

Staircase to Heaven

by

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Preface

The Grand Staircase-Escalante area of southeastern Utah is intriguing. The area's rugged landscape leaves an immense impression as layer after layer of rock formations expose themselves in a gigantic geological staircase.

This wilderness north and west of the Colorado River was the last part of the contiguous forty-eight states to be mapped. The task was accomplished by a surveying team directed by Major John Wesley Powell and Professor Almon Thompson, who guided a rafting expedition down the treacherous river around the heyday of the American cowboy era. The group discovered the Escalante River there in 1872.

The main characters of this story are fictional, but the people and incidents involving the geological survey team are more or less derived from Fred Dellenbaugh's firsthand account of the expedition, A CANYON VOYAGE.

Junction was the original name for the present town of Fruita, but the area along the Fremont River was not actually settled to any appreciable extent until the mid-1880's. The Army post at Spanish Fork was abandoned back in 1862, though there could still have been a token presence there since the Army still owned it. Mr. Thomas Blake did not exist, nor have I run across a single incident of the early Mormons condoning the kidnaping of wives in my research.

The Mormons developed a strategic corridor of settlements and towns from Salt Lake City southward along the western edge of this wilderness under Brigham Young's brilliant leadership. It supported their expansion down into Arizona admirably well. My apologies if I have misrepresented them in any way. The polygamy, the leadership's options on the laity's wives, the blood atonement, and other doctrinal references to early Mormonism are well documented—generally from their own writings.

Staircase to Heaven

Chapter 1

Dusty Winters drew his horse up at the top of the tallest rise on the Lonely Circle Ranch. Off to the north, the browning range of the Lonely Circle blended imperceptibly into the

distant hills of the Single Bar spread. Turning his gaze from the northern horizon, he looked regretfully down at the ranch house and outbuildings of the Lonely Circle outfit. That bunkhouse down there had been home to him for the past three years—the closest thing to a real home he had known since coming out west.

Heaving a silent sigh, he turned the Indian pony down the trail towards the bunkhouse. The muffled sound of each succeeding step of the little horse was punctuated by a small puff of dust. It was dry!

Dusty slipped in to the bunkhouse early, before the other hands would be back from the range. Relieved that no one else was there, he deftly packed his few belongings and a few trail supplies into his saddle bags, buckled on his gun belt, picked up his Winchester repeating rifle, and trudged dejectedly out to the corral. He let out a low whistle, and his big strawberry roan trotted expectantly out of the shade of the barn, ears forward and alert, to the gate where Dusty waited. He patted the horse's withers affectionately, bridled him, and led him to the barn to saddle up.

The young cowhand tightened the cinch, threw the saddle bags on behind, strapped on his bedroll, dropped his rifle into its scabbard, and led the horse quietly into the trees behind the barn. The horse nudged his shoulder reproachfully as he tied the reins loosely to a branch. "Easy Buster," Dusty chuckled, "I only rode that other horse today so you would be fresh tonight. Unless I miss my guess, we'll be headin' out this evenin'." Patting the horse reassuringly again, he turned determinedly towards the ranch house.

Dusty all but winced as he mounted the steps to the large veranda across the front end of the big weathered cedar ranch house. Crossing the bare wooden porch with a steady stride, he rapped firmly on the heavy door that marked the house as off limits for the cowboys.

"Who's there?" boomed the gruff voice of the burly rancher.

"Just me," Dusty called back loudly enough to be recognized easily.

"Come in, Dusty. You ready to take on the Single Bar?"

"That's just it," Dusty answered almost apologetically as he entered the house. "I can't help you do that, Mr. Rodgers."

"You can't what?" exploded the big man angrily.

"I can't help you take over the Single Bar, Mr. Rodgers. It ain't right."

"Well, I'll be!" Rodgers retorted as his face darkened and the veins bulged up in his neck. "I never guessed anyone who can shoot like you would be so yella!"

"It ain't that I'm afraid, Mr. Rodgers," Dusty answered steadily. "It's just that it ain't right."

"Don't you try to tell me what's right, you coward!" yelled the old man. "This is rough country, and a man's gotta do what it takes to survive. I took what I got with my gun, and I'm still tough enough to take whatever else I need. With this drought I need the Single Bar grass. They can move over if they want to stay!"

"Mr. Rodgers," the younger man pled, "The Single Bar was there before you came here. There's nothin' south of here. The grass ain't much, but there's enough land there to support our cattle through the drought. Couldn't we go that direction?"

"I know what I want," the old man bellowed. "The Single Bar has the best graze around, and I'm going to get it."

"Then I'll be ridin' out after supper, Mr. Rodgers," the discouraged cowboy replied.

"If you're not going to back me after all I've done for you, you'll be riding before dinner, you sneakin' cur," Rodgers replied, grabbing Dusty by the shirt and leaning in to leer in his face.

"Mr. Rodgers," Dusty replied evenly, "I've earned my keep here. I've cared for yer stock and yer stuff day and night, as I would my own. Besides, you owe me a month's wages."

