

DEADLY SECRETS

by

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CHAPTER ONE

It's a beautiful Spring day in Southern Montana and Josh had just finished most of his chores for the day. He could see why his Daddy chose this particular homestead with the mountains as a backdrop, they would hold their snow caps till mid Summer. The Springtime was Josh's favorite time of the year, it could never come soon enough for him. Everything starts to turn green again, the birds would return and the flowers bloom. The winters were his least favorite, with brutally cold temperatures hovering around -25 degrees for weeks at a time, unforgiving snow drifts 20' high, winds howling 30 to 40 mph. Trees would actually explode in the forest because of the cold and frostbite would occur to exposed flesh in 3-5

minutes. He was bringing in the cows from one of the nearby pastures with his trusty dog Spike, a border collie. It will take him another 45 minutes to water and bed them down for the night. He couldn't wait to hear the dinner triangle ring, he hadn't eaten anything since the very early morning. Ever since his father left three days ago, he's had to do double duty. This was the worst time of the year for his Daddy to do his disappearing act, with all the planting that needed to be done. He wouldn't be able to handle his chores and his Dad's too. His Dad has been acting very strange lately, just before his disappeared. According to my Mom, Dad had done this before for some unknown reason. My Dad wasn't very talkative to begin with, he was almost unapproachable when he was in one of his "moods". As he got closer to the cabin, squabbling could be heard between his twin sisters, Sarah and Abigail. His Mom met him at the door and gave him a great big hug, Josh tried to pull away saying, "I'm all dirty from bedding down the cows." What he really wanted to say is , I'm 18 and not a kid anymore. But, his Mom totally ignored him and gently pulled him into the kitchen area to wash up. The twins were old enough to handle a lot of the chores around the house, especially now with Dad's disappearance. Mom still did most of the cooking, the girls would divvy up the rest of duties, surrounding

mealtime. The meal was promptly served as soon as Josh had finished washing up. Josh now sits at the head of the table. It was venison steaks again, with some of his Mom's famous corn bread, yams and pickled cabbage, it was a feast fit for a king and he was hungry. It was Abigail's turn to say grace, "Dear Lord we thank you for the food on this table and bless us all, especially Daddy who needs your guidance, Amen.". They usually ate in silence, but not tonight. Josh started asking a lot of questions about his Dad's disappearance. All of the questions were aimed directly at me, but I still hadn't made eye contact since I met him at the cabin door. Josh was pissed, he wanted some answers regarding, Dad's strange behavior and I held all the answers. He had been doing double for the past three days. He had to get up at 4 am and he wouldn't return home till well after dark. The twins had to balance out the house chores as well help out with the livestock in the barn. Finally, Josh had had enough of my silence and he banged down on the table with a clenched fist, hard enough to send the pickled cabbage crashing to the floor. I made eye contact with him immediately and gave him a stern look on my face, this was new behavior for Josh and I didn't like it. You have to understand something, I have been mute since birth and all my children learned sign language at a very young

age. "That's just enough out of you, now pick up the cabbage. Your Dad was dealt a bad hand growing up and is still showing some of his emotional scars, we'll talk more later." I said. That was my pat answer, whenever the kids broached the subject about their Dad's disappearing act. After dinner, I sat them all down and said here's what I know.....

CHAPTER TWO

We knew almost nothing about your Dad's Dad, we do know he was a fur trapper from Missouri, who came to Northern Montana in the 1830s. His real name was Samuel Coleman. When he was about 40 years of age he took a Blackfoot wife, named Walking Stick. She was only 15 years old at the time and was born with a club foot. Your Dad was born the following Spring and they lived in a tiny one room cabin out in the woods, along the Canadian border. The cabin wasn't really a home, it was more of a place to store the pelts. It was very harsh living conditions, with no other white men around for more than a 100 miles. It was a log cabin built into the side of hill and had a 10' x 10' x10' living space. It was cleverly camouflaged, you could walk within 10-15 yards and not know it was there; it was built for

safety, not comfort and had no windows. The cabin was more like a fortress, it had to be, because of its location. The cabin had to withstand Crow Indian attacks, grizzly bear and wolf assaults and at least one blizzard a year that would completely bury the cabin under 10' to 15' of snow. Fur trapper cabins were unique, because of their size, they were easy to heat and defend. As Samuel would bring in the pelts, Walking Stick would dry them, and then line the walls and floor with the pelts to insulate the cabin, even further from the cold outside. By the time Spring came, the living space were reduced considerable to 7' x 7' x 7'. It must have been very difficult for your father growing up in such tight and cramped conditions. His mother fed and clothed him growing up, but other than that, she was not at all warm or nurturing. She was not a happy person.

When Adam was about 8 years old, his father started taking him on hunting trips for days at a time, these were the highlight of his childhood growing up. He took to the woods like a full blooded Indian and he felt more at home in the woods than back at the tiny cabin. Because of the terrain and deep snows, they never hunted on horseback, they didn't even own any domesticated animals. As his father would say "horses and dogs make too much noise in the woods." Your father and his Dad didn't talk

very much even on these hunting trips, your father would learn by watching his father's hunting and trapping methods. But, Samuel had little patience with his son, especially if he made the slightest mistake. If your father didn't set a trap just right, his father wouldn't scream or yell, his form of punishment, was to just leave your father at the campsite for days at a time, letting his son to fend for himself. We can only imagine how Adam must have felt. No eight year old, should have to go through something like that. If Adam wanted to eat that night, he would have to catch or kill his dinner. Your father went to sleep both scared and hungry on many a night growing up. At home, Walking Stick would make the meals, tan skins, dry meat and chop enough wood for the coming winter. She was treated more like a slave than a wife.

Around his 12th birthday on one of their longer hunting trips, his father started drinking earlier than usual that evening and unexpectedly started sexually fondling Adam at the campfire. Adam was very confused my this new behavior, this was the closest affection his father had ever showed him. He was unsure what to think and was bewildered. It didn't feel right to him, but he loved his father and wasn't sure what to do. One moment he was feeling very uneasy, the next he was actually enjoying it.

But, the next morning his father would pretend like nothing had happened. He was back to his old behavior, of ignoring your father for most of the day. This pattern of abuse continued for two years on almost every hunting trip he took with his father. It wasn't long before Adam started to know, in his heart that it was wrong and it started repulsed him to no end, he was starting to hate his father. He tried to tell Walking Stick many times, but she wouldn't hear any of it. What could she do, she was a prisoner herself?

When he was about 14 years old, on one of those camping trips, he waited until his father was sound asleep. It was a full moon that night and his heart was pounding so hard, he thought it might wake his father up. He could see his father lying there so peacefully and innocent, as if nothing was wrong. He had planned this in his head so many times, but now it was at hand, it wasn't so easy. He approached his sleeping father as quietly as he could. He knelt down next to him and with the bone handled knife his father had given him, he very unceremoniously slit his father's throat from ear to ear. Samuel suddenly awoke and grabbed his son's knife hand and the other hand went to his throat. Samuel was extremely strong, but Adam was able to break free from his father's grasp. He jumped to his feet and

sprinted into the woods with just the clothes on his back. He didn't stop running until he was at least four hundred yards clear of the campsite. Despite the full moon, he still couldn't see that well in the dense forest. He was deathly afraid of his enraged father. His father was very good at killing, he told your father on more than one occasion, how he'd slaughtered dozens of Shoshone and Crow warriors and their families. He seemed delighted in sharing this with your father and Walking Stick. It made Adam's stomach crawl and his father thought it would somehow help with his manhood.

Your father laid perfectly still for at least 4 hours, under a squat bush, covered with leaves until the sun came up. It took that long for his heart to stop pounding so fast. As he approached the campsite, a heavy mist clung to the ground, making it almost impossible to see. He waited another two hours just at the edge of the clearing until the mist was burned off completely, before he dared getting any closer. Samuel had had a knack for survival. When he was 13 years old, his campsite was attack by a Crow War Party. His entire family was tortured, scalped and later killed except for Samuel. With three arrows in his back, he crawled into woods to avoid capture. He then hiked three miles to safety.

Your father was deeply disappointed that Samuel was no where to be found. He was now scared out of his mind. He knew his father was an excellent tracker, "a wounded animal is more dangerous than a healthy one." his father would say. He had to calm himself down and think like a hunter and not the hunted. When he finally entered the campsite, it felt very ominous and down right eerie. He quickly gather up his things and put everything into a his knapsack. He quickly built a huge fire and proceeded to burn everything his father had left behind, skins, clothes, moccasins, food and other trinkets. He wanted no evidence of the crime. He noticed immediately his father's rifle and bone handled knife were missing among his possessions. He waited till the fire was completely out and then scattered all the ashes. Some of the things that refused to burn he dumped, about fifty yards from the campsite. He then took a dead branch and scrapped the ground, so no one could even tell they had camped there. He figured out his father would head directly back to the cabin and get help. His wounded father would take the easiest trail back, but it was at least an hour longer then the fastest trail, which was a lot harder to negotiate. They were at least two days out from the cabin and Adam would take the faster trail back to the cabin. It was very important that he beat his

father back to the cabin, he didn't want to have to confront Walking Stick and his father. You know what they say "leave no witnesses". Before he left, he blackened his face with the ashes so as not to give his father any advantage just in case. His father was a crack shot and could hit a moving pigeon at fifty yards amongst the trees. Even though it was dark, he took off running, knowing the trail by heart was a distinct advantage and the adrenalin rush also helped. He reached the tiny cabin on the second day, just as the sun was coming up and met Walking Stick outside, she was working on some pelts. He told her that Sam had fallen off of a rock ledge and was not knocked unconscious. Later that night after getting very drunk and acting strange and for no apparent reason, took off into the woods. Your father stayed at the campsite for two days, expecting his father to return. He spent another week searching for his father, but with no luck. He then decided to head home in case his father had gone there instead.

