cloth firmly to his shoulder.

The marshal groaned in pain. “Thanks a lot, Chandler. Now it hurts!”

“Sorry, pardner. We gotta stop the bleeding and get you back to Prescott, pronto. Can you ride?” The marshal didn’t answer.

“He’s passed out,” Lorena exclaimed with alarm.

“Itza-chu!” Cal yelled. “We need a travois.”

“I make,” replied Itza-chu.

Cal turned to Lorena. “Keep pressure on the wound. I’ll be right back.”

“Please take care,” she cautioned, her brow furrowed with worry.

“Always,” Cal answered, while springing into the saddle. He pulled his Winchester from its scabbard and galloped toward the grove of cottonwoods. When he got close, he tied Scout to a juniper bush and crept cautiously closer. He worked the action, chambering a round.

“I’m kilt!” The quavering voice came from the base of the jumble of rocks from which the man had been firing. “God have mercy! I’m done for!”

Cal carefully sidestepped to get a better view while he kept the rifle to his shoulder. As he moved closer, he saw the man lying in a crumpled heap in the sagebrush at the foot of the rocks.

“You ain’t killed yet,” Cal said, “but you will be if you make one wrong move.”

“Don’t shoot,” the man whimpered. “Help me! It hurts.”

Cal quickly moved up on him and removed the man’s pistol from its holster. “Where you hit?” Cal asked while looking him over. “It’s only your arm, looks like.”

“Am I going to lose my arm?”

Cal wrapped his kerchief around the wound. “If you do, it serves you right. You killed a man when you robbed that stage. Here, hold pressure on that.”

“I didn’t kill him. Slim’s the one who shot him. It weren’t me.”

“Where’s your horse?” Cal demanded.

“He’s over there, other side of that cottonwood, if those two didn’t take him. They just left me here,” he bemoaned, his face contorted in pain. “Oh gracious, it hurts so bad! They...I hit my head when I fell and got plumb knocked out. They rode off and left me for dead.”

Cal got him on his horse. “Try and run and that arm will be the least of your worries. You’re wanted dead or alive, so don’t give me a reason. Now let’s go.” Lorena was relieved when she saw Cal ride back over the hill with his prisoner.

Itza-chu had cut two poles, secured some of their canvas around them, and tied them to the pack mule. “Almost ready,” Itza-chu said. “This is not work for warrior. With my people, woman make travois.”

“Sorry,” Cal answered. “You’re the only one who knows how to do it right.”

Itza-chu grunted his displeasure while he pulled the knotted rawhide tight. “We go Prescott now. Good doctor at Fort Whipple.” The marshal had regained consciousness but was very weak. They laid him on the travois and headed down the wash toward the main road.

Lorena didn’t realize she had been crying. Silent tears streaked the dust on her face. The danger, the fatigue, and the worry for Cal and her cousin had overwhelmed her. When they reached the road, they turned toward Prescott. Itza-chu kept a gun on their prisoner while Cal and Lorena

followed behind, leading the pack mule with her cousin bumping along on the travois behind.

“Cal,” Lorena said tiredly, “I think I’d prefer you found a different line of work.”

“But I’m just getting the hang of this,” Cal said lightheartedly. Lorena looked at him coolly, and he immediately regretted his statement. He could see she was in no mood for banter. There had been too much blood and danger. “But as you recall,” Cal added seriously, “I was conscripted for this escapade.”

“I wasn’t.” Lorena’s demeanor was somber. “I insisted on coming along. And I shouldn’t have. I have only made it difficult for everyone. Having to worry about keeping me safe is an extra burden. I see that now. Plus, I can only imagine how it must appear to others, a lady going off with a bunch of men on a manhunt for outlaws – it isn’t proper. I guess I need to consider how that might look. I need to consider a lot of things.”

Lorena wasn’t much worried about others’ opinions. What really bothered her, she had not said. She wasn’t ready to articulate it, not even to herself. But the realization was gradually growing in her heart that she had put her love for Cal above common sense, maybe even before her commitment to God. She recalled her uncle’s warning: *The fire of love can burn virtue and wisdom to the ground.*

The drama of the day impressed upon her the seriousness of life. Life and death were hanging in the balance. Her cousin was severely wounded and could die. The outlaw they were taking to jail was losing blood and might lose his arm or his life. The fragility of existence thrust itself upon her mind.

Something else bothered her. Taking refuge under the covers with Cal on that bitterly cold night had been a matter of survival, and Cal had been a perfect gentleman.

Nevertheless, it had further ignited the fire in her heart, and that was unwise. She knew she would have never been in that position if she had not insisted upon coming along. *Actions have consequences*, she thought. As these things went through Lorena's mind, she resolved then and there to get her priorities straight. The last vestiges of childish immaturity receded as she determined to become a woman of wisdom.

Cal detected a remote coolness from Lorena. He chalked it up to her being tired. Nevertheless, the detachment he sensed worried him. And he especially wondered about her last statement: *I need to consider a lot of things*. What exactly, Cal wondered, did that mean?



An Incomparable Pleasure

DEPUTY MARSHAL CAL CHANDLER walked up on the porch of the modest white clapboard house situated a couple of blocks from Prescott's business district. Rapping twice on the door, he opened it, announced himself, and strode to the small bedroom in the back.

"Hey, pard," Cal said, "just checking on you."

The marshal was lying in bed, propped up with pillows. He put his newspaper down. "So, you think were pards now?"

"I reckon so," Cal quipped with a smile. "At least until you take this badge back and decide it's time for me to stop playing lawman and be an outlaw again."

“About that,” Travis said, “the U.S. marshal stopped in to see me. I asked him for the latest news on the Army Paymaster robbery. He told me they had arrested ten people quite a while back, all Mormons or people connected with the Mormon community around Pima. Ed Follett, the man who abducted Lorena, was arrested along with them but was released almost immediately for lack of evidence.

“The grand jury returned indictments on seven of the ten they arrested. They were held over for trial. Gilbert Webb and his son Wilfred were the ringleaders, and the case against all seven was strong. They had shot down eight of the soldiers, but none of them died. They all gave eye witness testimony as to the identity of their assailants. Law officers testified the tracks from the robbery led straight to their ranches. Right after the holdup, Webb started paying off debts with gold coin. Fairly conclusive proof, all in all.”

“Sounds like the lot of them are going to prison,” Cal said.

“No, they were all found not guilty.”

“What?” Cal was stunned.

“Yeah, lots of politics came into play. The main evidence was the testimony of the soldiers who identified their attackers, but they were Black, so the court didn’t consider their testimony to carry much weight. Webb used the thirty thousand in gold to hire the best lawyers in the country and exerted his political influence to get the newspapers behind him. Every politician in the territory was on one side or the other.”

Cal shook his head in disbelief. “Unbelievable!”

“Pathetic is what it is,” The marshal said hotly. “But that’s the way of it. They have all been released. It’s over and done with, and no one is interested in pursuing it further. The bottom line is no one has mentioned the name of Cal Chandler. I checked the wanted posters. You are not

among them. Apparently, you were not spotted at the scene.”

“No, I reckon not. I stayed well hidden while the other fools jumped around like kids at a Fourth of July picnic.”

“So, what you and Lorena told me is the only thing I have on you. Her word would be considered hearsay, and the Fifth Amendment says you can’t be forced to testify against yourself in court, so it’s a closed matter. I couldn’t lock you up, even if I wanted to. And I never really did want to. So far as I’m concerned, you’re in the clear.”

Cal breathed a sigh of relief at the news. All his mental turmoil, his fear of what would happen to him if he were caught, whether he could ever be with Lorena – all that stress dissipated. He was a free man! But as was typical, Cal kept a cool front and didn’t let his jubilation show to the marshal.

“Well, that’s good to know. I suppose this means I’m still your deputy.”

“Doc says I’ll be laid up for a while. If you’re amenable, I could sure use the help. Check in with me daily, and I’ll let you know what needs to be looked after. Take those keys on the dresser. They’ll get you into my office and the jail.”

“Alright then. The doc said you were lucky to be wearing a heavy leather jacket and leather vest, and the cartridge fired at you must have had a weak powder load. All that together accounts for why the bullet went shallow. He told me you should be fine if it doesn’t get infected.”

“Yeah, I think he told me that. I was pretty much out of it from the laudanum. He said the man you brought in is in serious condition. The bones in his arm were totally shattered. Said he hadn’t seen a wound like it since the Civil War. Doc said he’ll probably live, but he might lose

the arm. He's tending him there at the fort to see how he does. Chandler, that buffalo gun of yours is a terror."

Cal nodded his head. "It is that."

The marshal continued, "That fellow has given us the names of the other two. The U.S. marshal is getting posters out on them now. Listen, Chandler, there's something I have to say. You were Johnny-on-the-spot in that fight. You moved right up and returned fire when I couldn't. That sent them running. If not for what you did, things could have gone seriously bad."