"Get out!" screamed the enraged man, shaking Dusty by the shirt for emphasis. "You'll die of lead poisoning if I ever see you on the Lonely Circle again," he spat out threateningly.

"I'll be needin' my wages then," Dusty replied evenly, placing his hands nonchalantly on the rancher's arm. "Now, Mr. Rodgers," he added as he removed the rancher's hands as easily as if they had been a baby's."

Somewhat cowed by the young cowboy's strength, the rancher turned sullenly to open the large safe behind him. Drawing a twenty dollar gold piece from the safe, he threw it insultingly at Dusty's feet.

"That's to be thirty dollars, Sir." Dusty said evenly as he stooped for the coin.

Hiding his movements with his body, the rancher drew a loaded revolver from the safe. Swinging the gun around triumphantly, he found himself looking down the business end of Dusty's forty-five that seemed to materialize from nowhere. "Ten more dollars, please," Dusty requested easily, a slight movement of the gun toward the safe urging the rancher to retrieve the remainder of his wages.

Taking another ten dollars from the paling rancher's hand, Dusty said sternly, "I'm ridin' out now, Mr. Rodgers, just as soon as you lock that gun back in the safe so as no stray shots will accidentally hit me in the back. I didn't ask for no trouble here, and I don't want it follerin' me none. Good bye, sir."

Turning on his heels when the gun was safely locked away, Dusty felt the hair on the back of his neck tingle as he walked toward the trees where Buster awaited him. He had never shot anyone and was revolted at the thought of it. The few times he had drawn were actually more of a bluff than a threat. He knew deep down that there would have to be a mighty good reason for him to shoot another human being, but being naturally fast in this environment of guns helped to make that reason a remote possibility, he thought.

Mounting his fidgeting horse, he rode briskly through the protection of the trees to the trail that meandered away from the Lonely Circle. He didn't want any part of an unjust range war. It was hard to understand how such things could still happen in 1871. "Well Buster," he clucked to the roan, "Yer all I got and I'm all you got, and neither of us has the slightest idea where we're a'goin'." The roan nickered back as they struck a trail south into the vastness of the Utah wilderness.

Chapter 2

Dusty rode steadily down the trail until the sun turned orange over his right shoulder. As dusk began to settle, he turned Buster down a sandy draw where a small creek trickled through a clump of cottonwoods that towered above the scattered junipers of the desert. A twelve foot cliff of sandstone, carved out in wetter times at a curve in the creek, afforded some protection from the night breeze and the dangers of the raw Utah wilderness. Dismounting, he removed his gear, rubbed down the horse, led him to the creek for a drink, and hobbled him for the night. Finally, the lone cowboy built a smokeless fire under the cliff from some dry juniper scraps. It was always best to build a fire where it could not be seen by any hostile Indians or desperadoes of the desert trails. He made some coffee from the clear creek water and fried a few slices of bacon and a sliced potato for supper. After washing his plate in the creek, he doused the fire and rolled out his blanket near the ashes under the cliff. Although he was dead tired, he did not drift right off to sleep as he usually did.

The restless cowboy tossed on his blanket for an hour or so, and finally climbed up on the edge of the cliff to sit in the moonlight. Fleeting memories of his youth chased each other through his roving mind: His mother and father as they worked their way west on the wagon train. Their grief as they buried the baby on the plains during the cholera outbreak. That final day when the Indians ambushed the wagon train. How he hunkered under the wagon side by side with his dad after they had run out of ammunition. How the deadly arrows rained down in relentless waves from the rocky outcroppings on

either side the stranded train. He would never forget Dad's gasp as the arrow thunked into his chest, his earnest plea for Dusty to study his Bible and serve the Lord, and his final rasping charge to care for his mother if they survived. But when the attack was over, Dusty found that his mother had also been killed by a stray arrow through her heart as she crouched on the floor of the wagon.

The rest was a blur. The dead were buried in a mass grave, as a few inadequate words were said over them by men that scarcely acknowledged God even at times like this. All Dusty could do was to resolve to read his Bible regularly, in honor of his father's dying request.

The captain of the stricken train gave the oxen of the deceased to the survivors who had lost their own beasts in the fight, with little consideration for the surviving children's rights. Dusty was assigned to finish the trip with the Wright family, who took the Winters' one surviving ox and tied their saddle horse behind their own wagon. The Winters family's wagon and most of their goods had to be left to decay in the desert.

Fourteen year old Dusty had refused to succumb to grief. He could see that the family he was assigned to resented another mouth to feed, and it was obvious that they did not appreciate his presence in their family circle. He soon took to riding his father's horse with the scouts, and rapidly learned how to observe and interpret the signs of the trail. It was the scouts that really took him in. They taught him the ways of the trail, and he was quickly recognized as a natural tracker and out-doors man. He ate and slept beside their campfire, and his rifle regularly contributed game to the train's sparse food supply.

When the train reached Fort Bridger, it split up into those who were going southwest to the Mormon country in Utah, and those going farther along the Oregon Trail to the northwestern territories of the U.S. or even to California. As Dusty watched the good-byes between the two groups, Mr. Wright stepped up to claim the young man's horse. "Sorry, Mr. Wright," Dusty said, turning to face him. "This was my dad's horse, and it's rightfully mine."