Adam was totally exhausted and nearly collapsed at the foot of Walking Stick, he had traveled nonstop for two straight days without food or sleep, he desperately needed some rest. He purposely told Walking Stick the wrong direction to start with, so she would go off on a wild goose chase. He did not want any witnesses around when he might have to finish

off his Dad at the cabin. He waited patiently for his father's return, but after ten hours and nothing, he decided on another tact. He started heading down the trail at a slow gate and found his dead father about two hours out from the cabin. Some of the wild life had already started to ravage the body, his face was half gone. He dragged his father's body off the trail by about a hundred yards and dug a shallow grave with a shovel he brought. He also buried him with his rifle and bone handled knife. He covered it with dirt and then piled heavy rocks on top of the shallow gave. He arrived only ten minutes back at the cabin before Walking Stick appeared at the edge of the clearing. It was getting late and they would wait till morning to try again. It took almost eight days of looking, before Walking Stick officially gave up. It took her only an hour to pack everything onto her travois. She and Adam never really talked about what would happen next. He had no intentions of going back to live amongst the Blackfeet, he was a half breed and would be shunned by everyone there. Walking Stick left without saying goodbye, she never even turned around. His heart broken, after 14 years you would think she would have some empathy. Your father stayed at the cabin by himself for approximately three months, fishing and trapping and feeding himself, it was a lonely existence for a 14 year old boy.

CHAPTER THREE

The decision to stay in the area was not an option, the brutal Montana winter was coming and the high drifting snow would block the trails until Spring. So he decided to head towards Virginia City where he heard his father talk about a few times, maybe he could find work there. Your father spent most of his first 14 years having not ever talked to another human being except his mother and father. He took all his possessions from the tiny cabin that he wanted and set it ablaze. Trapper Cabins were traditionally burned after every other hunting season. They smelled of human and animal waste that was so pungent that it would attract animals of all sizes. He stood there for a long time thinking about

his childhood, until the fire burned down. He had a lot of forgetting to do, he would never return to this part of the country, ever again. He both loved and hated his father, but had absolutely no use for his mother. It took him a good 3 days just to walk out of the valley and another 15 days to reach Virginia City. The town was busting with activity, he had never seen so many people in his short life. Over the last 18 days he had lived off the land, eating mostly berries and nuts and occasional squirrel or rabbit. The only thing he carried in his knapsack were some homemade fish hooks, flint to light a fire, some of his father's gun powder, a bedroll, his knife and of course his rifle. What he didn't have was any food. He ate his last venison jerky two day ago and he was famished. He casually walked down the edge of town looking for something to eat, the first thing he came across was a small vegetable garden. He walked directly into the yard and picked an ear of corn, it tasted like honey. He continued on down the street and came to a barn with some horses and mules outside. Outside the barn, a man was pounding on a piece of metal with a hammer. As Adam approached the man he stopped, "What are you doing?" he asked "Can I help you?" said the man. Adam didn't know what to say. He had not spoken a single word in 18 days. So Adam stammered out a question,

"Whhaattt are you doing?" The man had a kind face, and a good belly laugh and said "You must be new in town." Adam replied "Yes, I've been walking for days and I'm looking for work and a place to bed down for the night". "You can sleep in the barn tonight if you'd like", said the man. Adam just bobbed his head up and down and said "Thanks". The man then started asking a whole bunch of questions, but your father didn't say a word, but was starting to get real nervous. He wasn't use to being interrogated like that. The man's last question was "Does the cat have your tongue?" Adam shook his head and just kept walking down the street. He stopped next in front of a store with all kinds of stuff in it, barrels of flour, sugar, whole slabs of bacon, dried meats, and some vegetables he didn't even recognize. Your father had never seen so many items in one place before, his father had told him about such places. Out in the woods, you needed to be totally self sufficient, this was all so new to him. His next stop was a saloon, which Adam knew nothing about. His father was a big drinker, but Adam wasn't allowed to drink at all. Some men were outside, having an argument about something or other and one of them bumped into Adam and almost knocked him down. Adam wasn't sure what to do, he was only 14 years old, but big for his age with long hair. He weighed a

good 210 pounds and stood 6'3" and he looked like he could handle himself. Just then, one of the men threw up all over your father. The other two men started to laugh at Adam. A small crowd of people started to gather to see what all the commotion was about and they all started to laugh at the situation. To save face, your father pushed the one man down to the ground and started swearing at him. "You drunken shit head, look what the fuck you did"? The other two men immediately jumped on top of him and started punching and kicking your father. The whole episode was over in less than two minutes. The crowd had dispersed as quickly as it had formed. Adam was lying in the street, not having thrown a single punch, with a broken nose, a sprain left wrist. His right ear near torn half off and bleeding profusely from several openings and that's besides his two broken ribs. He was having great difficulty catching his breathe. It took him a good ten minutes before he came to his senses, by that time everyone had gone back into the saloon. He brushed off his clothes as best he could, he tried to hold his ear in place with his right hand and staggered back the way he came. The blacksmith was still there hammering away, he turned and looked up at Adam and said "Welcome to Virginia City and what the hell happened to you? You must have set some sort of record for

getting into trouble in this here town." Your father didn't know what to say, he just stood looking dumb-founded. "Let's go get you clean up" said the blacksmith. They headed into the barn and found some medical supplies. Adam had seen his father get stitched up many time by Walking Stick, so this was not new to him. The blacksmith's introduced himself, "Hi, I'm Tom Turner and you are?" "Adam" he replied. Tom had spent some time in the Army and knew a little about "doctoring." First, he washed his hand with some lye soap and then the wounds with some hot water. He threaded up a heated needle, but before he started he handed your father a piece of wood and said, "Bite down on this, it might hurt a little". He proceeded to do a very nice repair job of reattaching his ear, only seventeen stitches. Adam bit down so hard on the piece of wood, he broke it in two and spate out the remains on dirt floor. To fix your father's broken nose, Tom then took some long tongs and said to your father "please hold very still" He proceeded to put them up Adam's nose and squeezed pretty hard. Your father fainted on the spot. He awoke three minutes later with the makings of two black eyes. Tom didn't bother telling Adam about the 'nose thing', because it wouldn't have done any good. Adam was sitting on a bale of hay and he was pale as a ghost and he wasn't sure where he was. Tom

asked him if he was okay. Adam said, "I don't know, let me sit here for a minute, until my head clears". Before Tom could get back to work, your father fell fast asleep on the dirt floor of the barn. Around three o'clock, Tom nudged Adam and asked "Are you hungry?" "I'm starved." Adam replied. Tom pulled him up by his good arm and walked him across the street to the only restaurant on this end of town. "Give this man anything he wants and put it on my tab and afterwards send him back to the stable." The cook just looked at Tom and nodded. "I can use him around the barn, mucking out stalls." said Tom. Adam was so thankful for the meal he didn't even ask if he was getting paid for mucking the stalls, room and board was enough for him right now. After a hearty lunch, Tom showed your father what to do around the barn. It took Adam just two hours to shovel all the horse and mule shit and cart it out back, he then put down more bedding, water and fed the horses and mules. Tom was quitting for the day, he was losing light and it didn't pay for him to make mistakes, especially when he was tired. He met Adam just as he was coming around the corner, "Let's call it a day partner", Adam just shook his head and agreed. Your father had started walking before sunrise and had walked a good twenty miles before he got to Virginia City and was exhausted. "You're welcome to

sleep in the barn for the night if you'd like" said Tom. Adam just nodded, he picked up his knapsack and bedroll and headed to the nearest empty stall. "I'll see you in the morning" said Tom who was already walking away. It felt so good to be indoors again and warm for a change, he had been living on the bare ground for past 18 days.

CHAPTER FOUR

He still didn't feel that safe in a strange place, so he slept with his rifle by his side and his knife in his good hand. It was a restless night's sleep and the morning couldn't come soon enough. He started in on his chores even before Tom arrived for work. As he was cleaning out the last stall, Tom came in with some fresh baked bread, some cheese and a can of milk. After breakfast, Tom and Adam talked out their sleeping arrangements. Adam would work through the end of the week, if things were still satisfactory to both parties they would continue, until one of them wanted a change. Tom and his wife Elizabeth were newly weds, Tom was 25 and Elizabeth 19, they had moved from Bozeman to Virginia City about a year ago. Tom had apprenticed under his father, also a blacksmith. They

bought an old run the down old barn from the previous owner, for a third the price he was asking. It took him a good three months just to fix up the place to get it into working shape. After only seven months of operation, the business started to show a small profit. They didn't want to start a family unless they knew the business would work out.

Your father and Elizabeth hit it off from the very beginning, she was so different than Walking Stick. She was everything his birth mother wasn't, caring, loving, very supportive and above all a happy person. He had never had any relationship to compare it to, for the first time in his life, he felt like he belonged. Over the next three years, they kind of adopted Adam as their own. He moved from the barn to an extra bedroom in their home, it was such a sharp contrast from his childhood. They did something else he much appreciated, they never asked him about his past, they loved and accepted him as "is". He didn't want to start lying to his newly foster parents about his past life.

They also introduced him to God and the Church. They attended church every Sunday and that was followed by a big Sunday meal. They also were very fond of Reverend Johnston and with some urging from Tom and Elizabeth they convinced your father to get baptized. Adam was so

proud of his new family and the congregation accepted him as one of their own. He had never known such love before and he had to pinch himself almost everyday to see if he was dreaming. Over the next three years, Adam became a very good blacksmith's apprentice and Tom a good teacher. When Adam turned 18 years old, he decided he didn't want to make blacksmithing his livelihood. It was just about this time, that they discovered gold at Alder Gulch, which was about 14 miles outside town. The town transpired from a sleepy little hamlet of 400 people, to a thriving, bustling, city of 2,000 overnight. Adam was due for a change and this was his chance to do something really different with his life. Tom and Elizabeth tried their damndest to talk him out of it, but his mind was made up. Even before he talked to Tom and Elizabeth, he had done some checking. He talked to four or five prospectors who had been to Alder Gulch and he was trying to learn from their mistakes. Because of the weather, you can only pan for gold in Montana for approximately five months a year at most; May, June, July and August for sure, April and September were iffy at best. Their were a lot of claim jumpers, you had to be ready to defend yourself at a moments notice. Freak snow storms and down-pours could wash out your claim, right out from underneath you. But by far the two most most

important attributes to success were mental and physical toughness. Lastly getting back from Alder Gulch to Virginia City with any gold was somewhat dangerous. People actually set up toll roads and would try to rob you if they thought you had anything worth stealing. After three days of talking with the Turners, they came up with a deal they agreed to. They would give him a "grub stake" and in return he would split 50/50 with whatever he made. Tom and Adam shook hands and Elizabeth gave him a big hug to seal the deal. He went directly to the General Store with their wagon and loaded up over four hundred pounds of supplies: axes, picks, hammers, pans, cooking utensils, nails, wood, lots of rope, feed for animals, ten yards of canvas and enough food to last four or five months. As part of the grub stake, Tom also gave him a horse and two mules to carry all his supplies. Just about the time Adam was ready push off, the town started to fill up with people, who all had the same idea. The whole atmosphere of the town turned ugly, with more saloons, cheap hotels and brothels. The town fathers were totally caught off guard and were unsure what to do about it. We found out later, they wound up hiring 20 deputies and commandeered a newly built hotel to expand the numbers of jail cells. With twelve inches of snow on the ground, Adam headed out of town