"I think we startled them as much as they did us," Cal commented.

"And," the marshal said, "the way you used that shoulder cannon was ace-high! And taking charge and getting me back here to the surgeon – I owe you."

"Itza-chu had a bit to do with it," Cal said modestly.

"Hold on, I'm not done. I won't forget you were willing to give up your life for my cousin. It's no secret she's mighty fond of you now. So..." The marshal hesitated, looking for the right words. "What I'm getting at is, I've seen what kind of man you are. I'm glad to have you as a deputy. Don't let me down. I'm out on a limb for you."

"Alright then, boss. I'll do my best."

"One more thing," added the marshal, "the man on the stagecoach who was killed, his family are well-to-do. They put up a five-hundred-dollar reward for any of the bandits. You get half of it. Now grab those keys and get to work!"

Cal's next order of business after leaving the marshal's house was to get some maintenance done on his tools of the trade. He stopped in at McKenzie's Hardware. It warmed his heart to get a hearty welcome from Henry. But he was embarrassed when Henry began praising him for saving his niece.

“I need some gun work done,” Cal interrupted.

“Well, Jim here is the best gunsmith in the territory. Nobody knows guns as he does. Jim, come on over here.”

Jim was stocking shelves in the back. He came up to the counter and greeted Cal as warmly as Henry had.

Cal put his Sharps rifle on the counter. “I’d like to pay you to go through this, clean it, and give it any necessary maintenance.”

Jim picked up the rifle, checked the chamber, and gave it a quick look over. He let out a long whistle. “So, this is the gun I’ve been hearing about. Double-set triggers, custom engraving...very nice!” He opened the breech and commented, “Certainly does need a good cleaning.”

Jim examined the markings on the gun and read them aloud. “*Sharps Rifle Company, Model 1874*. This is an improved model over the percussion Sharps used as sniper rifles in the Civil War. Oh, look at that! *50 caliber*. This is a daisy!”

“My father left it to me before he died,” Cal stated matter-of-factly.

“It’s a fine heirloom,” Jim commented. “There were not so many fifty calibers made. Most of them were forty-fives. They called these the Big Fifties. See the ‘*Old Reliable*’ stamped on the barrel? That tells us this gun was made in 1876 or later. ’76 is when they started using that stamp. Looks like this one has had some customization done at the factory. The engraving, the special sights, and the extra-length barrel – these were options that could be special ordered. Somebody spent some money on this. It’s worth a good price.”

“I would never sell it.”

“Don’t blame you there,” Jim said. “I wouldn’t either. It’s the most accurate long-range gun ever made. Powerful

too. I'll adjust the triggers and give it a good going over, and it'll be better than new when I'm done. I can order you some .50-140 Sharps cartridges for it, if you like."

"Thanks, Jim. I appreciate it."

"I heard about that shot you made with this. Nearly a mile!"

"No, it was barely half a mile."

"Still," Jim replied, "it takes some impressive skill to make a hit at half a mile. You know, a buffalo hunter named Billy Dixon owned one of these Big Fifties. Back in '74, during the Battle of Adobe Walls, he took down a Comanche at seven-eighths of a mile. That one shot scared off the entire war party of seven hundred Indians. They were unnerved when they saw the men had weapons capable of reaching so far. They high-tailed it."

"It pretty much had the same effect on our two bandits that got away," Cal replied.

"So I heard," Jim answered.

As Cal was heading out the door, he met Lorena coming in. She gave him a perfunctory greeting which he returned, tipping his hat to her and saying with a smile, "Good morning, Miss McKenzie." He was again troubled by her reserved and formal demeanor, but he didn't let on. He could be reserved and formal too.

He was almost out the door when he heard, "Deputy Marshal Chandler?" Lorena's lovely voice never failed to thrill him. He stopped and turned. Lorena looked radiant, wearing an exquisite maroon dress he hadn't seen before. It harmonized beautifully with her auburn hair.

Her eyes sparkling, she implored, "Deputy, would you do me the honor of escorting me to church on Sunday morning?"

“Miss McKenzie, it would be my incomparable pleasure.”

“Then on Sunday you may pick me up at ten in the morning at my Uncle Henry’s.”

Tipping his hat to her again, Cal walked out into the sunshine of a day that had just become significantly brighter.

Exposing the Lie



On Sunday morning Cal pulled up to the McKenzie place with a carriage and a team of horses he had rented from the livery. Looking resplendent in her Sunday best, Lorena rose from her seat on the front porch and hurried to the street.

“Your chariot awaits you, my lady.” Cal removed his hat with a flourish.

“Just look at you!” Lorena chirped while climbing up on the seat next to Cal. She looked him over approvingly, admiring the new outfit he had purchased. She particularly liked his broad-brimmed western hat – black with a leather headband – and she thought it presented well the strong and reliable man she knew him to be. “Well, Deputy Marshal

Chandler, you look quite the gentleman this morning. I like your new hat!”

When they arrived at the church, Cal secured the team and helped Lorena step down from the carriage. Lorena put her arm in Cal’s as they walked into the church. It was a small wooden building about a half mile from the business district. Lorena’s two uncles and their families were already seated, and they slid into the pew next to them. This was Cal’s first time in a church that wasn’t Mormon, and he was curious to see what it was like.

Cal noted the differences from the religion he grew up with. He observed most of the hymns were about Christ, with no mention of Joseph Smith. There was no allusion to obedience to the church, works to earn salvation, references to the priesthood, or becoming a god. Instead, the sermon emphasized a personal relationship with the Lord, contrasting with the distant, legalistic, and authoritarian presentation he was accustomed to. It was a difference he liked.

As they were leaving the church, the minister gave Cal a warm smile as he shook his hand. “I’m Pastor Sanders. Any friend of the McKenzies is a friend of mine. My wife and I would be honored to have you and Lorena over to our place today for Sunday dinner. Can you come?”

Cal looked at Lorena, who nodded her approval. “We would be honored,” Cal answered.

“Wonderful! Lorena knows where it is, so we’ll see you there.”

The pastor’s home was about a mile from town, just far enough to make a short but enjoyable drive. Cal chirruped to the horses, and they headed out.

“Looks like we’re having an Indian summer,” Cal said. “Nice and warm today.”

“Yes! It is a delightful day for a buggy ride. It was thoughtful of you to rent this rig.”

“Do you know the pastor well?” Cal asked.

“Not really well, of course, since I’ve only been attending here a few months. But I’ve heard him preach every Sunday, and I’ve been over to their place with my uncles a couple of times. He likes to talk and he has a vast knowledge of the Scripture. I’m hoping you two will hit it off.”

“He seems like a pleasant enough fellow,” Cal said. He was pleased Lorena seemed to be back to her usual chipper self, though there was something different in her deportment he couldn’t put his finger on. Nevertheless, she was warm and friendly. When she snuggled up close and rested her head on his shoulder, he wished the drive to the minister’s home would take hours instead of minutes.

“It’s right through there,” Lorena directed.

Cal turned the horses into a lane that wound through a grove of pine trees. Ascending a rise, they emerged from the grove into a small clearing and approached a stately two-story home with a large veranda.

Cal admired the home. “Looks like the pastor has done well for himself. He must do something besides pastor that small church.”

“Yes, he has prospered. He was part owner in a gold mine that struck a rich vein. He sold his interest and got out of mining so he could devote himself to preaching the Gospel.”

When they stepped onto the porch, Mrs. Sanders hollered for them to come inside. “I’ll have dinner on in half an hour. There’s lemonade over there.” She pointed to a table in the corner. “Help yourself.”

“I insist you let me help,” Lorena said. “Just tell me what to do.”

“Come along,” Pastor Sanders said to Cal. “Let’s sit out on the porch and get out of these ladies’ way.” Cal followed him outside where they seated themselves in a shady corner of the veranda. “Now, young man, I hear you’ve done some mining. I’ve done a bit of that myself, you know.”

“I’ve been doing some work on the McKenzie claim.”

“And doing a good job of it too, I hear. So, was this morning your first time in a church that wasn’t Mormon?”

“Ah, my reputation precedes me.”

The pastor laughed. “Well, yes. Lorena filled me in a bit. She thought you might have some questions for me. I’ll be happy to answer any you may have.”

“As a matter of fact, I do have questions. Lorena probably told you I have issues with the religion I was raised in. Their teachings on polygamy, the subjugation of women, their historical bloodlust, and their denigration of Blacks – I disagree with all of that.

“And according to Mormon teaching, I am an apostate on the road to hell for leaving the one true church. I’ve been taught that if a Mormon abandons the teachings of Mormonism and leaves the Church, he is destined for outer darkness. So, you can understand it is important for me to know for sure, one way or another, whether the Mormon Church is true.”