"Now you listen here, you thankless brat," insisted the wagoner. "I've cared for you and that horse ever since your parents died, and now I'm taking him down to Kanab with me."

"No way, Mr. Wright!" the boy answered with amazing calmness. "He's grazed his own way across the prairie without a quart of your feed. And," he added, "I've taken care of him the whole way myself. He's mine!"

"Get down from there," the livid man shouted as he jerked the boy off the horse and grabbed for the reins.

And then, as if by magic, Dusty's gun was out of its holster, and the rawboned man was backing off with his hands in the air. "Git this straight, Mr. Wright," the boy said with steel in his voice. "You kin keep my parents' ox, but I'm keepin' their horse and their guns. They're all I've got," he added lamely, more to himself than anyone else.

"The kid's right," exclaimed one of the scouts, "He's taken care of himself, and you've eaten more of his meat than he ever ate of yours. And besides, I don't think you'd best go up against a draw like that."

"You betcha!" several awestricken voices exclaimed from the crowd.

Dusty himself had been surprised at the speed and the smoothness of his draw. It just came naturally. He had scarcely drawn a gun before, except maybe to shoot an occasional rattler on the trail.

Gradually the glory of the desert stars and the beauty of the wild terrain under the full moon calmed Dusty's thoughts. "Dad would be proud that I did what was right today," he told himself as he crawled back to his blankets and fell into a peaceful sleep.

Chapter 3

The chill of the desert morning woke Dusty just as the sky began to lighten. He rekindled the fire and rustled some coffee from his saddle bags. Sipping it slowly from a tin cup, he soon had bacon sizzling in the cast iron skillet he carried. Finally, he fried a single large flapjack in the bacon grease, and wolfed down the standard meal of the trail, without butter or syrup. Those were chuck wagon and bunkhouse luxuries, to Dusty's way of thinking.

When breakfast was gone, Dusty doused the fire with water from the creek, pausing long enough for a deep drink for himself. Then, after filling his canteen, he climbed back to his seat on the cliff to read his chapter from the Bible for the day.

Dusty was no theological scholar, but his methodical Bible reading for the six years since his father's death had familiarized him fairly well with the Bible. He didn't understand a lot of it, but he knew what it said and could have repeated the parts that impressed him almost word for word. There were few Bible stories that he did not know well. He understood in a vague sort of a way that Christ had died for the sins of the world, but his religion, if he had thought about it, was simply to behave uprightly and leave the rest to God.

When he had finished his chapter, Dusty saddled up and continued aimlessly southward. He was always on the lookout for signs of Indians, and paused frequently at strategic spots to study his back trail. The changes in the land intrigued him as it went from

grasslands and desert sage to evergreen forests, back to increasingly rugged grasslands, and finally, after several days riding, to a landscape of stony bare gullies sparsely covered with stunted junipers, all punctuated by great gray mesas that towered nakedly above the level of the plains. It was unlike anything he'd ever seen.

Dusty's saddlebags were beginning to run low on supplies by the fourth day, so he detoured westward into a hilly patch of evergreen trees in hopes of killing a deer. Riding slowly through the trees, he came to a narrow meadow that sloped down to a shallow rocky stream. A towering sandstone wall several hundred feet high curved around the far side of the stream as far as he could see in either direction. The view was breathtaking.

The hunter's instinct in Dusty told him there would likely be deer down there. Slipping out of the saddle, he half-hitched the reins to a small limb, and stood silently in the trees at the edge of the meadow for a few minutes, scanning the valley for game. Seeing a buck grazing cautiously near the trees about three hundred yards downwind, the hunter backed stealthily into the forest, and moved noiselessly to a position that would be downwind of the deer before creeping back to the edge of the trees. Despite his caution, the animal suddenly stiffened and gazed intently upwind before taking suddenly to the trees near Dusty's position.

A greenhorn might have dropped the buck as it bounded by, but Dusty's attention focused instantly on what might have startled it. He was carefully studying every boulder and juniper in the suspect area when a couple of Indians came into view along the bank between the far side of the creek and the large sandstone backdrop. As they drew nearer, Dusty decided that they must be newlyweds, completely absorbed in each other. They were holding hands a bit more than necessary as they helped each other over the rocks along the way, sometimes half embracing as they chatted softly together in the seclusion of the wilderness.

Dusty had never seen an Indian with his guard down before. Instead of the usual impassive expression, their faces were relaxed and expressive. Instead of aloofness, this couple obviously cared for each other. As he crouched undetected in his hidden spot behind the trees, he realized that Indians were not necessarily murderous savages to be avoided or fought, but living, emotional human beings much like he was. Surely they had to hurt just as much when one of them died as he had hurt when the Indians had killed his parents. Death was a terrible thing--even for the Indians.

The Indian couple was directly across the creek from Dusty when he caught a shadowy movement on a low lying ledge just above them. Straining, he detected another gliding movement and finally made out the outline of a large mountain lion. Another slinky move confirmed that the beast was stalking the couple.