towards Alder Gulch on May 4th, 1864. He knew what to expect when he got there, hundreds if not thousands of prospectors all panning up and down the Little Blackfoot River. He had to travel thirteen miles up the river before he finally found a place to set up camp. Because of the many claims, the neighbors were cheek to jowl with each other. The close proximity started to bother Adam, somewhat. He decided to pay each of his neighbors and not so friendly visitation. Adam looked pretty imposing, he had added forty pounds of muscle and three inches in height. He was now an impressive six foot six and mean looking two hundred and fifty pounds, with a full beard. He certainly did not look his age. As he approached each of his neighbors, he told them straight out, that if they came into his area of the river, he would skin them alive and feed them to the buzzards. Only one of his neighbors faced him down nose to nose and he grudgingly left shaking his rifle at the guy. They all got the message, *DON'T MESS WITH ADAM TURNER OR HE'LL HURT YOU BAD.* Adam knew he was on a tight schedule, he had only enough supplies to last him four maybe five months tops, before he would have to turn back because of food or bad weather. He worked morning to night, stopping only to eat lunch, his only one real big meal of the day. It was survival of the fittest out

here, you had to live by your wits, he knew all about living like this, it was very familiar to him. You had to challenge anyone who even dared to come too close, with death. He knew all about setting up a campsite from his early childhood days. His crude canvas tent actually held up well. He set up his campsite right next to a claim site to make it easier to defend. He slept with his rifle at the ready everyday and every night. Sure enough, two weeks after he set up his claim site, a couple prospectors tried to set up too close to his. He gave a warning shot first, just over their heads, but neither one budged an inch. He then shot the first one, in the hand and with his next shot, killed the man's mule. After ten minutes of swearing and gesturing they cleared out, he wasn't sure what they said, but it wasn't English. He thought it might have been French, he wasn't sure, and he didn't care.

The first couple of days were very difficult. He didn't know a damn thing about panning for gold. Back in Virginia City, a couple of guys who came around the Livery Stables, tried to show him how, it looked so easy when they did it. A full week passed before he started to get the hang of it. Looking back on it now, those were some of the toughest times he ever experienced in his short lifetime. His feet were always wet and cold, his back would never be the same and his hands were always numb with cold.

The water leading into Little Blackfoot River was glacier fed, it had a blue tinge to it, meaning it was frigid cold. After 4 long months, he was starting to get a little frustrated. He cut his food rations in half to make them last a little longer. He was determined to stick it out to the bitter end. It was late August, at the end of a long day, he was losing daylight when he caught his first gold nugget, he could hardly believe his eyes. He didn't want to stop, but it was now pitched dark. As he laid in his tent, his mind was racing and of course he didn't sleep a wink that entire night. At the crack of dawn, he was out there panning his heart out. For three straight days, he pulled some nice sized nuggets, after each pan he would then quickly put the nuggets in his boot. He didn't want to alert his neighbors that anything was different. He would stop around noon, while eating his lunch, he would empty his boot and put the nuggets into a sack of flour. At the end of each day, he would use that same sack of flour as a pillow. It was one of the guys back at the Stables, who taught him that little trick. He woke up on the fourth day and wasn't feeling well, but he went to work as usual, but after only an hour he was having the chills and a fever, he was back in his tent. That evening, he was having the sweats and was now coughing a lot. He stayed in the tent for two straight days and it seemed he was getting

worse, not better. It was killing him, that he couldn't continue panning. It was either the third or fourth day, he decided to pack it in. The straw that broke the camels back, were the hallucinations about his father chasing after him with his bone handled knife. He took only his clothes on his back, the bag of flour, his rifle, knife and the animals. He had no intentions of ever coming back here, he even left a note on the tent flap stating his case, but made no mention of the gold.

Last night, he came up with a plan to get by the supposed toll takers. He took the sack of gold and emptied them into a bucket which was filled with bacon fat. He then coated his arm up to his elbow, took the gold nuggets and shoved them up the asses of the mules. Having worked at the barn blacksmithing, he watched Tom many times help with deliveries of calves and colts, this wasn't so different. Adam wasn't sure, but he thought the animals didn't mind it a bit. He climbed aboard his trusty mare, tethered the mules and headed down the trail to Virginia City. He had to stop a couple of times along the trail, once because he almost fainted. The other time he thought one of the mules was going to take a shit, but false alarm, it was just a piss break.

He got to the first toll stop, with four looking desperate men standing on the side of the road. The lead guy asked "What's up stranger"? Adam said, "Nothing, just heading into Virginia City to see a doctor." "What's wrong with yah?" asked the lead bandit. "Don't know, that's why I'm seeing a doctor, it might be pneumonia or the croup. Whatever it is, I'm sure it's highly contagious." replied Adam "This here is a toll road and you have to pay something or it wouldn't look right." said the other bandit. "How about this here genuine bone handled hunting knife, given to me by my Daddy, who got it from Jim Bridger himself, the indian fighter." said Adam. "Nah" came the reply, "How about we just take these here mules instead?" "I don't think so, but if you do I'll have to kill at least two of you." came his reply. "What are you talking about?" said the third bandit. "Those their animals are part of a grub stake, their not mine to give away. I'm probably going to die anyway, so I've got nothing to loose. Either let me pass or be ready to meet your maker." shouted Adam. The bandits weren't expecting this much resistance from just one sickly prospector. The oldest one said "Give us the fucking knife and get the hell out of here before we change our minds." Adam very slowly drew his knife and threw it within a half inch of the lead man foot. "If I wanted to kill you I would have put in your left eye."

replied Adam. The men stepped aside, as he was passed the last man, Adam thought to himself, Daddy that knife you gave me as boy, couldn't have gone for a better cause. About a mile out of town, Adam had to reverse the procedure and removed the gold from the animals, it was not a pretty sight. He thought to himself, what if someone happened by at that exact moment, he might ask themselves, why would a man put his arm up his mules ass", luckily no one did.

CHAPTER FIVE

As he approached the outskirts of town, he hardly recognized it as the same place he had left just 4 months ago, he would say it's doubled in size. So many more people just walking around, hanging out, so many new stores, churches, banks and saloons. He decided to check into one of the cheap hotels instead of going to Tom and Elizabeth's, just in case he's condition was contagious. He didn't want them getting sick on his account. As he approached the front desk, the clerk looked up from his newspaper and asked "Can I help you?". Adam plunked down a small gold nugget and grunted something about needing a room. The clerk spun the hotel registry around and Adam signed in as *John Smith*. After grabbing the gold nugget,

the clerk finally looked up again and blurted out "Are you all right?" Adam replied "WhaaaaaatTTTT" and fainted on the spot. A crowd of people quickly gather around him almost immediately, but no one really did anything. Finally one of the barmaids who had caught his entrance, asked the clerk "Has he checked in yet?" The clerk yelled back "234". The barmaid instructed two of her favorite customers to take this guy and his belongings up to his room. It took three men not two, to get Adam to his room. Somebody asked, "Does anyone know his name?" No one said anything and the questions went unanswered. How could anyone recognize him, he'd dropped at least twenty pounds, he hadn't bathed or shaven in four month, he was sweating profusely and unconscious. Adam finally awoke and as they lowered him into bed, he immediately started asking all sorts of questions. "Where the hell am I? Who are you people? What the fuck is going on?" His second thought was the gold. "Where's my knapsack?" he blurted out." "Hold your horses, you're here in Virginia City at Ruby's Hotel and Saloon." said the barmaid. "And the knapsack?" "It's right here next to the night stand and no one has taken anything, cowboy." replied the barmaid. "Thank you, now get the hell out of my room." came Adam's reply. The barmaid was in control of the situation and told everyone to

leave. As soon as they were gone, he got up and staggered to the door and locked it. He went to the knapsack and took out the bags of gold, then he went into the only closet and found a loose floor board. He was able to pry a loose board up with his bare hands. He placed the four bags next to the floor joists and replaced the floor board, so no could tell it had been disturbed. He barely made it back to his bed before he passed out again. Approximately three hours later, he woke-up in a pool of sweat, the shakes and then started hallucinating again. He is back revisiting the murder scene, with him standing over his father with his knife in his hand. He started screaming and yelling at the top of his lungs, "*YOU SON OF A BITCH, YOU FUCKING BASTARD.*" People in the next room were awakened by all the commotion and started banging on the walls, yelling "*ARE YOU OKAY IN THERE?*" Adam was wide awake now and yelled back "*MIND YOUR OWN GOD DAMN BUSINESS*". Adam fell back to sleep almost immediately, but within hours, he started hallucinating again. His father was chasing after him again with that fucking bone handled knife, Adam thought for sure, he was going crazy. Finally, there was a knock on the door and some one said "breakfast.. tray..... food..... door". Adam wasn't sure if he was still hallucinating or what. He staggered towards the

sound, as he opened the door, a woman happened to pass by at that exact moment. Adam looked up at her as he bent down to pick up the tray, she instinctively put both hands to her face and whispered "You look terrible, do you want me to get a doctor?" Before Adam could answer, he fainted again, just inside his room. She stepped over the breakfast tray to get a better look at the man lying unconscious . He was much too heavy for her to move, so she just covered him with a blanket and closed the door behind her. She hurried downstairs and headed over to one of the two doctors in town. She decided to go to the closest one, which was Dr.Foster, he was just two blocks from the hotel. It was early morning, which was fortunate, because both doctors would still be sober enough to help their patients. She knocked on the physicians office door at least 7 or 8 times before she heard any movement. When Dr. Foster finally opened the door, she could smell last nights liquor on his breath. She then told the doctor the situation at Ruby's Hotel. A few steps behind him was a young girl who was gathering his medical supplies together, to make the house call. She looked awfully young to be his assistant, she never uttered a word the entire trip over to the hotel. As they crossed over Fairmont Street, the doctor asked the woman what were the patients symptoms. But before she