Pastor Sanders smiled kindly. “I’ll do my best to help you find the answers you’re looking for. How familiar are you with the Bible?”

“Lorena gave me a New Testament to read, and I’ve been reading that almost every day. It presents a completely different viewpoint from what I’ve been taught. I never read the Bible much before because we were told it was

changed and corrupted. For example, the Book of Mormon in 1 Nephi 13:28 says, ‘*many plain and precious things were taken away*’ from the Bible at the behest of a corrupt church. Lorena says that’s not true. Can you explain how we can know the Bible wasn’t altered?”

“Yes, I can, and I’d be happy to show you. Whenever someone says the Bible is corrupt, I ask them to show me exactly where it is corrupted and then show me what proof exists that such-and-such a passage has been changed. No one has ever been able to demonstrate that. Until they do, such claims are without foundation.

“Cal, I want you to think about how the New Testament came together. It is mainly comprised of letters or accounts written by the original apostles to various churches. The churches that received these letters considered them scripture, so they took great care with them.

“Once a church received a letter from an apostle, they immediately made copies to distribute far and wide to other churches, where the pastors read them aloud to their congregations. And these churches would also copy them and send those copies on again. So these documents proliferated quickly throughout Christendom.

“And it was not just anyone who made these copies. It was done by people trained in the art. It is essential to realize the early church was all Jewish in the beginning. Why does that matter? It matters because the early church had scribes, Jews who had devoted their lives to accurately copying scripture. Romans 3:2 tells us that God entrusted the Jews to be the keepers of “the oracles of God.” Making copies of scripture was the job of the scribes and they took this job seriously.

“They had many rules for testing the accuracy of a copy. For example, once a New Testament document was copied by a scribe, the letters, words, and paragraphs were counted, and the middle paragraph, the middle word and

the middle letter of the document had to exactly correspond to those of the original document. Any discrepancy in that count would reveal a mistake had been made. Such meticulous care was taken in making copies, that a copy was considered to be as reliable as the original.

“These New Testament letters of the early church were also translated into the native tongues of many nations. We have thousands of copies of these early documents in many languages. The point is, the New Testament documents were spread far and wide among the churches very soon after they were written. And as we compare these old manuscripts from various places, what do we find? They all say the same thing. Of course, there are minor differences in punctuation and things like that, but these variances would not affect any of the great doctrines of the Church.”

“So, how does that prove they weren’t later altered?” Cal asked.

“Because, if any group got together and conspired to alter the text of the New Testament, it would be soon detected, for there were so many copies everywhere. It wasn’t like there was one autocratic organization that held all the documents and could secretly change them with no one finding out. No, the scriptures were distributed among the people. Every local congregation had them, for they had spread all over the world. If any religious organization tried to change something, they would be exposed, for the people had copies of the scriptures from the very start of the Church.”

“I see.” Cal nodded thoughtfully. “I didn’t realize all this.”

“Furthermore,” the pastor continued, “it says in Isaiah 8:20, *‘If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light in them.’* So, if the Book of Mormon, which came nearly two-thousand years later, says anything contrary to the Bible, it is the Book of Mormon that is fallacious, not

the Bible. The Bible is the standard to which all doctrine must be compared, for it is the teaching of Christ and His apostles.”

“Something else I want to ask you about,” Cal said. “There was a Mormon prophet named Lorenzo Snow who told us, ‘*As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become.*’ I have been taught that God was once a man who became a god and that the goal for every Mormon is to attain godhood as well. But as I read the Bible, I can’t find anything saying that God was once a man or that men can become gods.”

“And you won’t find any such thing,” the pastor responded, “because the Bible doesn’t teach such a heresy. But what the Bible does do is warn us over and over about false teachers and false prophets. Lorenzo Snow was a false prophet. Satan was the first to tempt man with the idea of becoming a god. In the Garden of Eden, he suggested to Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she could become like God. Ever since then, Satan has been inspiring false teachers to spread the same lie. Here, let me show you something.” The pastor opened his Bible and read, “Isaiah 45:5, ‘*I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.*’” Pastor Sanders handed the Bible to Cal so he could see the passage.

“You see, Jesus taught that being a Christian starts with becoming like a child, which if you think about it, is the opposite of trying to become a god. The core of Christianity is turning from sin and humbly realizing Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity, and submitting your life to Him. By doing this you obtain salvation instantly. You don’t have to earn your way to heaven. You receive it as a free gift based upon Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.”

Cal continued looking at the Bible the pastor had handed him. He read the verse aloud, “*I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.*” Cal was

quiet for a moment as he contemplated the passage. “I have been lied to,” he said bitterly.

“Yes, you have. I know I’ve given you a lot to think about. Take your time and consider. Anytime you have questions you can find me here or at the church. Come by anytime.”

“Thanks, I appreciate that. I can see the Jesus of the Bible is entirely different from the Jesus I have been taught.”

“Yes, I’m afraid you have been taught what the Bible calls ‘another Jesus.’ False prophets frequently present a different Jesus than the divine Christ of the Bible. Just remember, being a Christian isn’t a matter of attending a particular church or following the right “prophet,” as you have been taught. It is a matter of coming to God and seeking forgiveness for your sins. And you can only do that through the historical Jesus of the Bible. If you surrender your life to Him, you will be changed – born again, the Bible calls it – and that takes a decision.”

“Come and get it,” Mrs. Sanders hollered. “Dinner is served!”

The rest of the afternoon was pleasant and the food was delicious. Cal was unusually quiet on the buggy ride back to the McKenzie home.

“How did your talk with Pastor Sanders go?” Lorena asked.

“It went well. You were right. He knows the Bible thoroughly. He had good answers to my questions. He has given me a lot to think about.”

“That’s good! Now I have a question for you. Will you take me to church again next Sunday?”

“On one condition.”

“Oh, conditions are there?” Lorena tilted her head slightly and smiled up at Cal.

“Yes, on the condition you let me take you on a buggy ride and a picnic, just you and me, right after church.”

“Oh, so the prince intends to abscond with the fair maiden to parts unknown?” She gave Cal a frisky smile.

They laughed, then Cal added, “Actually, I will have to impress you with the vastness of my kingdom another time. I was thinking of a simple picnic by the creek.”

“That sounds delightful,” Lorena said as she snuggled up close to Cal, leaning her head on his shoulder and hugging his arm with both hands. “I can pack us a lunch!” she said, looking up at Cal with fluttering eyes. Cal felt that familiar pang deep inside, a sort of joyous ache that always struck him as he beheld the most endearing and precious face he could have ever imagined.

“Alright. I’ll supply the horse and buggy. We can go for a little drive before we eat.”

When they stopped in front of the McKenzie home, Lorena turned and looked deeply into Cal’s eyes. Cal put his arms around her as she leaned into him. Her beauty overwhelmed him. They kissed slowly on the lips, and Lorena whispered, “*I love you!*” Then she dashed happily into the house.

As Cal drove away, he contemplated the surprise he had in store for Lorena. He longed for next Sunday to arrive, for it would be then he would ask her to marry him.

A Woman's Heart



IT WAS A BUSY WEEK for Cal as he took care of his duties as deputy. The marshal's wound was improving, but he was still in bed recovering. Most of Cal's work involved dealing with minor disputes between residents during the day and handling disorderly drunks at night on Whiskey Row, the street on the city square comprised mostly of saloons.

Cal frequently stopped in at McKenzie's Hardware, where he was always welcome. He was eager to begin working at the mine again, but he was needed in town until the marshal was back on his feet. Henry had paid Cal his portion from selling the high-grade, almost three hundred

dollars. He had also received two hundred and fifty from the reward for the apprehension of the stage robber. With his job as a deputy and part-time work at the mine, he had a reliable source of income, enough to support a family. He longed for the end of the week to arrive so he could propose marriage to Lorena.

The law was not hunting for him, and he had sufficient income, along with a nice nest egg. Moreover, he had already decided he was done with Mormonism, and he was attending church with Lorena. He believed all the impediments to marriage had been removed.

On Sunday morning he arrived with the horse and buggy to pick up Lorena. She came bouncing down from the porch in a frolicky mood. Sliding in next to Cal, she kissed him on the cheek.

“It’s so good to see you!” she beamed. “I hear you have had a busy week.”

“Sure have. There is always someone who is not happy with someone else.”

When they arrived at the church, they took their same spot in the pew with Lorena’s uncles. Pastor Sanders’ sermon that Sunday was about the deity of Christ and the Trinity. These had been foreign concepts to Cal until he started reading the Bible. After the service Cal and Lorena climbed into the buggy for a short jaunt along Granite Creek, stopping at a grassy spot shaded by the spreading branches of majestic cottonwood trees.