Dusty was hesitant to yell. It was too apt to alert any hostile Indians who might be nearby. Then, as the huge cat gathered for a final leap, the cowboy almost automatically

raised his Winchester to his shoulder, cocking it as it came up. Sighting on the brute, he waited to see what would happen. As the cougar sprang, he squeezed off a shot.

The rifle report echoed thunderously off the rock wall, and Dusty saw the mortally wounded beast's body strike the woman in the back, knocking her harmlessly to the ground. Without waiting for further developments, he whirled and ran for his horse. Wherever there was a squaw, there would likely be other Indians in the area, and they might not understand his motive for that impetuous shot.

The fleeing white man jerked Buster's reigns free and leaped into the saddle. He rode away hurriedly, picking a silent path over a thick carpet of fallen pine needles while avoiding any noisy underbrush as much as possible. His first thought was to ride back out of the trees to the trail he had been following, but he thought better of riding into the open as he approached the edge of the forest. After some deliberation, he holed up in an undercut beneath the roots of a large tree in a dry wash until dark. Then, before the moon rose, he would ride out of the trees in the darkness and use the light of the rising moon to find the distant trail.

After dark, Dusty let Buster pick his way back towards the east, and the sure-footed horse found the trail within a couple of hours. Dusty patted his neck affectionately as he urged the animal along at a fast walk for several hours before stopping for a meal of cold jerky and tepid water. There was no way he was going to chance a fire so close to the Indians.

Chapter 4

Dusty was off at the crack of dawn the next morning. As the sun peeked over the eastern horizon he noticed that the landscape was getting rougher. Awesome formations of red and white half-formed rock rose from the bare reddish ground that was dotted with eight to twelve foot shrubs. There was little other ground cover, and the landscape seemed to be an endless series of mounds and washes. There was little water, and virtually no game except for an occasional jack rabbit. The altitude seemed lower, and the dry air hotter—near a hundred degrees, he suspected. He finally stopped about noon to give his thirsty horse a break, resting under a juniper until the sun was well into the western sky before moving out again.

As they rode along, Dusty was beginning to wonder if they would ever find water. Still, this was obviously an Indian trail, and they would have had to have water as well. Surely they would find it soon. Sure enough, before sunset Buster drew up suddenly, almost back pedaling. They had come to the rim of a tall crumbly red rock drop-off that stretched as far as the eye could see to the west and north. The trail turned eastward and angled its way down the face of the rift into a narrow green valley below. There would be water here.

At sunset Dusty crossed a small river flowing out of a narrow rocky canyon about a half of a mile south of the edge of the rocky reef. After allowing Buster a small drink, he walked him along the southern bank into the high walled canyon to a defensible spot, removed his tack from the horse, rubbed him down, and led him back to the river for a fuller drink. Lighting a small fire, he brewed coffee and fried the last of his bacon. He had nothing else with him to eat, but he slept well, certain that he would find plenty of game here.

Pinkish daylight brightened the sky above the solid rock walls of the gorge that they had camped in. As Dusty crawled out of his blankets and slipped noiselessly towards the river he saw several deer coming down to the stream to drink. Dropping back to get his rifle, he crept back Indian-like to where he could get a good shot, and was dragging a mule deer back to camp within minutes. His position was relatively safe, and after frying a fresh steak, he set to work slicing the better parts of the meat into small strips for drying. He didn't have enough salt for long term preservation, but he made a crude drying rack from two forked sticks supporting a third one to hang the thin strips of meat on. Then, after building a fire of dried mesquite under the rack, he began smoking enough meat to satisfy his appetite for five or six days. After reading his daily chapter in the Bible, he decided to spend the day there, letting Buster rest and graze, and doing the meat slowly for better flavor and preservation. He tried panning for gold in the stream, but found no color at all. He finally gave it up after an hour or so, and just rested, cleaning his guns, and turning the meat or tending the fire occasionally. He sacked out right after dark and slept more soundly than usual.

As Dusty drank from the river the following morning, a shadow fell across him. Startled, he looked up to see two mounted Indians towering over him. Paiutes, he thought. His guns were back by the fire with his saddle and gear, and he stared steadily at the nearer brave feeling absolutely defenseless. Finally the Indian spoke. "White man hard to follow," he said. Then, as his face softened a mite, he added, "Good shot! Save squaw." Beckoning the other Indian to come forward, he said, "We have gift for white man;" and Dusty realized that the second Indian was a woman—a beautiful one at that.

The woman dismounted and untied a roll from behind her. Smiling shyly, she said, "Your hide." Holding it above her head she let the scraped hide of a cougar unroll almost to her feet. "I fix for you," she said. "Thank you," she added as she handed it to him. Then mounting, they were gone as silently as they had arrived. Dusty picked up the hide and walked shakily back to the fire. He shouldn't have been so careless, but he knew that these two Indians would be his friends for life.