could answer him, he said something to the effect, do you think he can he afford my services? "According to the front desk clerk, he paid with a gold nugget for his room" said the women. His symptoms were another thing, "He's lying on the floor, unconscious, white as ghost and sweating profusely." said the women. As they made their way into the hotel lobby, she pointed to the staircase and said "Room 234." Dr. Foster opened the door and saw his patient still lying on the floor, where she had left him. The doctor could almost diagnosis the man's condition without touching him. The doctor whispered "*pneumonia*" to his young assistant and the three of them, helped Adam into bed. The young assistant proceeded to strip all his clothes off and threw them out the window, into the alley below. She disappeared out of the room and came back with a wash basin and started to wash him from head to toe. She patted him dry and then applied some rubbing alcohol all over his body, trying to bring his temperature down. Even after the rub down, his temperature still hovered around 104o. Adam was coughing the whole time and holding his chest. The doctor took two different colored bottles from his bag and gave him two heaping tablespoons, between coughs. Before the doctor left, he introduced his assistant, "This is Mary, she doesn't talk very much". I smiled and nodded

my head up and down. I was tall for my age, with red hair, blue eyes and freckles. It was obviously that I was of Irish decent. I disappeared again downstairs and this time I came back with a bowl of hot chicken soup. I feed your father the soup, Adam hadn't eating a decent meal in weeks and I'm sure the soup must tasted so good. Adam dozed off almost immediately and slept twelve straight hours, the most he has slept since he left Virginia City over four months ago. He woke up the next day with me putting a cold compresses on his forehead. The cold cloth felt good and helped Adam remember where he was, in a strange hotel, in a strange bed with a stranger helping him get well. Adam asked then me "Have we met before"? I'm sure I looked puzzled and just shook my head back and forth. Adam kept asking questions and I kept shrugging her shoulders. We both got very uncomfortable with the silence, until Adam realized the problem. "Are you mute?" he asked I just nodded. Adam felt very embarrassed for asking the question and replied "I'm so sorry". I touched my heart three times and then touched his and we both smiled.

That afternoon the doctor appeared and said "Your fever has broken, but you still need bed rest. "Within a day or two, Adam was eating solid food and feeling better. During the entire time I rarely left his side. Around

the 7th day, the doctor gave him the okay to get some exercise and stretch his legs.. I would make only two visits a day, checking on your Father's progress. Around the 10th day, the doctor gave him the good news and released him from his care. The bad news was we wouldn't have an excuse to see each anymore.

Adam decided it was about time to contact his surrogate parents. As Adam approached the Livery Stable, his heart started pounding harder, the closer to he got to the Stables. Just then, Adam and Tom locked eyes for five long seconds. Tom made the first move and approached Adam and he put put out his big hand to shake, but instead, Adam gave him a big bear hug. Tom gently pulled away and asked, "Where the hell have you been? Adam gave him a brief outline of what had happened over the past ten days. "Are you okay now, you look like you lost a ton of weight?" asked Tom. Adam reassured Tom that he is feeling much better and almost back normal. Tom suggested that they all head home, to talk it all out with the misses. Adam said I'll meet you at the house in ten minutes, I want to introduce my life saver, who is my doctor's assistant. When Adam arrived at the doctors office, I answered the door and handed Adam a note that said the "Doctor is not Available". He told me he couldn't read, but would I

follow him back to Tom and Elizabeth. I was a little reluctant at first, but he insisted. When we arrived, he asked them to read the note that I had given me. They read the note and laughed and repeated its contents. Now we were all laughing. “Tom and Elizabeth this is Mary, she helped nurse me back to health, she saved my life.” He also explained my speech impediment. They both thanked me for bringing Adam back to them. Before Adam could utter another word, Tom and Elizabeth stated that we knew you were in town, because our mare and two mules were returned to us by a stranger. We figured you would return to us when you were ready.

It took Adam a good twenty minutes to explain everything that happened since he left Virginia City four months ago. For some reason, he left out the part about the gold hidden back at the hotel. Your father wasn't totally sure he could trust me yet. Elizabeth insisted that Adam go gather up all his things at the hotel and come back for a celebration dinner. Everyone happily agreed and I walked your father back to the hotel. As we approached his hotel room, Adam asked me to wait outside for a minute. Inside, Adam hurriedly went straight to the closet and retrieved the gold. He put the gold in his knapsack, scooped up the rest of his meager belongings and closed the door behind him. I was waiting for him outside

the door and I know I had a quizzical look on my face as if to say, "What the hell was that all about?" But Adam ignored my looks, he was getting good at reading my facial expressions after spending almost two weeks with me. As we approached the hotel clerk and he told him he was checking out and inquired about his bill. The clerk said "Mr. Smith you're paid up through the end the month." Adam tried not to look too surprised. He figured out that the gold he had, was worth a lot more then he first thought.

CHAPTER SIX

The dinner was ever everything that Adam could die for, a big juicy steak, mashed potatoes, collared greens, fresh baked bread and apple pie for dessert. Adam finished everything on his plate and he was stuffed. It was getting late and Elizabeth said to Adam "Your room is ready for you, it's just as you left it." Adam turned to me and said "I'll walk you back home." I know my face dropped suddenly, and I felt sick to my in the stomach. Adam noticed something right away, and asked me "Mary is anything wrong?" I just shook my head back and forth. Adam didn't say anything at the moment, he just put in the back of his mind, to ask me about it later. You have to understand, Adam and I had a very unusual 10 days together.

During Adam's fist two days, I never left his side for the entire time. While Adam slept in the bed, I slept on Adam's bedroll on the floor next to him. During that critical time, I fed, bathed, dressed, and gave him his medications. Adam could understand why the doctor liked to have me around, I was very good at what I did. As we were walking back to Dr. Fosters', I took your father's hand and grab onto his arm, for the first time in their strange relationship, he was supporting me. When Adam looked down, I was crying. The closer we got to Dr. Foster's the more I cried. He turned and asked "What's wrong?" I shook my head back and forth and just tightened my grip on his arm and wouldn't let go. We stayed that way for a good 5 minutes, finally I pulled away, wiped my tears on my sleeve and ran inside the house and never looked back. Adam stood there perplexed as ever, with his hand on his hips, not knowing what to think. As Adam was walking back to the Turner's, he asking himself, what the hell just happened? He also knew he and I had some serious communication issues.

The next day, Adam took the bags of gold and went down the assayer's office and had it weighed. He walked out of the office with \$4,200 and went directly to The Virginia Savings and Loan and made the

deposit. He then drew a check for \$2,000, made out to Tom & Elizabeth Turner and additional \$100 cash. He first headed over to Dr. Foster's to pay his outstanding bill, but his real motive was to see me again. When Adam approached the office, the door mysteriously opened and there I stood, looking so innocent and all smiles. Dr. Foster came out immediately asked if everything was all right. Adam then handed the doctor \$50 for his services and asked him "Will this cover his bill?" Dr. Foster "Oh yes" and thanked Adam for paying his bill so promptly. Most of the time it took weeks, if not months for him to get paid. If the patient died, he wouldn't expect to get paid at all. Dr. Foster had a patient in the back room and soon disappeared as quickly as he appeared. Just before I followed him outside, I stuffed an envelop into your father's coat pocket. Adam left the office and hurried over to the livery stable and where Tom was outside working hard, pumping the bellows (which used to be Adam's job) with one arm and working some red hot metal with the other. He tapped Tom on the shoulder and said "I have something for you". Tom stopped what he was doing and then he handed Tom the check. Tom wasn't expecting anything, he just stared at the check for a good 5 seconds before taking it. "What is this?" were his first words out of his mouth. "This is your half of the gold

that I recovered from my claim." said Adam. "I can't take this, you almost died to get this money." pleaded Tom. "That was the agreement we made and you can't back out of it now." said Adam. Tom stood there for a minute and then just bear hugged Adam, lifting off the ground with his huge arms. Tom then folded up the check and put it in his back pocket, then Adam started pumping the bellows as if nothing had changed.

That night after dinner, Adam finally found the letter that was in his coat pocket. He handed it to Tom and Elizabeth and asked them to read it to him.

Dear Adam,

My full name is Mary Cassidy. I'm 15 years old. I was born in Dublin, Ohio to missionary parents. I have two older brothers, William, a minister back in Canton, Ohio and Robert, a river-boat gambler somewheres on the Mississippi River. When I was 6 months old, I developed scarlet fever and it left me with a speech defect. I have never spoken a single word in my entire life. My parents home schooled me till I was 10 years old. At age 11, they sent me to a school in Hartford, Connecticut to learn sign language. When I was 12, my parents decided to move to Southern Montana to help convert the Indians. While at school, both of my parents died of a small pox epidemic in '61. At the age of 14, I had to make some tough decisions. I could go live by brother in Ohio or find work where I could earn a living. The last option (which I never considered) was to enter the Convent that was associated with the school. Within a week before I had to make a decision, a letter came from a Dr. Foster, from Virginia City, Montana. It stated that he was my parent's physician at the end. He had just lost his partner and he needed an assistant. He was willing to provide room and board and to continue my education. He was also willing to pay for all my travel expenses. Since I hadn't heard from my older brother William, the decision was easy, head West. The trip out to Virginia City

by road coach, took almost a month. I started working for Dr. Foster last April. I was very naive about life, having only lived with my parents or at all girls school. Within a couple of weeks, I found out that Doc Foster was closet alcoholic. One of my jobs was after he passed out almost ever evening, was to put him to bed. Little did I know, that Dr. Foster was also was a dirty old man. Approximately 3 months ago, Doc started coming into my room late at night asking me to pleasure him. He said it was either that or I was out the door. I am living a "nightmare". I'm not sure who I can trust. I do know that if I can somehow just get back to Ohio, I know my older brother would take care of me. Please, Help Me!

*Love,
Mary*

Elizabeth and Adam just looked at each other in total shock and reread the letter aloud again. Then Elizabeth started crying, while Tom and Adam just stood there in silence. Your father started heading for the door, but Tom grabbed him and said "Let's not do anything rash. Let's just sleep on this tonight and with clearer heads in the morning, will find out what's been going on between the good doctor and Mary." Adam tried to pull away and Elizabeth stepped in and said "I think Tom has a valid point. Before we jump to conclusions, let's find out as much as we can tomorrow." Everyone turned in around 11 pm, but Adam was so upset, sleep was out of question. He laid there in his bed thinking of what he would do to Dr. Foster. The next morning, around the breakfast table, they planned their next step in the investigation. The first suggestion was to confront me about the validity of the letter's contents, because of it's disturbing nature.

They were unsure how they would going to do this, because of my speech impediment. They then decided the next tact was to invite both Dr. Foster and I over for dinner and ask him to explain how I became his assistant.