After assisting Lorena from the carriage, Cal secured the horses and provided each with a nosebag of grain. He unrolled a homemade quilt to spread on the grass, while Lorena unpacked their lunch. Reclining on the quilt, enjoying their lunch, Lorena smiled happily at Cal. “How did you like the sermon today?” she asked. “Any questions?”

“Oh, it was enlightening and quite interesting! It answered some things I’ve been wondering about. Thanks for inviting me. And I see it now. Jesus is God. That is clear from the first chapter of John, where it says, ‘The Word was God and the Word became flesh.’ So, does that mean Jesus is the Father?”

“No, not exactly. I know it can be confusing. God is three in one. Three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – together they constitute one God, one being consisting of three persons. Think of it like an egg, which has three parts. The shell is egg, the white is egg, and the yoke is egg. One egg, three parts. An imperfect analogy, of course, but one God made of three distinct persons. Each of them is God, and together they are God.

“Jesus said, ‘*If you have seen me, you have seen the father.*’ That reveals their oneness. We see it also in the text you quoted in John where it reads, ‘*The Word was with God and the Word was God.*’ There we see both the distinctness and the unity simultaneously. We can’t fully understand it now, but we can believe it by faith.”

“I see.” Cal was thoughtful for a moment. “This is all different from what I was taught, but I see the Bible teaches it. It takes some getting used to, is all.”

Seated on the quilt and flanked by the gently meandering brook, they were lulled by the tinkling stream and fluttering cottonwood leaves. It was a delightful place for discussing matters dear to the heart and enjoying the simple pleasure of home-cooked food. Lorena had packed a tasty lunch of sandwiches and cornbread, with a cherry pie to round out the meal.

It was a cool autumn day, one of the last before winter set in, but not too cold in the sunlight. Cal was enjoying the food and conversation but was having trouble concentrating on anything, knowing what he would ask her. He couldn’t wait any longer.

“I have something for you.” The hint of mystery in Cal’s voice piqued her interest.

“Oh, a surprise?”

“Yes, a surprise. But first, some news. Your cousin, the marshal, did some checking. The law is not looking for me. No one has connected me with the holdup. Even those who did it have all been tried and found not guilty, though everyone knows they did it. So it’s a closed case now, and I’m in the clear.”

“Oh Cal! That’s wonderful news! I’m so glad! Well, not glad the guilty went free, but pleased you are not implicated. I was worried about that.”

“Yes, me too. And there’s something else. With my income from the mine, my salary as a deputy, and the reward money, I have over six hundred dollars saved. And that’s not counting the wagonload of ore we haven’t sold yet. I have enough to get a nice home.”

“Oh Cal, good for you! I think—” Lorena stopped in mid-sentence. Her eyes widened as Cal took something out of his pocket. He opened the small box and displayed a diamond ring set in gold.

“Lorena, you know how dearly I love you. For me, there is no one but you. You are the most amazing woman I have ever met. All I want in life is the privilege of making you the happiest woman in the world...” Cal paused and looked deeply into her lovely blue eyes. “Jessica Lorena McKenzie, will you marry me?”

Lorena’s voice quavered, “Oh Cal!” She looked down and wiped the tears from her eyes. She glanced up. “You are a fine man...” She choked up. Overwhelmed by emotion, she found she couldn’t continue.

“Well? What do you say, my love?”

“I do love you so,” she eventually managed, looking down at her trembling hands. Then, looking up again, she gazed into Cal’s eyes and noticed the worry beginning to furrow his brow. Her vision clouded with tears. She looked down at the ground, unable to bear to see the pain she was causing.

“I’m so very sorry, Cal. Your offer is most honorable... welcome even, but I must decline. I cannot marry you.”

“You can’t?” Cal was bewildered. “Is it my past?”

“No, it is not your past.” She took out a handkerchief and tried to dry her eyes. “I would never hold that against you,” she sobbed. “Especially after all you have done, offering your life for mine. No, it is not your past.”

“Then what?” Cal implored, apprehension rising and clenching his throat.

“Please don’t ask me, Cal. I can’t tell you. I mustn’t. Just know that I love you.” She looked up once more, meeting his anxious eyes, and said emphatically, “*I will always love you!*”

“But you don’t love me enough to marry me?”

“I didn’t say that. I love you more than words can say. Please don’t press me.”

“Alright. I won’t.” Cal put the ring away.

The sun was low in the sky as they gathered up their things. Cal drove Lorena home, and there was an uncomfortable silence between them.

As they pulled up to the house, Cal asked, “What does this mean for us?”

“That’s up to you. I will understand if you don’t want to see me anymore.”

“No, I don’t want that. I would just as soon stop breathing as to stop seeing you.”

“That’s good, then. I have always told you I was worth loving, but what I tell you now, Cal Chandler, is that you are worth loving.”

“Whatever that means,” Cal said, his voice quiet and subdued. “Worth loving. Just not worth marrying.”

She blinked, and a solitary tear ran down her cheek as she tried to smile. “I do love you,” she said, her voice soft and sincere. “Please let that be enough for now.” She leaned over, kissed him tenderly, descended quickly from the buggy and hurried into the house.

Cal drove away, his soul aching as he pondered the mysteries of a woman’s heart. Part of him wanted to run from the hurt, but he dismissed the idea; he was not the same person he once was. *Please let that be enough for now*, she had said. He considered the phrase, *enough for now*. He would be pondering its meaning for weeks to come.

29

Matters of the Heart



LORENA WAS VISIBLY DISTRAUGHT. “Oh, Uncle Henry, whatever am I to do?” Lorena cried through her tears. She had come into the hardware store, quite agitated, and asked her uncle if he had time to talk with her. They walked across the street to the park-like plaza surrounding the courthouse and sat together on a bench on the grassy courthouse lawn.

“Tell me, what is the matter, my dear?” Uncle Henry’s kind voice had always soothed her, but this day she was inconsolable.

“It’s Cal,” Lorena wept. “He asked me to marry him.”

“Now, is that something to cry about?”

“I told him no, that I would not marry him. That is what the matter is.”

“Oh, I see. You don’t want to marry him?”

“Yes, I do. That’s the problem!”

“So, let me get this straight. Cal wants to marry you?”

“Yes.”

“And you want to marry him?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Then, I don’t see the problem.”

She wrung her hands and looked imploringly at her uncle, seeking any wisdom to calm her troubled heart. “Uncle Henry, you know the problem as well as I do. You just want me to say it. Cal isn’t a Christian. I can’t marry someone who doesn’t love the Lord. And the worst of it is, I can’t tell him why I said no.”

“And why is that?”

“Oh, Uncle Henry, you know why.”

“Yes, my dear, I believe I do, but I also believe you need to say it. You need to clarify the reason for your own sake.”

“I can’t tell him because I don’t want him to profess to be a Christian just so I will marry him. I would never know if his commitment to Christ is real or not. It needs to be real. He should come to Christ because he truly believes. He needs to do it for himself, not for me. He can’t be a Christian because he loves me; he needs to be a Christian because he loves Christ.” Lorena took out a handkerchief from her purse and wiped her eyes.

“That’s right, Lorena.” Her uncle’s voice was soft and gentle. “You have wisdom beyond your years.”

“Thank you, Uncle Henry, but I have deeply hurt him. And what if I lose him?”

“Now, now, precious one, who you choose as your partner for life is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. God intends to be very involved in that decision. You need to trust God with this. If this is the man God wants for you, He will work it out. You must believe that and trust the Lord. That might sound like a trite platitude, but it also happens to be the truth.”

“Oh, I do trust the Lord. At least with my mind, I do. But my heart is going crazy! I love him so!”

“Yes, my dear. I understand. Sometimes it is easier for the mind to have faith than for the heart to trust. Do you know the story of Charles Blondin?”

“No, I’ve never heard of him.” She wiped her eyes again and put her handkerchief away.

“Well, it was thirty years ago,” Uncle Henry began. “It was in July of 1859 that Mr. Blondin, an accomplished tight-rope walker, strung a rope across Niagara Falls from the United States to Canada. Thousands gathered to see his amazing feat. He was all set to cross when he yelled to the crowd, ‘I will cross the falls from one country to another! Who believes I can do it?’ The crowd hollered back, ‘We do! We believe you can!’

“And he did it. He walked across from the U.S. to Canada and back again. Then he took a wheelbarrow and asked, ‘Do you believe I can cross while pushing this wheelbarrow?’ The crowd roared, ‘We believe! You can do it!’ Then he asked, ‘Do you believe I can push this across with a man in it?’ Once again, the crowd voiced their faith in him, ‘Yes, we believe you can!’ they shouted. Then Mr. Blondin asked, ‘So, who will get into the wheelbarrow?’ The crowd was silent. There were no takers. Of the thousands who said they believed, none really did.