Packing the meat that had smoked all night, Dusty broke camp and continued up the canyon. It was widening as he plodded along. Within an hour or so it was about a hundred yards wide, and the trail was wider too. Then the sky began to cloud up, and he began to urge his horse a bit faster, not wanting to get caught in a flash flood. Within a few minutes thunder was echoing in the canyon, and occasional bolts of lightning stabbed downward from the ragged sky. Finally, the south wall of the canyon ended

abruptly, opening into a luscious green valley that gradually faded into desert further away from the river. Dusty could make out a purplish mountain range merging into the clouds far to the south of the valley.

The trail-wise cowboy immediately headed into the higher ground off to his left, keeping an eye out for some kind of shelter from the oncoming storm. All he could find before it broke was a huge rock formation that afforded a bit of protection on the downwind side of the storm. There he stood, back against the rock, holding Buster's reins and stroking him reassuringly for an hour or so, until the thunderous storm blew on down the canyon.

When the storm was over, Dusty rode back to the previously placid little river, which was now a frenzied turnpike of roaring turbulence, three or four times as deep as it had been before the storm. He could only imagine how it must have thundered through the narrow part of the canyon he had just come through.

As Dusty made his way on upstream, the right wall of the canyon also petered out. Rounding its final edge, he could see the large red cliff that he had descended the night before several miles to the north, as it shrank to oblivion on the western horizon. And amazingly, there was a tiny settlement several miles on up the river.

Chapter 5

Dusty was impressed with the farm on the stream between the canyon and the settlement. It wasn't exactly a ranch, like the Lonely Circle, but there were a few cattle on the pasture along the stream. Nearer to the buildings, fenced fields striped with irrigation ditches from the river supported crops of corn and wheat. The barn and corral were separated from a large bare wooden farm house by a productive-looking apple orchard. A dairy cow chewed its cud contentedly in a small fenced side pasture. It was downright amazing to a cowboy used to nothing but the open range.

Approaching the house, the curious cowboy found three women, all sitting in the shade of the large front porch. "Howdy, ladies," he said as he dismounted and doffed his hat. "Could you tell me who runs this outfit?"

"State your business," the wary voice of the oldest-looking commanded austerely, as the others gazed pointedly at their sewing without looking up at him or her.

"I'm just a cowhand lookin' fer some grub, n' maybe a job," he answered candidly.

"Do you follow the Prophet?" she asked suspiciously.

"I ain't follerin' no one, ma'am," he denied, shaking his head negatively. "Just ridin' through."

"Yer a Gentile, then?" she asked accusingly.

"I guess so," he answered confusedly. "Least I ain't no Jew to my knowledge."

"Go on 'round back and git a drink," the woman replied severely, jerking her head to point the way to the back door. As he walked around the house in the indicated direction he heard her call sternly into the house, "Missy, git this heathen saddle tramp a drink at the back door, and send him packin'."

As Dusty walked slowly around to the back door, a slim golden haired young woman about his own age limped out with a glass of fresh milk and a thick slice of buttered bread. "Eat it quickly, before she sees it, or I'll be in a peck of trouble," she whispered with a grin.

He gulped down the milk between hurried bites of bread. "That was good," he said as he handed the empty glass back to the waiting girl. "Thank you, ma'am. I'm Dusty Winters," he continued, fidgeting with his hat.

"I'm glad you liked it," she replied with a winning smile. "I'm Missy. You'd better leave now. If you want to talk to Mr. Johnson, you'll probably find him up at the settlement." Then, turning around, she limped back to the door, pausing for a brief wave before disappearing inside the house.

"Thank you, ladies," Dusty called out as he rode by the porch. They ignored him pointedly.

The traveler rode on up to the little settlement of seven or eight buildings, including a small store and a blacksmith's forge. He assumed the houses were where the proprietors' families lived. There was also a small church building complete with a spire.

Dusty stopped at the store first. It was small, and mostly carried simple staples like sugar and flour. There were also a few essentials like cartridges and coal oil for lamps. When he tried to purchase some flour, the woman in the store told him he'd have to talk to Mr. Miller.

"Where?" he asked.

"At the church," the woman said, pointing up the street; so Dusty walked up to the small chapel. Tying Buster to the hitching rail outside, he entered the door. Three men sitting together on one of the split log benches rose to face him as he entered.

"Howdy," Dusty said apologetically. "I didn't mean to interrupt anything."

“No problem,” one of the men replied. “We just finished our business. What can we do for you?”

“Is Mr. Miller here?” Dusty asked.

“That’s me,” another man spoke up. “I’m the Bishop, and Mr. Johnson here is one of our worthies, and Mr. Shepherd is another. How can I help you?”

“I’d like to buy some coffee and flour for the trail,” the cowboy answered.

“I can help you with a bit of flour,” he replied, “but our supplies are really for the saints along the Fremont River—unless,” he continued, “you happen to be a worthy Mormon.”

“Don’t reckon I’m anything but a Christian, sir,” Dusty answered. “But I’d sure appreciate some supplies for the trail, ’lessen Mr. Johnson’s got a job on the farm for a hard-workin’ cowpoke.”

“I could use some help picking apples for a week or so,” Mr. Johnson cut in, “if you can refrain from alcohol and coffee while you’re with us.”