Tom and Adam arrived at the doctor's office around 10 am, but when they got there, a sign was on the front door read *BE BACK LATER*. They decided to wait, this was too important to put if off. It was almost noon before we both came back. They could smell liquor on Dr. Foster's breath as soon as he walked in the door. When they broached the subject of an invitation to dinner, we both gladly accepted their offer for a home cooked meal. That evening, Elizabeth as usual cooked up a wonderful spread, pork chops with apple sauce, yams, brussels sprouts and bead pudding for dessert. The dinner plans were going according to schedule, everyone was being so very cordial. After Elizabeth and I had cleared the table, the men started asking their questions of the good doctor. "When and how did you know the Cassidy's? When and who wrote the letters to contact Mary at the school? Did you ever get a response from Mary's school? Was William Cassidy notified that he being the next of kin, was responsible for Mary? Did you hear back from William in which he approved or dis-approved of her decision to work as your assistant. Were you aware of the

problems surrounding Mary's condition? Did you realize how old she was at the time?"

The doctor's explanation came without the slightest hesitation. "I met the Cassidy's here in Virginia City, after they were exposed to small pox while they worked with the Blackfeet Indians. They were very sick at the time and died within days after their arrival. Before Jacob Cassidy died he asked me to send a letter to Mary and the School, outlining her possible choices. The older brother William, never responded to the letters I sent. I knew how old she was from her father. And I received a nice letter back from The American School for Deaf-Mutes, written by Dr. Laurent Clerc himself, the founder of the school." stating that I was aware of the entire situation

Everyone shook their heads and agreed all the questions had been answered, except the two big questions regarding the excessive drinking and sexual impropriety. Those two problems would be addressed at a later time. Tom and your father wanted to ask me more questions, but without the doctor being there. "Its getting late and we should be going, I have patients I need to see in the morning." said Dr. Foster. Adam stated that he wanted to walk me back to the office. As they approached front door, I

very gently pulled your father close and gave him a lingering soft kiss and gently pushed a note into his palm. He didn't want to leave, but Dr. Foster was walking up behind us and he pulled me through door. Adam was some-what taken back by this move, but he didn't want to make a scene. He immediately rushed back to the Turner's and ask them to read the note that I had given him. The note was very brief and read:

Adam,

Doctor Foster didn't speak the whole truth, you'll have to investigate further if you want to fine the whole truth
Affectionally Yours,
Mary

Tom shook his head and said "I had a feeling he wasn't telling us the whole truth. Next morning, we'll check the death certificates at the Town Hall, now let's all get some sleep, I'm exhausted." Adam was only functioning on at most, 2 hours of sleep, he was out before his head hit the pillow. Early the next morning, Adam and Tom headed down to the Town Hall. The place was a mad house, people were filing out marriage certificates, deeds to properties, judgements against people. When they finally got to the window, the women was all smiles and very helpful. As per their request, she disappeared in the back room and came out with the

documents they wanted. She said, that they could look at them here in the office, but because they were the originals they couldn't leave the building. When they looked at who was the attending physician at the time of death, it was a Dr. Sampson who signed the death certificates for both Henrietta and Jacob Cassidy. Adam asked the clerk "Do you know this Dr. Sampson who signed these here death certificates?" "Oh sure," said the clerk, "he use to be partners with Dr. Foster. But he died about a year ago in his sleep, he must have been in his late 80's". Adam and Tom left the Town Hall with new information, now they just had to put it all together. Back at the house they started to throw around a bunch of ideas. The best one was that Dr. Foster knew about the Cassidy's and his mute daughter, from Dr.Sampson. Dr. Sampson probably wrote the letter to my school and somehow Dr. Foster is taking credit for it. Dr. Foster never did write the letter to my older brothers, but just said he did.

That same morning, they marched over to doctors' office and caught him just as he was leaving. We have some follow-up questions from last night, if you don't mind. "I am on my way out, can this wait till later, I have a patient wailing?" replied the doctor. Adam put his hand on Dr. Foster's shoulder, and said "It will only take a few moments of you time, please sit

down." Dr. Foster yelled back "I don't have to stand for this!" Adam very calmly said "if you move off that chair before we're finished, I going to smash in your face." "Hurry up and ask you questions!" said Dr. Foster. "Who actually treated the Cassidys' for small pox?" asked Tom. "Well, I did, but my elderly partner signed the death certificates. But, I was in the office when he did it!" stated Dr. Foster defiantly. "Who wrote the letter to Dr. Laurent Clerc at Mary's school. "I wrote it and Dr. Sampson signed it. " said Dr. Foster. "Did you ever write the letter to her older brother, William?" "Yes, I told you I did, but you don't believe me, do you?" said Dr. Foster. "No we don't, you've lied to us already about the death certificates, why should we believe you now." said Adam. "Well, it's your word against mine and remember I was only looking out for her best interest." shouted Dr. Foster. "If Dr. Sampson wrote the letter, she was suppose to work for him not you!" Adam shouted back "What difference does it make, who she works for Dr. Sampson or myself" said Dr. Foster? "It might" shouted Adam. "Now let's talk about something even worse then your lies, what's this you coming into her room late at night and sexually taking advantage of her!" yelled Tom? "I don't know what you are talking about!." pleaded Dr. Foster. Within a split second after the answer, Adam swung his balled up

fist and hit the side of the doctors' face, so hard that sent him sprawling across the floor. Blood came streaming out his left ear. While he was down on the ground, Adam kicked him right in the groin area as hard as he could. The force of the kick, actually lifted him off the ground. The shrieks could be heard outside on the street, but people were use to hearing wailing coming from his office. Tom and your father picked up the doctor and put him back in his chair. Dr. Foster was holding his head, trying to stop the bleeding and winced in agony. Adam leaned down next to his good ear and whispered, "I'll be taking her now and if you say one word about what happened here today, I'll come back and cut off your dick and shove it down your throat. Do you understand everything I've just said?" Dr. Foster just shook his head up and down. I already had my bag packed, your Dad and I walked out of the office hand in hand. Tom picked up my bag and followed the us love birds all the way home. We couldn't wait to tell Elizabeth, most of what happened, except the bloodshed. Elizabeth thought of everything, she already had the sheets changed on Adam's bed. Elizabeth showed me his room and helped me unpack some of my things. As Elizabeth was leaving, she said "You can stay as long as you want. I've already packed up some of Adam's things, he going to stay at the hotel till

the end of the month, after that we'll figure something out". I approached Elizabeth and gave her a big hug and we both started to cry. Two minutes later Adam stuck his big face into the room and said "Is everything all right ?" "YES" said Elizabeth and after dinner "I'll start teaching you how to read and Mary will teach you sign language. How are you going to be a couple if you can't communicate with each other?" asked Elizabeth. We're still not sure who blushed more Adam or myself. We left the room holding hands. The next day, all four of us where at church, enjoying the service and the sense of community. After church was followed by the usual Sunday meal, today it included roasted chicken, riced potatoes, beet tops and peach cobbler for dessert. After dinner Adam and I went for a buggy ride out into the countryside. It gave us a chance to be alone with each other. Adam really liked it when I would sit close to him. I just know Adam was also feeling awkward, not knowing how to act, he thought he knew how I felt. The hard part was getting each of us on the same page. We stopped a couple of times and kissed, I would cry and Adam would kiss away my tears. After two hours we arrived back home, it's starting to get dark early and winter was coming. Tom had a nice fire going in the living room and Elizabeth had the *1st Grade Primers* out on the table for Adam to

start his first lesson. As it turned out, Adam was a very quick study and was reading on the 2nd grade level within a week. I opened some of my books from school on *How to Teach Signing*. We were spending every waking moment together, trying to cram everything we could into Adam's brain and fingers. After only two weeks Adam was reading at the 6th grade level. Learning to read sign language is a lot for difficult than most people think. But because he could read now, I could now just wright it down for him. Within maybe six months he could read about a third of everything I was saying. Adam and I were falling head over heels in love with each other and Elizabeth and Tom were playing the cupid.

It was now mid November and a long brutal Montana winter was finally here. Virginia City's main street had two feet of packed snow, which actually made for easier traveling. In the Spring and Fall, the town was a literal mud bowl. It was hard keeping the Livery Stable open because of the low temperatures. Tom kept the furnaces going full blast and even with the barn shut tight and the temperature was still hovering around 20o. The owners hardly came around to work the animals any more, so Tom had to let them run in the enclosure and keeping it free of drifting snow was a real hassle. Winters in Montana were just harsh on animals as well as people.

Some of the weaker stock wouldn't make it through the winter and that meant, Tom wouldn't get paid. In the beginning, Tom and Elizabeth loved living in Virginia City, but with the population explosion and all the changes it brought, life wasn't the same anymore. Montana has always been known for their harsh winters, but for some reason they seem to be getting longer and harder. With money in the bank Tom and Elizabeth had options they never had before and it was tempting. If they moved just 200 or 300 miles southeast into the Dakota Territory, the winters were much milder.

During the long winter months, Adam actually showed Tom some of the skills that he learned as a boy. Adam kept the larder full of venison and buffalo and other smaller game. It was one of these adventures with Tom, that your father came upon the Blackfoot Winter Encampment. As he walked through the camp, he was purposely looking for Walking Stick. He wanted to know if she was all right. Just then, he happen to walk right by her, she was busy making some sort of soup. She never even looked up, so he just kept on walking. No wonder she didn't recognize him, she knew him as a boy and now he was a man. In the back of his mind, he thought hopefully my secret will never come out of the woods, the past is the past.