“You see,” Uncle Henry continued, “they believed with their head but not their heart. As long as they didn’t have to be the man in the wheelbarrow, they believed, but when it came down to personal risk, they didn’t believe. It is easy to give intellectual assent and say you believe, but the real test is whether or not your heart believes. Whether you are willing to get into the wheelbarrow, that is the real test.”

Uncle Henry reached over and covered Lorena’s trembling hands with his. “My dear, you have put yourself in the wheelbarrow. You are trusting with your heart. And that can be quite scary. But you are doing the right thing. You are putting God first, and it is pleasing to the Lord. Let this be a time of intense prayer for you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you and strengthen you with His peace. I promise you that God will not let you down.”

“Thank you, Uncle Henry, that helps. You always know how to say exactly what I need to hear. You’re right; it is scary. I don’t want to lose him.”

She looked at her uncle and noticed for the first time how gray his hair had become. The laugh lines around his eyes were deeper and every feature of his face reflected the gentle and kind man she had always known him to be. She had always loved him for his good-natured sense of humor, but now she especially appreciated how wise and kind he was.

“I love you, Uncle Henry.”

“I think the sentiment is mutual, my dear.”

“I hated hurting him like that,” Lorena said, her voice shaking. “and I am hurting so badly myself. Every fiber of my being wanted to say, ‘Yes, I will marry you.’ But I couldn’t. I do hope everything turns out all right.”

“It will.” Her uncle’s voice was gentle and soothing. “Cal is a fine man. Unselfish, self-sacrificing, industrious...He seems up to any task set before him. But as

I have said, nothing is as good as a husband who loves God. And the hard thing you are doing right now, who is to say this isn't exactly what Cal needs so he will take his eyes off you long enough to contemplate serving Christ?" "You're right, I know," Lorena said. "It helps to talk to you. I appreciate your taking the time."

"Of course. Is there anything else?"

"Yes, I have one question. "Did Mr. Blondin make it across the falls pushing the wheelbarrow?"

Uncle Henry let out a hearty laugh. "Yes, he did. He made it." And then, with a softened voice, added, "And so will you, dear one."

30

Decision Point



TO COPE WITH HIS SADNESS, Cal immersed himself in work, which occasionally took him past Pastor Sanders' home. Whenever he stopped by, he found solace in the pastor's wise counsel and genuine interest in his well-being. Unlike his previous church leaders in Pima who demanded strict obedience, Pastor Sanders had an open-minded and friendly approach. He never preached at Cal during their visits but always had insightful answers whenever Cal had questions. He felt grateful for the pastor's friendship during this difficult time.

Cal approached Pastor Sanders one day with a question. "Pastor, I was taught God has many wives in heaven who give birth to 'spirit babies.' So when a baby is conceived on earth, a spirit baby in heaven gets incarnated into the fetus."

Pastor Sanders listened quietly. Cal continued, “I was also told that Christ and Satan are both offspring of God’s union with a heavenly wife, that they were spirit brothers.”

“Brothers? Jesus and the devil, brothers?” Pastor Sanders raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, in the sense that they are both offspring of God, but that Jesus was good and Satan turned toward evil. That is Mormon teaching. I was taught that the spirit baby Jesus, after he grew up in heaven, went into Jesus’ body before he was born on earth, just as we all came from heaven and went into our bodies. So what I want to know is, does the Bible support this idea?” Cal stopped and waited for the pastor’s reply.

Pastor Sanders gently shook his head as he listened to Cal’s question. “That doctrine is not biblical, and the worst thing is, it presents a Jesus who had a beginning, which lowers the status of Jesus. False prophets, in one way or another, always attack the deity of Christ and try to portray a different Jesus than the one described in the Bible. Satan is a fallen angel. Jesus created all the angels. Therefore Jesus and Satan cannot be brothers in any sense of the word. Jesus is eternal and has no beginning. He is God and has always existed as God.” Opening his Bible, he turned to Colossians 1:16-17. “Here,” he said, handing the book to Cal. “Read this. It’s a description of Jesus.”

Cal read the passage out loud. “*His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*”

“So, Jesus made everything,” the pastor said. “And now, turn to Isaiah 9:6 and read aloud.”

Cal found the passage and read, “*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*”

“So,” the pastor said, “those two passages tell us Jesus is before all things, and He is referred to as Eternal Father. Now consider this: If Jesus is before all things and is eternal, how could he be born as a spirit baby in heaven? Heaven can’t exist, and a so-called spirit mother can’t exist before Jesus. Nothing can exist before Jesus, for He is before all things and the creator of all things. He is eternal.”

“I see.” Cal nodded in agreement. “The idea Jesus had a beginning can’t be true, for it contradicts the word of God.”

“That’s right. Furthermore, the idea that all people were spirit babies in heaven before birth is also an unbiblical concept. Zechariah 12:1 says, ‘*The Lord formed the spirit of man within him.*’ How can God form our spirit within our body if our spirit was already formed in heaven?

“And besides, John the Baptist said in John Chapter One, ‘*He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.*’ That says Jesus existed in heaven before John was born on earth. So, John could not have preexisted as a spirit baby. And then there is John 3:31, where John the Baptist says, ‘*The One who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The One who comes from heaven is above all.*’ There John is saying he is from below, from the earth, but Jesus is from heaven.

“But if the Mormon idea of spirit babies is true, then the Scripture is false, for John would be from heaven too. Jesus reiterated the same thing to the disciples when in John 8:23, He said to His disciples, ‘*You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*’ So

once again, if the spirit baby idea was true, all the disciples were from heaven just as Jesus was.”

“I understand,” Cal said. “If the disciples existed in heaven before they were born, then Jesus was telling a falsehood when he told them he was from heaven and they were not.”

“That’s it,” the pastor said.

Cal enjoyed these discussions with the pastor. The more he learned, the more he realized how skewed his perception of reality had been. As a result, he stopped off many times to visit with the pastor and learned something new each time.

One day Cal mentioned he had asked Lorena to marry him, but she had turned him down. He hadn’t planned on saying it. It just came out.

“I imagine that was painful and troubling,” the pastor said. “Did she give a reason?”

“No, she would not say why.”

“Well...” The pastor paused momentarily. “I don’t know her mind. But I do know the Lord’s mind. And I believe God wants you to be more concerned about another marriage right now.”

“Oh no,” Cal answered. “I can’t think of marriage with anyone but her.”

“I didn’t mean marriage with another woman. I meant the marriage between Christ and the Church mentioned in the Bible.”

“I don’t get your meaning.” Cal was puzzled.

“In the Bible,” the pastor explained, “earthly marriage is described as a picture of an eternal marriage between the Church and Christ. Jesus wants a close family relationship with everyone who comes to Him. So close it is pictured as

marriage. That is what I was speaking of. God wants you to consider your relationship with Christ.”

“Well, I’ve been attending church and reading my Bible. And I pray.”

“Let me show you another scripture,” the pastor said. After finding the passage, he handed the Bible to Cal. “Read John 5:39.”

Cal read, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”*

“Cal, you are doing well to come to church and to search the scriptures. But no matter how many church things you do, none of it will give you life. None of that will make you a Christian. You cannot earn salvation by doing religious works. You see, Christ purchased your salvation by shedding his blood on the cross and dying for you. And now he offers salvation to you as a free gift. All you have to do is repent and put your trust in Christ to save you. Being a Christian doesn’t start with doing. It starts with being. It commences with being a submitted servant of Christ.

“And that doesn’t happen without a decision. To be forgiven of your sins, escape Hell, and guarantee Heaven as your home, you must belong to Christ. You must put your faith in him. You must surrender. You have to say ‘I do’ to Jesus.” The pastor smiled and said, “Sorry, I didn’t mean to start preaching at you.”

“No, that’s quite all right,” Cal said quickly. “I always consider what you say, and I’ll give this some thought.”

After Cal left that day, he found himself pondering these matters. Days turned into weeks, and the biting cold of winter descended upon the small mountain town of Prescott.

He still went to church with Lorena every Sunday. He loved her, and she him, but Cal stewed over why she had rejected his marriage proposal. It puzzled him. She had asked him not to press her, so he didn't, but he thought about it always.

Why? The question was always in his mind. What was her reason? Was it because her family was wealthy and he was not? Cal decided that was not likely to be something that would matter to her, yet no matter how many times he turned it over in his mind, he could not figure it out.

All of this put a strain on their relationship. Lorena seemed to be struggling with things as well. There was a tension in their interaction that wasn't there before. There were times, Cal noted, when Lorena was about to say something to him, but then she would stop herself.

Questions assailed his mind. Where was their love heading? If they were not to marry, would he have to move on? And there were the spiritual questions he struggled with. He was afraid to get back into another religion after being deceived by the Mormon church. Yet all Pastor Sanders said made sense, especially when he said he was not talking about religion but about a relationship – a relationship with Christ. As the weeks went by, Cal continued to visit the pastor occasionally.