“I don’t drink and I’m out of coffee,” Dusty replied, realizing how they knew he wasn’t a Mormon, “and my horse needs the rest.”

“Three meals and a dollar a day, starting tomorrow,” Mr. Johnson offered, “And you can sleep in the barn.”

“If I kin sleep in the barn tonight, I’ll be ready at sun-up,” the cowboy agreed, and they shook on it.

Chapter 6

Dusty got up with the song of the birds the next morning. He was washing the last of the lather from his face at the trough when Missy showed up, barely visible in the early light. She presented him with a plate of bacon and eggs and a glass of milk for his breakfast. “Gentiles aren’t allowed at the family table,” she remarked with an impish grin, “So they sent me with your breakfast. Eat fast. Mr. Johnson will want help harnessing the team, and I gotta milk.”

Dusty gulped down the plate of food, and went back into the barn where Missy was already milking the cow in the glow of lantern that complimented her long soft curls. “Which way does Mr. Johnson hitch the horses?” he asked, “Un where’s the harnesses?”

“The mare on the right and the gelding on the left,” she answered, pausing to look up at him like it should have been obvious, “And the tack is probably in the wagon, since he used it yesterday.” Dusty had the team harnessed to the buckboard in a jiffy, before his new boss arrived. “That was fast,” Missy commented approvingly as she turned the cow out to pasture and picked up her bucket full of fresh milk. “He’ll like that. See you at noon,” she finished up as she limped out of the barn with the milk.

Mr. Johnson was a fast no-nonsense worker. He quickly taught Dusty to pick the apples that were just ready to ripen, and pack them carefully in shipping crates without bruising them. “They’ve got to arrive in Provo in good shape,” he cautioned, “or I’ll hear from headquarters at Salt Lake City.” The cowboy followed instructions well, and earned Mr. Johnson’s confidence quickly. They worked together almost silently anticipating one another’s moves as an efficient team, and Dusty could sense that his work was appreciated, despite their differences. Missy brought them some sandwiches and milk from the kitchen around noon, scarcely saying anything in Mr. Johnson’s presence. Dusty caught a smile behind the big man’s back just before she turned back towards the house. Sweet little thing, he told himself he as watched her go. It’s a pity such a beautiful girl has to be so crippled.

The men quit picking at sunset, hauling the fruit to the spring house in the buckboard. After unloading, Dusty drove the horses to the barn, unhitched and watered them, and rubbed them down carefully with a piece of burlap. He was just putting them in their stalls when Missy showed up with a large plate of beef and potatoes and several thick slices of bread. She did the evening milking as the tired cowboy ate his meal.

“Thanks, Missy. That bread was terrific,” he said as he handed her the empty plate.

“Don’t mention it too loudly,” she replied. “Nina doesn’t like to waste it on Gentile hands.”

“Nina’s the bossy one?” he asked.

“Very,” she grinned.

“She his wife?” he continued.

“All three of ‘em.” she answered. “Nina’s the first,” she continued, wrinkling her nose in disgust.

“You a hired hand?” he persisted.

“Worse!” she answered. “His stepchild. Mom told me that Indians raided our wagon train and killed my dad when I was only two years old. Mr. Johnson was kind enough to rescue us by buying us from them, and Mom was so appreciative that she married him. When he brought her home, she found she was number four, with no way out. Mom

lived till I was ten, but Nina always hated her, and tried to work her to death. She warned me never to join the church," she blurted out.

Then looking up suddenly, she said confidentially. "I've never told anyone else, but somehow I trust you—even if you are a Gentile," she added mischievously.

"What's this 'Gentile' stuff?" he asked.

"You are either a worthy Mormon or a Gentile around here," she answered. "And 'worthy' isn't necessarily the right word for some of 'em, either." Then, grabbing up her frothing milk pail, she exclaimed, "I gotta get going or Nina'll have a fit," and she was gone.

Chapter 7

Dusty worked from dawn until dusk throughout the week, making sure that he earned his keep. Missy brought his meals, and he managed to have the cow milked before she got there on several evenings. The first time, she hung around to chat a bit, explaining a bit more about the Mormon religion.

"It takes over where the Bible leaves off," she told him. "The angel, Moroni, told Joseph Smith about some golden plates from God, which he dug up and translated into the BOOK OF MORMON with some special spectacles that had been buried with them. He also got some revelations from God, which he wrote up in DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS. He also got about thirty wives, but I don't think God had anything to do with that," she added wryly.

"Do you believe all that stuff?" he asked incredulously.

"It confuses me," she replied.

"Missy, I think God would be fair. If He sent ennyone ta us with a new message, He'd give 'em enough miracles or somethin' ta prove they really came from Him."

"What about when the seagulls came and ate the swarms of grasshoppers that were destroying the early Mormon's crops?" she asked.

"It could'a been an answer ta prayer," Dusty admitted. "But it could'a just happened. It wasn't an undeniable miracle like the crossin' of the Red Sea er the Jordan River."

"What about all the Mormon healings by the laying on of hands?"