CHAPTER SEVEN

It was now April and the snows came less often and the temperatures rarely dipped below zero anymore, which was a real sign that Spring was close. Adam and I had become inseparable. We spent our days reading, horseback riding and your father teaching me how to shoot and handle a knife. Elizabeth taught me how to cook, clean, iron, sew and manage the house. Tom started teaching Adam how to plant a garden, farm a little and how to tend to cattle and other livestock, especially the horses. Everything was going along so well these past five months, but all things have to come to an end. At the Sunday evening meal, Tom and Elizabeth announced that

they had a big surprise, they were going to have baby. Everyone started to hug one another and then we all started to cry and then just as suddenly, it all turned to laughter. It was obvious to everyone, but it needed to be said, they would need the spare bedroom this coming September. That just planted a seed in our minds, that it was time for us to move on. It wasn't till the end of May that the snows were completely gone and Spring was right around the corner. The nice weather also meant an influx of prospectors coming into town by the droves and everything that follows them. Adam was tired of living at the hotel, the food was inedible, the noise level made for difficult sleeping and he was always coughing because of the very heavy cigarette and cigar smoke. He was very concerned about contracting pneumonia again. Fights would breakout daily downstairs in the saloon and he was now afraid to bring me to his room because of all the unsavory characters hanging around outside. We didn't like the direction of how the town was growing. It was starting to get unsafe to even walk down the streets, without getting accosted by a panhandler. While scanning the Montana Post one day, your father read an article entitled *Free Homestead Law Enacted*, in which if you lived on the land for five years and improved upon it, you owned it outright. You just had to

register with the Land Office, plus a ten dollar filling fee. Around June 1st, Adam went to the bank and withdrew all \$2,100 from his account at the Savings and Loan. He and I said our goodbyes to Tom and Elizabeth, with lots of tears and hugs. We packed up the few belongings we had accumulated into a wagon we purchased in town and bought from Tom two of our favorite horses and set out to find their new homestead. We decided to head Southeast, where maybe it's a little warmer and not so wild. Maybe he and I could do some farming and raise some cattle. We were sure of one thing, we wanted to get as far away from Virginia City as soon as possible. The town had grown in population of almost 10,000 people, it was now the largest city in all Montana and that's not where we wanted to raise our family.

Adam had heard some nice things about the Yellowstone Area, how pristine it was and how it might be a nice place to settle and put down some roots. It took us almost a week of traveling to reach the area. We decided on a beautiful piece of land (160 acres) just outside a town we know today as Gardiner, Montana. It had everything you could hope for, fresh running water, ample forest, plenty of game, pasture land and a beautiful mountain backdrop. The town didn't even have a name yet, so everyone just called it

the "Settlement", it wouldn't become incorporated until 1880. We went to the nearest Land Office and registered Lot # 147, under the names of Adam and Mary Turner and paid our ten dollars.

At the nearby General Store (it was the only store) we bought all our supplies to start farming and building a more permanent structure to live in. It took Adam almost a full week to clear just one acre of land and plant a garden, I was in charge of tending the garden. Adam's main focus was to build a home that would take them through the tough winters. He came up with a brilliant idea of building two homes, one for the Spring, Summer and Fall and one exclusively for the Winter months. He would start on the one that they would spend most of our time, but also because that it would be easier to build and more versatile. It would be a traditional log cabin, 20' x 20', post and beam. It took about two months to construct from start to finish, for his first try, it came out really good. Building the fireplace was a little more difficult, after more than a couple of failed tries, we finally hired a mason to get the updraft just right. Once the outside structure was up, your father build some furniture and then I took over and made the house a home. Adam's next project was to build a barn and corral for the livestock he would buy, maybe twenty head of cattle in the Spring. While he was in

town he hired four locals to help him build the two structures for all the livestock. He made sure it was built near one of the many heated steam vents located on the property. It would help keep the barn a little warmer during the long winter months. In late September the first of the many snows hit the Yellowstone Valley. This was a reminder to Adam, that he needed cut 15 to 20 cords of wood to take them through the long winter. It wasn't till early October before Adam started in on the Winter home, it later would be known as the "Earthhouse". It was also be located near one of the steam vents. With the help of the four hired hands, he dug into the side of the hill approximately fifteen to twenty feet (sound familiar). The earth surrounding the vent was warm to the touch. He then built two side stone walls into the hill approximately 9' high and 20' long, it was hard difficult work, under very tough conditions. He then just put logs across the stone walls to make a roof, with supports down the middle. They would carry most of the weight baring support. He then pushed all the displaced dirt against the stone walls and the roof supports. Each wall was about 4' to 6' thick and the roof 2' of earth on it. A unique feature of the Earthhouse was it had no windows in the structure to prevent heat loss. The only opening in the winter home was the doorway, it was 2' thick and was balanced

perfectly so that it would open and close with just the touch of a finger. We would not use the winter home, until the temperature hit around zero. Because steam vents kept the earth surrounding the winter home toasty warm, we would need a minimal amount of wood burning to keep the temperature inside at a toasty 55°. We moved into the Earthhouse around mid November. The first big snowfall of the year was on Dec. 4th, about 38 inches fell in less than 6 hours and the temperature dropped to a very low -32°. The strength of the house was now being tested, Adam decided to shovel the snow off the roof just in case, he didn't want to take any chances of a collapse. Adam built a nice fire and he and I were snuggling with each other, while the storm raged outside. I turned to Adam and signed, "You're going to be a father." Adam was totally blown away with the news and started to pace back and forth. I jumped up and signed "You'll make a great dad". Adam was now in total shock and started muttering "I'm going to be a dad, I'm going to be a dad." Adam had a lot of second thoughts, based on how his father raised him, he knew what not to do.

Our first Christmas at the new house was very special, Adam shot a turkey, and I prepared my famous buttered beets, with creamed spinach and sweet potato pie for dessert. After dinner we decided to open our

Christmas presents. I gave Adam a hand sewn coat made of animal furs that Adam had trapped, since they had arrived at our new home. Adam put it on immediately and was so proud, he wore it the rest of the night, only taking it off when he went to bed. Adam gave me a beautifully handmade cradle and right on cue, I started to cry. Adam just hugged me in his big heavy fur coat, it was a very precious moment. Before turning in, Adam placed the fur coat in the cradle and it fit snugly and I just felt so loved at that moment.

Spring couldn't come soon enough, our food sources were running low and the firewood pile was almost down to nothing. Adam and I made a trek in the Settlement to replenish some of the basic supplies: flour, sugar, molasses, dried beans, salt, cornmeal, honey, crackers, baking powder, baking soda and yeast. Adam needed, seed for planting, axes, saws, picks, an anvil, blacksmith tools, gun powder, ammunition, dynamite and lots of rope. We also inquired about a midwife for our upcoming newest arrival. Adam also bought those 20 head of cattle, 6 milk cows, 4 draft horse, a dozen laying hens and a rooster.

It's now June and Adam goes to work early every morning trying to clear the land and put in enough hay for the livestock over the long up-

coming winter. The work is hard, the large trees and stumps require a combination of dynamite and use of the draft horses to pull out the stumps. Adam picked two of the hardest working men of the four locals that helped him build the house and barn. The trees, then have to be chopped into firewood and then stored in the Earthhouse. The firewood cured faster there than it could outside because of the heat source. He used the dynamite sparingly, it's dangerous and it spooks the cattle and milk cows. Mary put in her garden as soon as last frost hit and it's already starting to show.

Adam and I devised a method of communication that would alert him in case an emergency. Adam forged a simple dinner triangle that was hung outside on the porch. I would simply start ringing the triangle for help, three short blasts meant, come in for supper, continuous blasts meant something was wrong. I never used the continuous blasts until late June. As soon as Adam heard it, he rushed back and found me lying in bed, crying my eyes out. "What's the matter honey?" he asked. He took a closer look at the bed sheets which were all bloody and said, "I'm so sorry". He had actually seen this before, Walking Stick had miscarried more than once, when he was a young boy. It was upsetting and scary back then and now it

was even worse. Adam road into the settlement and got the midwife, as he was driving back home with the midwife, he became very despondent. He was deathly afraid of losing me, his world would change forever. Your father doesn't deal with sudden change very well. He had never told another living soul about killing his father except me. When they got to the cabin, the midwife took charge and ask Adam to step out side. "This was something no man should have to witness." said the midwife. Adam grabbed his rifle and mounted his horse and road out in the woods. He would disappeared for two days before returning home. He hunted during the day slept on the bare ground at night, it felt like old times. He finally came home on the third day, the midwife had long gone and I was in the kitchen preparing some soup. He came into the cabin and I stood rigid over the fireplace and never turned around. He came over to fireplace and put his huge arms around me and just hugged me from behind. I spun around and started pounding on his chest, signing "WHY, WHY, WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?" Adam didn't respond, he just pulled me close and hugged me even harder and we both started to cry, and cry and cry. We stayed in that embraced for a good 10 minutes. Until he brushed away my tears and I went back to fireplace and stirred the soup. Adam said "Is the soup ready,

I'm starving?" They buried Franklin's coffin, not far from the Earthhouse" where the forest ended and the clearing began, you could see it from anywhere on the homestead. They sat there the rest of the afternoon enjoying the sun on their faces. We finally ran out of tears to shed.

It was mid July when they got a letter from Virginia City addressed to Adam and Mary Turner. Long ago, Adam had told Tom he wanted to use *Turner* as his last name, but never told Tom why. Your father never wanted to utter his real last name *Coleman* ever again, as long as he lived. Tom never asked why, which Adam appreciated. Tom knew he had a deep dark secret hidden in his past, but that was none of his business. He decided, when Adam was ready to tell him, he would. I showed Adam the letter and he quickly opened it.

July 4th, 1869

Dear Adam and Mary,

I hope this letter finds you well. Our first born was a beautiful baby girl, named Christina, after Elizabeth's grandmother. She is now a almost 2 years old and doing fine, she looks exactly like her mother. Things are not going well here in Virginia City. The gold fever is gone and the people that are staying on, are not the kind a people I want to be around to raise my family. I've sold the business and the house and Elizabeth and I are moving. We've decided to try the Southern Montana, we have heard a lot of nice things about the Settlement and Yellowstone area. We should be arriving in about a month, after I get all the papers signed. I look forward to seeing you both, neighbor..