Cal wondered about his future. He could not see what lay ahead, and it was well he could not, for events were soon to happen that would take his life on a path entirely out of his control.

31

The Palace Saloon



IT WAS A FRIDAY EVENING in late December. Cal sat huddled at his desk in the marshal's office, completing routine paperwork. The night sky outside the window was pitch black, and violent winds could be heard brewing outside. Each gust whistled and howled fiercely against the walls and rooftops of the buildings on Whiskey Row, portending a coming winter storm.

With the paperwork stacked neatly and securely in the desk drawer, he leaned back in his chair and took a deep breath. His gaze shifted from the desk to the window as he reflected on the twists and turns of the past year. His life had taken a radical turn since the robbery of the U.S. Army payroll.

Initially, he felt like a forgotten and aimless soul, buffeted about by circumstance and ruined by his associations and choices. But now, as he looked out at the world beyond the window, his heart felt lighter and his spirit uplifted. He considered himself ready for whatever lay ahead, for he could plainly see the hand of God's guidance in all that had happened.

Despite the negative repercussions of his involvement in the robbery, Cal saw God had used it to save him from the maze of Mormonism. Running into Chester was more than fortuitous. It was providential, for he learned a trade and absorbed some practical common sense. And the encounter with Chester eventually set him on the trail to Prescott, where he met Lorena. He had vowed to abandon any semblance of religion, but she changed all that. And somehow, in the midst of Lorena being kidnapped and rescued and the subsequent stage robbery, it ended up with a badge being pinned on his chest.

Now all investigations into the payroll robbery were over, he had a steady job, a small stake in a gold mine, and he had Lorena. Although he didn't know where that was going, he could see he needn't worry; God and time always seemed to work things out. He had thought he was beyond redemption, but now he smiled as he recalled a scripture Pastor Sanders had shown him: *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*⁵²

He blew out the kerosene lamp, grabbed the keys, and locked the office. Cal often slept on the cot in the back room of the jail, but when he had no prisoners to watch over, as was the case this night, he would get a room at the hotel. He was looking forward to a comfortable night's rest in a soft bed.

⁵² Jeremiah 29:11

High winds blew sleet in his face as he made his way across the Plaza to Whiskey Row. He wanted to make sure all was quiet before heading to his room at the Bellevue Hotel on Cortez Street. Pulling his hat low to shield himself from the biting wind, he proceeded up the boardwalk.

“Deputy!” A man stepped out of one of the saloons and shouted to him over the wind. As Cal drew near, the man said, “Johnny’s had a bit too much again. The bartend cut him off and he ain’t liking it too much.”

Cal hoped this would not become an arrest that would have him sleeping on the cot again for the night. He entered the saloon, where he saw Johnny sitting on a bar stool.

“Hey, Johnny!” Cal greeted him in a friendly tone. Over the past weeks, he had gained some skill in dealing with people who had consumed too much liquor. He knew Johnny was not the sharpest pencil in the drawer, but he was a likable enough fellow, just the same. “What’s going on?” Cal asked.

“That no-good skunk!” Johnny slurred drunkenly. “That lousy excuthse for a bartenda! He won’t let me have another drink! Ornery coot! He’d thteal a fly from a blind spider!”

“Now Johnny,” Cal said. “You know Slim is your friend. Don’t talk about him that way. He’s just lookin’ out fer ya. He thinks you’ve had a bit too much, is all. Besides that, I’ve never known Slim to steal a fly from a blind spider,” Cal joked, while smiling at Johnny, hoping to cheer him up.

“Depidy, I theel mad enough to thwallow a horn-toad backwards! And I ain’t as drunk as thinkle peep I am!”

“What?” Cal laughed. “You better give that another go!”

“Oh, you know what I mean!” Johnny swayed back and forth on his bar stool.

“Johnny...” Cal’s voice was low, as though he were sharing a secret. “Did Slim offer you any of his special water?”

“What special water?” Johnny asked.

“Oh, he keeps it a secret. His special spring water will make you feel great! He only gives it to his best customers.” Then, looking up at Slim, he gave him a quick wink and in a low voice said, “Get Johnny some of your special spring water.”

“Oh,” Slim said knowingly. “My secret water. I keep that in the back. I’ll get some.” Slim returned with a glass of water.

“There you go, Johnny. On the house.” Slim set the glass on the bar.

“Now listen,” Cal said. “Take a few swallows of that, and soon you’ll feel ten feet tall and pleased as a pup with two tails!”

Johnny looked at the glass suspiciously. “Looks like plain old water to me.” He took the glass and guzzled half of it. “Tastes like ordinary water too.”

“Easy there, Johnny,” Cal said. “It’s powerful stuff.” He patted Johnny on the back. “Feeling better?”

“Well, yeah. A bit.”

“You just keep on sippin’ that real slow,” Cal said. “Now don’t give Slim a hard time. And whatever you do, don’t mix any more alcohol with that special water, or tomorrow you’ll feel so bad you’ll have to feel better just to die.”

“Ok, deputy. I won’t.”

Cal gave Slim a nod and a wink and headed for the door, hoping Johnny wouldn’t realize he was, in fact, drinking plain water. It was the friendly words that had calmed him

down. When Cal headed back outside, he saw the wind had picked up. He looked forward to a warm room and soft bed as he headed for the hotel.

Halfway down the block, Cal approached the Palace Saloon. A shot rang out from the Palace, and a couple of people dashed out the front door. "It's that Sam Duncan again!" one of them exclaimed. "He fired his gun into the ceiling. His recklessness is gonna get someone hurt."

Cal pulled his forty-four from its holster and entered the saloon, holding his six-gun slightly behind and out of sight. Sam Duncan was seated, his six-shooter lying on the table before him. Cal had dealt with Sam before and knew he could be mean as a rattlesnake.

"Sam, don't touch that gun," Cal said firmly.

Sam looked up angrily. "I don't take orders from nobody, especially from no tin star still wet behind the ears!"

"Now Sam, you know I'm not your enemy. But we can't have you shootin' your gun through the ceiling and maybe hurtin' innocent folks. So why don't you tell me what's troubling you?"

"Oh, you gonna be my priest now? You come to take my confession?" Sam gave Cal a sneer that was half smile and half snarl.

"Sam, you crossed a line. You need to come with me, and we'll sort this out."

Sam nonchalantly picked up the whiskey bottle on the table and poured himself a shot, his eyes glinting in mockery. "What you got in your hand there, young feller? You gonna shoot me?" Then turning to others in the saloon, he hollered, "Hey everybody, my priest thinks he's gonna shoot me!" He let out a raucous laugh. "You think I can't fill my hand faster than you can blink?"

“Stand up and back away from the table!” Cal ordered.

In an instant, Sam’s sneer vanished, replaced by a cold and deadly stare. His voice dropped to a low and menacing growl. “Or what? Whatchya gonna do if I don’t? Listen up, young feller, I’ve fought Injuns, kilt my share of Mexicans, and knocked down plenty of struttin’ peacock lawmen. So, don’t go thinkin’ I can’t deal with a young pup like you.” Sam guzzled his shot of whiskey and threw his glass to the floor, where it shattered at Cal’s feet. The room became deathly quiet, and people cleared away from the two.

Cal saw at once the time for talk had passed, and he moved toward the table to take Sam’s gun. Quick as lightning, Sam snatched his gun from the table and leveled it at Cal, who sidestepped to the left while raising his cocked pistol. Two guns fired at once, the sound of the shots deafening in the enclosed space of the saloon. Both bullets found their mark. The two men fell, their blood soaking into the dirty wooden floor, mingling with spilled whiskey and broken glass.

The Rising Sun



LORENA SAT COZILY at home with Uncle Henry, his wife Sarah, and their teenage son Billy. After a satisfying supper, she was relaxing in the front room, reading her Bible by the soft glow of a kerosene lamp.

The quiet was interrupted by a knock on the door. Lorena paid it no mind. Probably Jim stopping by to talk business with his brother, she thought. Her uncle answered the knock and spoke with someone who remained outside.

The howling wind carried small fragments of conversation to Lorena's ears, and she sat upright as she picked up the words '*shot in the head.*' Straining her ears, she tried to listen, but the voices were too faint and muffled. Then, another phrase came through – '*Lorena would want to know*' – and her heart lurched in dread at the harsh

implication of those words. Surely something terrible had happened.

Uncle Henry shut the door quietly behind him. The gravity of his expression was enough to make Lorena's heart pound even before he spoke. "Lorena..." he paused, and his somber demeanor frightened her. "I have some unfortunate news." His voice was grave, alarming her further. "Cal's been shot." His words hit her like a physical blow, and her heart dropped.