“All I kin say’s when Jesus healed folks, even His enemies had ta admit that He really done it.”

“Mom always said the Mormons couldn’t be right, the way they treat women,” Missy volunteered. “She quit going to church, and then she died. Nina says God was angry ‘cause she quit going to church.”

“I read my Bible every day,” Dusty answered, “and I know that Jesus treated women as good as he treated men. He met one at a well once, and told her she was wrong ta have more’n one husband. She went away happy cause he knew all about her sins, and forgave ‘em all, I guess.”

“We don’t read the Bible much,” she said. “Brigham says the Book of Mormon takes precedence over it anyhow.”

She sighed deeply, shrugged her shoulders, picked up her pail full of milk, and went bleakly back to the house.

The next time she lingered to talk, Mr. Johnson walked in on the conversation. He curtly sent her back to the house. Then, turning to Dusty, he said, “Don’t be bothering Missy with your infidel questions. You’re a good worker and would make a good Mormon. If you want to learn the truth, come to church in the morning. We won’t be working on the Sabbath anyway.”

Dusty walked behind the family to the church the following day. He was appalled as Mr. Miller explained that God the Father came down in the flesh to father a son by Mary. It just wasn’t consistent with the Biblical accounts, and both of them could not be true. The rest of what he heard was a mixture of Biblical-sounding quotations and contradictions that left his head spinning. One thing he knew, he didn’t want any more of it—ever.

Dusty walked out of the church without speaking to anyone, and went straight back to the barn. Buckling on his gun belt, he saddled Buster and rode south into the desert to exercise the horse and clear his dumfounded mind. “How could anyone familiar with the Bible believe such things?” he kept asking himself.

Buster was anxious to go, and Dusty let him run a while before turning him in a wide arc that would get them back to the barn before dinner. They were riding down the lane to the barn as the sky turned orange before sunset.

As Dusty dismounted, he heard an angry shout in the barn. Dropping the reins, he stepped quietly inside to see a well-dressed middle-aged man staring arrogantly at Missy. He had her cornered between a stall and the barn wall, and seemed to be studying her almost as if evaluating livestock. Dusty slipped easily up behind him, and

when the stranger made a coarse remark about her figure, the enraged cowboy spun him around by the shoulder.

“What do you think yer doin’?” he challenged as Missy limped into the lengthening shadows.

“Mind your own business, Gentile,” the aggressor shouted back angrily.

“I work here,” Dusty replied evenly. “What happens to Mr. Johnson’s daughter is my business.”

“I’m Thomas Blake, the Area President of this stake,” he replied haughtily. “If I want his daughter, he has no choice. I could even take his wife if I wanted to.”

“She has a choice,” Dusty said grimly. “She’s not a member of yer church, and you’ll be ridin’ on without her.”

“I’ll decide that,” he replied as he slipped a hand nonchalantly into his coat. Dusty anticipated his move, and he was staring down the barrel of Dusty’s Colt before his derringer was half-way out.

“I’ll take that,” the cowboy said easily as the enraged man handed it over. “Now git and stay git.”

The man huffed out of the barn to the house, and within moments he returned to the barn with Mr. Johnson. Both men were armed with shotguns.

“Dusty, come here a minute,” Mr. Johnson called up to the loft where Dusty usually slept, as both men cocked their weapons.

“Sure thing,” Dusty replied as he stepped out from a stall behind them with his revolver in his hand. “I’m right here. Ya won’t be needin’ those guns ta talk ta me, so I’d suggest that ya put ‘em down nice and careful like so they won’t go off and hurt someone,” he continued casually.

“Mr. Johnson,” he said as the two men lay their guns down gingerly, “if you knew how this man was a-lookin’ at Missy, and heard what he said to ‘er, you’d have that gun pointed at him.”

“A man’s got a right to check out a prospective wife,” the stranger retorted.

“Missy may be crippled,” Dusty answered angrily, “but she’s a respectable human being, not a piece of merchandise. And she’s way too good for that kind of treatment.”

“Crippled!” shouted the visitor, turning on Mr. Johnson. “You didn’t tell me that.”

"Figured it was self-evident, Mr. Blake," Johnson said defensively. "She's a good worker and an excellent cook."

"I don't need no cripple," the man spat out as he huffed out of the barn towards the house. And Dusty was sure that Missy was safe for the moment.

When he heard the door slam, Mr. Johnson turned on Dusty. "Don't you be gettin' me in trouble with the church," he growled angrily. "The big wigs are the law around here, and they can do as they please."

"I can't believe ya'd let ennyone treat a woman like that."

"Nobody asked you," the man replied sulkily. "You're fired!" he added as he drew his wallet from his pocket and handed Dusty the six dollars that he owed him before stomping out the door to join the churchman.

"I guess I'm on the road again, then," Dusty muttered as he put their guns in a dark corner of a stable to allow him a bit of get-away time. Then, gathering his things, he swung back into Buster's saddle again. He rode around the barn and circled through some trees toward the lane in front of the house, where Missy stepped out of the bushes to meet him.