Love,

Tom & Elizabeth and Christina

CHAPTER EIGHT

Adam and I couldn't be happier about Tom and Elizabeth decision to come and live in the Yellowstone area. The our two families would be together again, like old times. During our short time here, we have met some very nice neighbors. One in particular, was a minister who had just come into town and wanted some help, to build a church. He somehow knew about Adam's skills as a blacksmith and knew they would come in very handy. Adam actually volunteered, but like everyone else, no one could start until after the harvest was in, sometime in the late Fall. Pastor Boyand was in his mid-twenties tall, lanky and unmarried and reminded Adam of pictures he had seen of President Lincoln. He said "The Lord can

wait, his flock isn't going anywhere". He was a very likable guy and they knew Tom and Elizabeth would be tickled pink that a church would be starting up soon. Tom and Elizabeth finally arrived at the end of August. We had big hugs all around and of course, Christina was as cute as a button, blond wavy hair, beautiful hazel eyes and dark complexion, like her mother. After a few minutes we were told straight out by Christina "You're going to be my Godparents". Adam and I shook our heads in agreement. Elizabeth bent down real close to Christina and said, "I think you're suppose to ask them first". "Oops, I forgot" came back the answer. They both loved our homestead, Elizabeth was blown away with the idea of a summer and winter homes. Tom was really impressed with how the barn came out and the corral attached to it. They couldn't believe that I had cleared so much land for seed and pasture. "Mary, when did you become such a gardner?" said Elizabeth. I just smiled and accepted the compliment. Adam proposed, that since it's late in the season our guests take the Earthhouse and we'll stay in the summer house the winter. Of course we have to clear out all of the wood, so they can set up all their furniture. We kind of made a group decision that we would all take our meals in the big house and when they wanted any privacy or for sleeping,

they would use the Earthhouse. It felt like old times, but with the addition of Christina it was even better. In just a few weeks she was growing up so fast on the farm. I started giving her horse back riding lessons on one of the the older mares. Her favorite chore was feeding the chickens and her least favorite was in the barn around milking time, the cows can get a little clumsy. Tom and Elizabeth loved the Settlement, it reminded them of Virginia City before the gold rush. During one of their visits in town they finally met up with Pastor Boyland. He put the arm on Tom to help with the church and Tom came back with "I'd love to do the Lord's work". All three of them just smiled and Elizabeth promptly invited him to dinner that Sunday. He nodded and said "That would be great, I've meant to come out and see Turners' Homestead "Pastor Boyland you can meet our daughter Christina, she's the one who we like to be baptized. "Maybe you could do it that Sunday" asked Elizabeth. "It would be my pleasure and thank you for asking. The people here have been very courteous, but the final verdict is not in yet" stated the pastor. We all just smiled and shook hands and said our goodbyes.

It was almost November before we started working on the church. It was a typical framed clapboard church, that would seat maybe fifty people.

Approximately twenty people showed up to help, not counting the wives and children. I guess you would say it was a town project. The whole building program took only three Sundays and another Sunday to do the painting. We had our 1st official church service on Dec. 2nd, 1870. It was a beautiful day and the whole town came to hear minister's homily. The ladies baked cake and cookies for everyone afterwards, which was very nice. We all congratulated each other on our fine carpentry skills and let's not forget the painters, someone said. Appropriately, the homily this Sunday was all about "Giving and Doing The Lords Work". Elizabeth was already organizing the choir and Tom had volunteered be a deacon, it's like they had never left the Virginia City.

Tom and Elizabeth had some hard decisions to make regarding what to do with their future plans. I'm not sure Tom wanted to go back into blacksmithing and he wasn't much of a farmer, but he wasn't afraid of hard work. He looked around at the landscape and thought he might like do some commercial logging. People were moving into Montana and Dakota Territories by the hundreds every week. They are going to need lumber to build their stores and homes. Back in Virginia City, Tom had run into a gentleman named Alton Holter, he needed some help at his sawmill at

Ramshorn Gulch. Tom worked at the sawmill for nearly a month with Alton, forging new parts to help make the mill run smoother. Between the \$2,000 he got from Adam and the sale of the his business and home, he thought he could make a go of it. On the other side of town, Tom and Elizabeth homesteaded a quarter section of land (620 acres), which was enough for a start. If they stayed on the property for just 6 months and improved on it, the land would only cost him only a \$1.25 per acre or approximately \$775. He went back to Ramshorn Gulch and bought up all the spare parts he could find from Alton Holter and then paid him another \$250 for an old lumber saw. He still had over \$1,000 to build a home and start his lumber business. It took two trips with the Adam's help, to drag all this equipment and spare parts back to town. That first year, he built a make shift lumber shed and over the long winter, worked on the logging saw, day and night until he got it running. It sounded terrible and looked worse, but he produced his first hundred board feet on April 10th, 1871. He had no trouble finding lumberjacks in town, because he paid a fair wage. Within nine years, Tom would be become the 1st mayor of Gardiner and when Montana gained statehood on November 8th, 1889, he served in the Montana legislature for three terms.

CHAPTER NINE

In May of 1872, I finally gave birth to a bouncing baby boy. He looked just like his father, brown hair, blue eyes and olive completion. Adam was so proud of Joshua, at night after a hard days work, Adam would sit by his cradle and stare at him for hours on end. Joshua grew up fast, walking at one, talking at two and riding the horses at three, learning to shoot at five. At six years old age, he had his own pony and all responsibilities of caring for the animal, this is where he got his first love for horses. On his trusty mount Trigger, he would follow Adam everywhere on

the farm, the two were inseparable. Four years after Joshua was born, I gave birth to identical twin girls. Sarah and Abigail who were a spitting image of their mother, red hair, blue eyes, fair complexion and lots of freckles, I couldn't have been happier. As Adam doted over Josh, that's how I looked at the twins, they were my "precious babies." The twins grew up fast, I would say faster than Josh did, walking at ten months, talking at one and totally potty trained at two years of age.

Next to come along was Joseph, he was two years behind the twins. I had a very difficult delivery, the midwife came two days before the delivery and stayed two days after. Elizabeth practically lived with us the last month of my pregnancy. Adam took the three children and lived with Tom across town. Joseph was born breach, it was a very long and difficult delivery, that lasted eighteen plus hours. At one point I thought we might have to make a decision, that no parent wants to make. He weighed a scant four pounds and cried constantly. Adam was able to hire a live-in nanny in town, a very nice colored woman, named Rachael to help with the children, she would soon become part of our family. Joseph was mildly retarded, it was so obvious when he was late talking, walking and potty trained. Not surprisingly, as Adam had doted on Joshua, he did the exact same thing

with Joseph. Joseph was one of the happiest children Adam and I had ever met. Adam was very proud of their new son, despite his learning difficulties. But all that changed, when the midwife informed me, I couldn't have anymore children. I was devastated and went into a deep depression after Joseph's birth. I refused to feed or change his diaper, it was hard on the whole family. I then stopped getting out of bed. Rachel had to do all the nurturing of Joseph, which was a full time job, all by it self. Plus all the normal chores around the house, besides taking care of the other three children. Adam had to stop work for weeks at a time to help out, it was starting to overwhelm everyone. The other three children started asking question like "What's wrong with mommy" and "When is every thing going to be all right again?" When Joseph was just six months old, he was playing on the floor, he swallowed something and started choking. Rachel was feeding the twins, Adam was in the fields with Josh. I was asleep on the bed and awoke suddenly and see Joseph rolling on the floor, holding his throat, and starting to turn blue. Instinctively, I jumped out of bed, grabbed my son and turned him upside down and slapped him on his back. I hit him so hard, that everyone in the cabin turned around in shock. Out came a piece of bread, rolling across the cabin floor. Joseph starting

wailing so loud he could be heard all the way out into the barn area. Adam and Josh came running to see what all the commotion was about. I starting crying uncontrollably and Joseph started screaming in gasps. I held onto Joseph the rest of the day, refusing Rachel and Adam's approaches.

Things quickly started to return to normal, within a week. Rachel wasn't really needed anymore, but she and Elizabeth had really hit it off together.

So Elizabeth hired her on the spot, without even asking Tom. She saw what a great job she did with our children, how could she go wrong.

Elizabeth would eventually have five more children besides Christina.

Rachel had found a permanent home..

Because of my situation, the farm took a major setback which needed constant care. Adam was almost overwhelmed by the situation, but he would never admit it. With a little luck from Mother nature they were able to get through that next winter.

The years seem to fly by, It was hard for us to think that we had come here over seventeen years ago. Those were some of the happiest years of our lives. Adam taught Josh all the skills his own father had taught him. Josh took to the woods just like his Dad did. He was an excellent tracker and could follow a deer or a mountain lion tracks with no trouble. He was

even a better shot than Adam and his knife skills were only second to his grandfather's. But his true passion was with the horses, he had a second nature about them. He could almost talk to them and they seemed to listen, it was uncanny. Josh at fourteen was pulling his own weight in the fields, and the girls were getting straight A's at school. Joseph was trying to stay up with Adam and Josh as best he could in the fields. They were one big happy family.

In 1883 we had one of the worst blizzards in Montana recorded history. We moved into the Earthhouse earlier than usual, it seemed to snow for days at a time, some say between 70 to 80 feet fell that winter, which was followed by the frigid temperatures, dipping to a low of -42o. We had a lot more smoke inside the Earthhouse than usual because of all the ice and snow build up. The poor ventilation was especially not good for Joseph or Adam's lungs. Joseph started coughing at the beginning of November and didn't stop until January. The midwife diagnosed him with double pneumonia. Adam thought for a brief moment, that maybe he gave his son the disease somehow. Maybe the the good Lord was punishing him for killing his father. They were hoping the midwife could be wrong with her diagnosis, but suddenly Joseph died at the tender age of ten, on a cold

wintery morning on February 3rd, 1884. With all the snow and frozen ground they wouldn't be able to bury Joseph until Springtime. The children had never felt such loss before, they were unprepared to deal with their feelings. The twins took it especially hard because they were a big part of Joseph's care giving. Josh just worked longer hours in the barn, tending to the animals. Adam on the other hand, saddled his horse, with just his bed roll and rifle, road out into the woods and would not be seen for two days. With the absence of his father, Josh decided that it would be good idea to move everybody back into the big house earlier than normal, if not just for change of scenery. They also didn't want to take any chances with all the smoke. Before we use the Earthhouse again, they would have to fix the ventilation problem.

Adam came out of the woods and he acted as if nothing had happened and we did the same. He looked older and thinner than when he left, he was quieter and more solemn than usual. Thank goodness that I was back to my old self and the household looked normal from the outside.

It was warm enough now to bury our youngest son. His frail body was placed along Franklin's grave site. Pastor Boyland presided over the funeral and half the Settlement came out to pay their respects.

Refreshments were served outside, milk for the children, ice tea for the women and hard liquor for the men and fresh baked homed made goods for everybody else. After about two hours, most people were starting to leave, when a man approached Adam and I and inquired if we were interested in a headstone marker for our sons. It had never occurred to either of us to put permanent markers on their grave sites. It took a good five seconds before Adam and I were able to regain our composure. "Absolutely" he said. "My wife will come to your shop next week and pick them out". said Adam. "Look for the sign "Master Stone Cutter-Ivan Kozlov" and I'm sorry for you losses " said. Ivan.