"*No!*" she cried out, her composure slipping away. Her breath caught in her throat as she spoke, and she struggled to remain calm while her mind was tortured with images of Cal lying somewhere, wounded and dying.

"How bad is it?" She asked, her voice quavering.

"I don't know, but it's bad. Cal was attempting to disarm a drunk at the Palace Saloon. He's been shot in the head."

"Oh, Lord!" Lorena cried prayerfully as tears clouded her vision. "I must go to him at once. Uncle Henry, please take me to him!"

"Of course, my dear," he answered softly. "He's being cared for by the doctor at Fort Whipple."

"And send for Pastor Sanders," Lorena added.

"I'll take care of it," Sarah said from the kitchen. "I'll send Billy to fetch him."

"Billy, help me hitch the team," Uncle Henry said.

"No," Lorena contradicted. "Uncle Henry, I'm not waiting for the team. Let's go on foot."

"Now, you're not thinking with a clear mind," her uncle gently chided. "You can't go on foot in this weather. It's almost a mile, and there's a winter storm brewing. We'll

saddle the horses and ride. That will be quicker than the buggy.”

Lorena threw on her coat while fighting back tears. “I’m ready. Let’s go.”

“I’ll be praying,” Sarah said, wringing her hands as they hurried out the door.

In the stable behind the house, they hastily saddled the horses. As Lorena slipped the bridle on Tory, she couldn’t stop shaking with dread. She sprang into the saddle and waited momentarily for her uncle to finish with his horse. When they were both mounted, they rushed out into the night. As Lorena exited the stable, the frigid wind took her breath away as it whipped at her clothing.

Lorena and her Uncle Henry were thoroughly chilled when they arrived at Fort Whipple. Henry promptly cared for their horses while Lorena rushed into the surgeon’s office. An orderly seated behind a desk asked what he could do for her.

“Where is Deputy Chandler?” Her voice conveyed her urgency.

“Right this way.” The orderly motioned to follow and guided her down a dimly lit hallway to a small room. Cal lay on a bed, unconscious, with the doctor carefully tending to the gunshot wound in his head.

“How is he, doctor?” Lorena asked. “Is he going to be all right?” Her voice shook, and fear gripped her as she saw the blood-stained pillow under Cal’s head.

“Well...” The doctor hesitated. “It’s hard to say...” He carefully wiped his blood-stained hands on a white cloth. “The bullet creased him along the side of his head, causing a concussion, and he’s been unconscious since he arrived. There could be a skull fracture, and that would be serious. We’ll have to wait and see. If he wakes up soon, he’ll likely

be all right. He could wake up in five minutes, or...in five months, or—”

“He’s going to be fine,” Lorena blurted out, not wanting to hear otherwise. He would recover. She wanted to believe that. She *needed* to believe that.

“As you say, miss. I’ve done all I can do for now. Time will tell. I have to look in on another patient. Stay as long as you wish. If he comes to, talk to him and keep him awake for a bit. That may help.”

After the doctor left, Lorena pulled a chair beside the bed. She held Cal’s hand, laid her head on his chest, and wept. “Oh, Cal,” she cried through broken sobs. “My dearest love, I am here.” Tears streamed down her cheeks and wetted Cal’s shirt. When Uncle Henry came in, she asked him to say a prayer.

“Yes, of course,” he replied tenderly. “Dear Heavenly Father. You know what has happened, Lord. We look to you now in this troubling moment. You promised you would be a very present help in a time of trouble. We ask for Cal’s life and health to be fully restored. Nothing is too hard for you, God. Touch him with your healing power. May your presence come into this room. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”

“Oh God,” Lorena prayed aloud. “Please don’t let him die! Lord Jesus, touch Cal with your mighty power, I ask. God, please don’t let Cal go out into eternity without knowing you. Please, God, as you added years to King Hezekiah’s life, I ask you to add years to Cal’s. Don’t let him die without knowing you. Amen.” Lorena laid her head down again on Cal’s chest and wept.

After some time, Lorena told her uncle she would stay through the night. “Go home to Sarah. I want you to be there and send the pastor here when he arrives.”

“I can stay. I don’t want you to be alone.”

“It’s all right, Uncle Henry. I am not alone. The Lord is present, and your prayer has strengthened me. I want to be alone with Cal, and I want you at the house so you can send the pastor when he comes.”

“As you wish.” Her uncle took her by the hands, gave them a squeeze and assured her he would be praying.

After he left, Lorena continued to pray to God and talk to Cal. “Come back to me, Cal,” she pleaded. “I need you. Please don’t leave me. Hold on. If you can hear me, know that I love you. With all that is within me, I love you.”

Time meant nothing as Lorena sat in the silent room, tears streaming as she prayed fervently for Cal. She didn’t hear Pastor Sanders quietly step into the room, but the sound of his caring voice brought instant comfort.

“I am here.” The tone of his voice conveyed his deep concern. “How is he?”

Lorena stood. “Thanks be to God, you’re here! And thank you for coming out in this terrible weather.”

“I came as soon as I got word. What does the doctor say?”

“The bullet merely grazed the side of his head, but he is unconscious and not out of danger. The doctor doesn’t know if it is only a concussion or if there is a fracture of his skull. Oh pastor, please pray!”

The pastor prayed what seemed to Lorena to be the most powerful and eloquent prayer she had ever heard. When he finished, she asked, “Pastor, how can this happen? Why now? He was so close to accepting the Lord. I worry he will go out into eternity without knowing Christ. I can’t bear the thought of not seeing him in heaven.”

“He didn’t tell you?” the pastor asked.

“Tell me what?” Lorena was puzzled.

“Lorena, don’t worry. Cal accepted the Lord two days ago.”

“He did?”

“Yes, he has been stopping by to see me at least once a week for some time now.”

“Really? I had no idea. But that’s good, very good! He never mentioned it to me.”

“Yes, and a couple days ago, he stopped in and told me he was ready to make Jesus his Lord. I prayed with him, and he made a heartfelt decision for Christ.”

“Oh, pastor! That is wonderful news! Do you feel it was a genuine commitment? He wasn’t just doing it for me, so I would marry him?”

“My dear, Cal never had any idea why you rejected his offer of marriage. We talked about it. I had no idea either, but of course, I suspected the reason, but I said nothing. I am sure his conversion is genuine.”

“Oh, thank you, Lord!” Lorena prayed aloud. “And thank you, pastor, for coming and bringing such wonderful news!”

Pastor Sanders stayed another hour or so until Lorena insisted he should go home to his family. “I’ll be staying the night, pastor. Thank you for coming, and please keep praying.”

“I will continue to pray, and I’ll get some folks from church praying as well.”

The pastor left, and after a time, the doctor returned. When he learned Lorena had no intention of leaving, he brought a cot for her to sleep on, which she moved next to Cal’s bed. Lying on the cot, she took hold of Cal’s hand so she would be awakened if he stirred. She continued praying silently until her eyes closed in sleep.



SHE AWOKE SUDDENLY, not knowing how long she had slept. She saw through the window a hint of dawn on the horizon. Then she realized what had awakened her. Cal stirred again and groaned. In an instant, she was on her feet.

“I’m here with you, Cal,” she said hopefully, while taking him by the hand. He groaned, moved slightly, and his eyes slowly opened.

“Cal, can you hear me?”

Cal turned his head slightly and looked at Lorena and then closed his eyes. For several minutes he moaned and tossed. Remembering the doctor had said to keep him awake if he came too, she said, “Cal, I am here. Please talk to me.”

He opened his eyes and gazed at her. “I must have died and gone to heaven,” Cal murmured groggily, “because I’m looking at the face of an angel.”

Lorena burst into happy tears. “No, you didn’t die; you’re very much alive!” She was half crying and half laughing out of sheer relief and joy. “And I’m no heavenly angel, but I’ll be your earth angel for as long as you need!”

“Ow! I have a splitting headache,” Cal said painfully. “What happened?”

“You were shot,” Lorena answered. “The bullet grazed the side of your head.”

“Shot? No, Johnny wouldn’t shoot me. Besides, I left him happy as a coon eatin’ grapes.”

“Not him. It was Sam Duncan. The doc told me. He shot you, and you shot him.”

“Sam Duncan?” Cal reached up and winced as he touched his bandaged head. “Oh yeah, I remember now.

Sam was in the Palace Saloon, shootin' up the place. Did I...Did I kill him?"

"I don't think so. I don't know for sure. They have him here somewhere. Doc said he's in worse shape than you."

"Well, that's good. I mean, not good that he's worse than me, but good he isn't dead. He's an all-right guy until he has too much whiskey. Oooh," Cal groaned and put his hand to his head again.

"Don't talk too much. Just lie still and rest."

"Why are you here?"