CHAPTER TEN

Midweek, I headed into Gardiner alone, something, I rarely did and went directly the Stone Carver's shop. I knocked on the door several times before a young boy eventually opened it. On a piece of paper I had written, *"I'm interested in purchasing two head stones for my departed children"*. The youngster (I found out later was Ivan's apprentice, could neither read nor write), got all flustered and finally asked me to step inside. Ivan came around the corner and recognized me and immediately dismissed his apprentice and asked if I like something to drink. I shook my head and handed Ivan the note that I had written. After about 10 minutes we had

agreed on the size, shape and the price, \$5 per headstone. Ivan's next question was "What do you want me to put on the headstone?" I handed Ivan two other pieces of paper in which I had written what we wanted to appear on the headstones. The first one read *Joseph Turner A most loving child -1876-1886*. The second read *Franklin Turner Loved in life and in Death - 1869*. Ivan nodded and said "You pay me half now and half when I put them in the ground. If you are not totally satisfied, I give your money back, deal." I handed Ivan \$5 and he stuck out his big hand and we shook on the unwritten contract. The hand shake lingered a little too long and it made me feel a little uncomfortable for some reason. Approximately two weeks later, Ivan with his horse drawn carriage, appeared at the home-
stead with the tombstones that we had ordered. The twins accompanied me to the grave site and watched Ivan unload the headstones. Each headstone must have weighed between fifty to seventy five pounds and Ivan carried them as if they were like loaves of bread. Both headstones were in the ground in under an hour, the twins scampered back to the cabin, they were starting to get bored and it was getting late. All of a sudden, Ivan turns around and faces me and produces a knife and puts it to my throat. With the other hand he starts unbuttoning his fly and said "If

you don't give me the best blow job ever, I'm going to come back here and kill your entire family, especially those cute twins, but not before I have my way with them." He now grabs my hair and pushes me down on ground and thrust my face into his crotch. I did as she was told, with a knife at my throat, what alternative did I have? It was all over in a couple of minutes. Afterwards, Ivan pushed me to the ground and said " All women are cock suckers and whores." He buttoned his fly, got in his wagon and left. It took me at least twenty minutes to compose myself. As I entered the cabin, all eyes fell on me, "Where have you been, we were all set to send Spike out looking for you" said Josh? "Oh, I was just saying some prayers over the children" I said. Actually I was feeling very guilty, was I at fault for Ivan gross behavior. Did I act inappropriately at any time during my visit to his shop. I was deathly afraid to tell Adam, because he might also blame me for what happened. The only person I could tell was Elizabeth and she was all the way across town. I never did tell another living soul until now. Over the next two weeks I started having nightmares again, now both Ivan and Dr. Foster would come into my room and asked me to pleasure them I would wake with a start, thrashing both arms around in the bed and of course it would wake up Adam. He would whisper in my ear "I'm here now,

you're safe with me ." Adam would then hold me for as long as it took before I would fall back to sleep. Adam hadn't seen one of these episodes in eighteen or nineteen years, he was wondering, what brought this on.

I told Adam "The next time you go into the Settlement, ask Ivan to come back out, I think the headstones have settled a bit." I was been between a rock and a hard place. If I told Adam, he certainly would go into Gardiner and take his revenge. Justice was very swift in new Dakota Territories, Adam would be put to death because weren't enough jail cells to hold all the offenders. If I said nothing, then Ivan would be back again and again. I would not go through what happened when I was fourteen years old, ever again. I'm now thirty three years old and I had options. As part of my master plan, I sewed a sheath to the inside of my right boot. I then took the sharpest boning knife in the kitchen drawer and asked Josh to put an extra sharp edge on it. As soon as the knife was ready, I wore it concealed in my boot for a weeks. Ivan finally rode up on horseback one early afternoon and went directly to the grave sites. Adam and Josh were in the fields and the twins were in school. I rode out to the grave site to meet up with Ivan who was already there. "How can I help you missy?" asked Ivan. While still on horseback, I handed him a note that read, "*I would love to*

suck your cock again, that was a real turn on for me". I turned and headed into the woods, to give us some privacy and of course Ivan followed me. Ivan jumped down from his horse and immediately started unbuttoning his fly. I dismounted and got into the kneeling position, with my left hand I grabbed his cock and put it in my mouth as far as it could go. I could hear him groaning with ecstasy, yelling "Yes, Yes, Yes!" With my right hand I took the knife from my boot, I then bit down on his penis as hard as I could and with one swift motion, I cut his penis clean off. He instinctive grabbed my hair and started screaming, I then stabbed him two more times in the ass. He fell to the ground moaning like a baby, bleeding like a stuck pig. I took some rope I brought with me and tied his hands behind his back. As he was screaming, I took his cock from my mouth and shoved it into his mouth as far as it would go. Ivan rolled on the ground, gasping for air. His eyes pleaded with me for help. It was all over in less than five minutes. I took some more of the rope and tied one end to his leg and the other end to the saddle horn of his horse. Getting on my horse, I led them both down the path back towards the Gardiner. Luckily for me, no one was around. I stopped on the outskirts of town, dismounted and undid his suspenders and pulled his pants down by his knees and let go of the reins. Ivan's

horse instinctively took off for the barn where he was boarded, dragging his owner behind. I turned around and never looked back. Approximately three minutes later, I could hear people screaming and yelling, the only thing I could think of was "Revenge is Sweet". A week had past before I had heard any the details of Ivan Episode. According to all the gossip, about 10 people had gathered around the barn where Ivan's horse had stopped. "Cut the fucking rope and for God sakes and cover him up." someone yelled. The young apprentice soon appeared with a tarp and placed it over his bosses body. "Who the hell would do something like this." screamed a woman in the crowd. Another gentleman stepped out of the small crowd and said, "That mother fucker sexually assaulted my thirteen year old daughter last month, when the misses and me were away in Virginia City. Since we don't have a sheriff in this one horse town, it was my daughter's word against his. I would have shot the bastard sooner or later. If it was up to me, I would burn the fucking pervert's body and scatter his ashes in the nearest outhouse." said the angry man. Within an hour, a cheap wooden coffin appeared and the town fathers hired a local, to take his body and bury it in the Town Cemetery, located on the out skirts of town. Their wasn't any church service, just something simple at the gravesite

read by Pastor Boyland. I have never had another nightmare the rest of my life and I've never slept so well since. The only nagging thought I had was, what if someone saw me with Ivan body being dragged along by on his horse. Within a week the the Town Council decided to hire a lawman from Cinnabar, a small town few miles northwest of Gardiner to investigate the murder. They would pay five dollar for him to investigate and ten dollars if he found the murderer. The biggest thing that concerned me were the drag marks that might lead away from our homestead. Luckily for me, we had a very heavy rain storm, just two days after I took my revenge. I was sure no evidence would lead back to our homestead. The Sheriff visited all the homesteads in the area and tried to interview anyone who had any dealings with Ivan Kozlov. In his shop, Sheriff Wolfe found the receipt for the two headstones that Adam and I had ordered. On his second visit out to our homestead, he wanted to talk to Adam and I again. Adam remembered the conversation that he had with me, regarding Ivan coming out to the house to fix the crooked headstones. The sheriff wanted to know if Ivan, ever made it out to the house for his second visit. I told Adam that Ivan had never showed. The sheriff has his doubts and decided to check the headstones anyway. Sure enough they were out of alignment as I had

stated. Sheriff Wolfe had nothing to link Ivan's murder to either Adam or me. What the sheriff did find out was that Ivan had a checkered past. He had served jail time in Pennsylvania for sexual abuse of two other children. He suspected that Ivan's apprentice was being sexually abused, but he refused to testify, when asked any such questions.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Over the next 2 years things started to return to normal, we started to recover somewhat from Joseph's passing. It's not that we would ever forget Franklin or Joseph, but as a family we needed to move on with our lives. Mother nature had been kind to the people of Gardiner, the harvests were especially abundant and everyone stayed pretty healthy.

When Josh turned 16, a light went off in his head and all of a sudden he was interested in girls. He started off very slowly by going to church socials with us and his twin sisters. He would stand in the corner with his male companions ogling the girls. His first two dances were with the 12-14

year olds. The younger girls were easier to approach and impress than the older girls. This infuriated the older girls, who thought Josh was the best catch in all of Gardiner. Now the girls were asking Josh to the dances and he was a little self conscious. But, he finally got over it and started taking a couple of girls his age on "buck board" dates, as we called them. We had some of rules regarding his dating: Only on Sunday after church services, he must introduce them to Adam and I and he must introduce himself to her parents. With a two hour maximum, they had to stay in the confines of the town and absolutely no alcohol.

After each date the twins would have a field day grilling Josh about, who she was, what she wore and how she behaved, where did they go, did he like her or not? Did he kiss her was the most important question of the entire night. All this of course was that they wanted to know for themselves on how to act, when they would be asked out on a date. This went on for an entire year and finally he met someone at the Christmas Pageant that he couldn't take his eyes off. He was chosen to play *Joseph* because of his height and complexion and she chosen to play *Mary* because her last name was Boyland, the minister's daughter. She was 15 years old and I would say mature for her age. Rebecca and Josh practically grew up

together, not noticing each other because for the first 13 years they were just buddies. He was now madly in love with Rebecca and he guessed it was the same for her, but he wasn't sure of anything. They started seeing each other every Sunday for the six months after that. They had kissed only once and almost got caught by her father. When Josh turned 18 he approached us about getting married to Rebecca Boyland. We were totally shocked. "Rebecca and I are going to live in Bozeman and I am going to raise horses and specialize on a type of mustang that are needed in this part of the country." stated Josh. This was his dream ever since he got his first pony when he was only six years old.

I of course started to cry, tears of both joy and sadness. Our family was finally spreading its wings and we had to learn to let go. I took it much better than Adam did. After Josh told of his plans, Adam went into his shell, his way of protecting himself. We all knew what was coming next and nothing we did, could prevent it from happening.

It was a beautiful Spring day in Southern Montana and Joshua had just finished most of his chores for the day, he could see why Daddy picked this particular homestead because of the mountain backdrop, they would hold their snow caps until mid Summer. The Springtime was Joshua's

favorite time of the year, it could never come soon enough for him. Everything would turn green again, the birds would return and the flowers would bloom. The winters were his least favorite, the brutal cold temperatures hovering around -25o for weeks at a time, unforgiving snow drifts 20' high and howling winds up to 30 to 40 mph. Trees would actually exploded in the forest because of the cold and frostbite would occur to exposed flesh in 2-3 minutes. He was bringing in the cows from a nearby pasture with his trusty dog Spike, a boarder collie. It would take him another 45 minutes to water and bed them down for the night. He couldn't wait to hear the

THE END