"You really did get knocked in the head," Lorena chided. "Don't you know I'm the woman who loves you with her whole heart?"

"Oh yeah." Cal smiled weakly. "Dumb question. I guess I'm still pretty out of it."

"Just rest easy," Lorena said caringly. Cal closed his eyes and lie quiet for a few minutes. Wanting to keep him awake as the doctor had suggested, Lorena said, "Speaking of questions, you know that question you asked me before..." Lorena paused. "You can ask me again."

"What question?"

"You know, *the* question."

"The question? I don't get it." Cal looked confused.

"By the creek, when we had our picnic. You asked me a question."

"Oh, that question. You told me not to press you. Don't worry, I won't. I'm sure you had a good reason."

"So, ask me again!"

"Ask you again?"

"Yes! Ask me again!"

“Ask you what?”

Lorena sighed in frustration. “The question you asked me the day we picnicked by the creek.”

“When? Now?”

“Of course, now!”

Cal looked searchingly into Lorena’s eyes. He noticed her eyes were red from crying and her face streaked with dried tears. It dawned on him how worried she must have been, and it touched him deeply. All the feelings he had tried to control came to the surface in a rush.

“I love you,” he said, and his voice was heavy with emotion. “Always have. Always will.”

“So, ask me!” She said, half laughing and half crying.

“Lorena, my precious angel, will you marry me?”

“Yes! Yes! Yes, I will marry you!” She gripped his hands with both of hers as tears of joy streamed down her face. “I have been wanting to say that for so long!”

“So, this is what I needed to do to get you to marry me!”

“Do what?”

“To get you to marry me, I just needed to get shot!” Cal chuckled and then stopped abruptly. “Ouch! That hurts! Don’t make me laugh anymore.”

“You’re the one telling jokes,” Lorena said.

“Yep. I just needed to get shot. Why didn’t I think of that sooner?”

“Of course, that wasn’t it!” Lorena scolded happily.

“You mean, I went and got myself shot for nothing?” Cal gave her an impish grin.

“Oh, stop teasing, you silly goose!”

“Remember, I’m *your* silly goose. So, what was it then? Why had you said you couldn’t marry me?”

“Because I needed to know you were committed to following Christ. And I couldn’t tell you that. I didn’t want to coerce you into just saying you would follow Jesus. So I had to give you space to do it on your own without me twisting your arm. The Bible says a believer should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. I had to say no to you in obedience to Christ, which was the hardest thing I have ever done.”

“Oh!” Cal roused from his grogginess. “So that was it. I had no idea. I couldn’t figure it out. But I can see the wisdom in it. You had to put God first, even before us. Pastor Sanders led me to Christ a few days ago. I was going to tell you on Sunday on our way to church. After being so disappointed and deceived, I resisted because I didn’t want to join another religion. But I finally got it through my thick skull that I didn’t have to formally join a church or a denomination or swear obedience to any earthly organization. All I had to do to be saved was decide to believe the Bible and follow the real Jesus. It was simpler and easier than I thought.”

“I’m so happy for you, Cal! God works all things together for good for those who love Him.”

“But how did you know? How did you know I had accepted the Lord?”

Lorena squeezed Cal’s hand. “Pastor Sanders was here earlier. He prayed you would have a spectacular recovery. He told me you had become a Christian. So now,” Lorena said smiling, “you belong to Christ, and soon, we will belong to each other for the rest of our lives. Now close your eyes and rest, my love. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Cal closed his eyes. His head hurt, but his heart was full of joy and peace. He thought about his life's winding course over the past year. From being religiously deceived and an outlaw on the run, he had found the real Jesus and become a deputy marshal who was about to marry the most beautiful woman in the territory. His life had come full circle.

While everyone else from the robbery was being hunted down and arrested, Chester had been teaching him a new trade. When he lost his home and family, he found love with Lorena. Cal smiled as he reckoned the unlikelihood of going from being a lawbreaker to being a deputy marshal. Through all the twists and turns of his life, Cal could see the hand of God had been there directing circumstances for his best good. He had gone from being hopeless to hopeful.

“You know something, Lorena? For the first time in my life, I feel and know God loves me. And something else, since I came to Christ, I feel closer to you than ever before. It’s as if our souls are touching.”

Lorena couldn’t answer at first. She was too choked with emotion. “The closer we each get to God,” she said, “the closer we are to each other. That’s because God is a god of love. He invented love. He is love. Two people can’t reach their full potential of true love without God. Isn’t it wonderful?”

“Yes...wonderful!” Cal mouthed the word slowly as though it were something to be savored. “*Wonderful*. I like that word. It has new meaning for me. I thought I knew God, but I didn’t know anything. God sought me out even before I realized how much I needed him.”

“That’s what he does.” Lorena smiled joyfully. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Lorena laid her head on Cal’s chest. She gripped his hand while Cal gently stroked her hair.

“You know,” Cal said. “You were right. No one who will respond to God’s love is beyond redemption.”

Sunlight streamed through the window and bathed the two with its brightness. The sun had risen; a new day was dawning. And the Son who had risen and come forth from the tomb was shining his love upon two of his dear ones. And they loved Him for it.

The End

IS IT REALLY THE END, or is it just the beginning? Book II of Beyond Redemption will be released soon. It begins with Cal and Lorena's wedding plans and details their continuing adventures together.

To be informed when Book II is available and to be notified of free book offers, please sign up at: **[goodread.us/signup](https://www.goodreads.com/signup)** or scan the code below with your phone's camera. Tap the link that appears when scanning.



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Epilogue

THEY BELONG TO THE AGES NOW. The Follett brothers, Cyclone Bill, Gilbert and Wilfred Webb, David Rogers, Marc Cunningham, and all those involved in the 1889 Paymaster Robbery lived and died long before we were born. Although composite characters, Cal Chandler, Jessica Lorena McKenzie, and her relatives are portrayed in circumstances that did happen, and in situations that could have happened, even likely happened, but were not recorded.

Though composites, the events that happened to them are real in the sense that pioneers of the Old West lived, loved, cried, and died as they pursued their dreams and experienced events just like what Cal and Lorena went through, such as the highwayman in Chapter Ten who discharged his firearm and spooked the team pulling the stage, causing a runaway that foiled the robbery. That really happened near what is now the ghost town of Gillett, Arizona. Many such incidents in this writing were taken straight out of the pages of Arizona history.

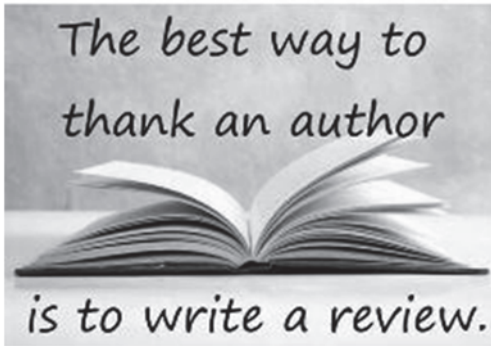
The characters of this story have long since passed on into eternity. Yet for some reason, we cannot let them go. Mankind is always looking back into history to study the lives of those long gone, as though some invisible chord is pulling our attention to them. We are connected. Their lives, loves, passions, and hopes – like ripples in the waters of time – reach out and touch us. No man is an island, for what we do changes the world in thousands of unseen ways.

Something deep within us whispers that their lives mattered. That whisper is the voice of God, for indeed, their lives did matter. They mattered to God, or rather they *matter* to God, “for to Him all men live.” Because they matter to Him, they matter to us. Not only do their spirits

reside in eternity, but their former lives have also become the fabric and foundation upon which our world is built.

The life of each person who ever lived changed the world for good or for bad to some degree. May we learn from their history – their mistakes and successes – as we celebrate their lives. Shakespeare wrote, “All the world’s a stage” and “a stage where every man must play a part.” May the lessons we learn from past recitals guide us all to give our best performance.

* * * *

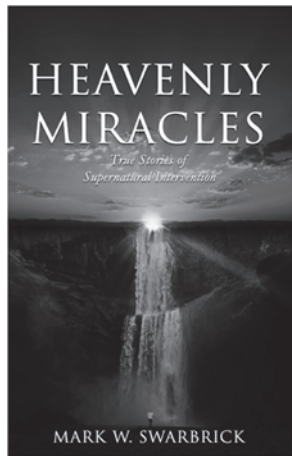


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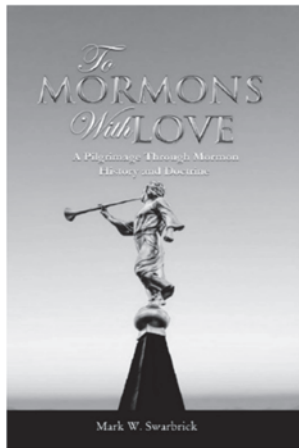
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