"I figured you'd come this way," she whispered loudly. "Brought you enough supplies to get away," she said breathlessly.

"I'm not about to run from him," Dusty replied, "But it seems that I've worn out my welcome here."

"There's a wagon rut with a scattering of Mormon homesteads running west of here, but don't go that way now. Mr. Blake is in control out there, and he'll convince them that you're an enemy of God and get them to hunt you down. Just leave!"

"Let me take you out of here, Missy," he offered. "Somebody'll git ya iffin' I don't," he urged.

"Not when they see I'm crippled," she replied with a grin. "It turns 'em all off."

"Suit yerself, Missy," he said. "But listen! That book can't be true if the Bible's true. They're downright contradictory. Don't let 'em mislead you."

"I'll be thinking on it, Dusty," she said. "I've got to go. They'll half kill me if they find I gave you any supplies." She looked up into his face and uttered, "Thanks!" He thought he saw tears glistening in her eyes as she turned to limp back towards the house.

Dusty picked his way slowly back down the river trail in the moonlight, deeply concerned about the young crippled girl's future.

Chapter 8

After camping in the canyon downstream from the farm, Dusty decided to follow the Fremont River downstream to the Colorado River. Why not? He was in no hurry, and he knew he would run into the Colorado sooner or later, if he just kept working his way east.

The trail along the Fremont became less and less distinct as that first day wore on. By sunset it wasn't really a trail anymore. The cowboy had no idea what lay ahead, but he felt as rugged as the land that stretched to the horizon before him, and as invincible as the purple mountains that flanked it to the south. He had no qualms about his ability to survive, as long as he had ammunition and kept close enough to the river to get water for himself and his horse.

He rode along the river for days on end. Sometimes it led him into canyons that became impassable, forcing him to backtrack for hours only to fail again by another impassable route. He was often forced to cross to the other side of the river, or even swing wide of it into the wilderness for miles at a time. Sometimes the way was forested, sometimes desert, occasionally plains. Mile after mile might be rocky, or sandy, or treacherous bare washes of unstable eroded earth that would have been difficult to traverse on foot, let alone on horseback. Once he led Buster for a day and a half without ever mounting the beast. Dusty gloried in the challenge of it!

A couple of weeks downstream, the Fremont joined another quite muddy river that doubled its size. The dirtier water was so alkaline that it was hardly palatable, but there was nearly always rain water to be found in hollows in the rocks. The enlarged river seemed to be cutting in a more southerly direction as it wound its way towards the Colorado. The canyons seemed more and more rugged, and the roar of the rapids in the narrower places became downright exhilarating as the river grew.

The starkness of the land took on a peculiar beauty that few people could appreciate. Dusty was one that could. He loved it, respected it, feared it, and endured it all at the same time. Time ceased to exist, except for the rise and fall of the sun as the days rolled on.

Dusty lived off the land. He killed deer, pausing to smoke the meat and rest his horse every five or six days. He made no money and couldn't have used it if he had. His only regret was that he had no coffee, and even that seemed to fade into triviality with time.

As time went on, the journey became a spiritual one. He continued to read his Bible daily, but his brush with such a contradiction to it seemed to give it more significance. He was on a retreat with God, searching for answers to Missy's dilemma, though he never expected to see her again. He'd read a passage, and reread it until it took on meaning. He found himself praying, first in his morning devotions, and then more and more as he rode along. At first he was asking for God's help. Finally he was talking to God as a friend along the way.

The significance of the virgin birth impressed him first. Then the perfect life of Christ made him realize how short he came of the righteousness that God demands. And finally, the significance of the crucifixion fell into place. Christ didn't simply die for the sins of the world, He died for Dusty's sins. And as these things crystalized in his soul, he began to understand that the love of God was personal. He consciously accepted Christ as his Savior, and he was born again.

Neither the beauty of the land nor his newfound closeness to God made Dusty careless. He watched ahead of him, around him, and behind him. He was careful to keep his footprints undetectable, his campsites defensible, and his campfires invisible. He wanted a shirt on his back and a scalp on his head when he reached civilization. He saw rattlesnakes, he saw bears, he even saw a mother cougar with her kittens. He ran across the ruins of past Indian civilizations, he ran across cold signs of contemporary Indians, but he never saw a single human being. Not one! He was alone with his horse and his God, and he loved it.

Chapter 9

The landscape seemed to change a bit as the river turned due south. The top lands were flatter, sometimes with grazing space and occasional buffalo, but the canyons were steeper and deeper. And then, early on the morning of the last day of September, Dusty suddenly found himself at the junction of a much larger river. It had to be the Colorado.

Sitting astride Buster at the top of the rocky red bluff overlooking the larger river, after nearly a month of solitude, the cowboy was shocked to see a large boat come into view around the bend to the North. Then another one, and yet another, each sporting a United States flag.

Half-hitching Buster, the cowboy scrambled down the bluff as the first boat put in to shore. A surprised cry of alarm went up as Dusty stepped into view, and guns came up on the shoulders of several men on the twenty-one foot boat.

"Easy there," Dusty called out casually without raising his hands. "I was here first," he continued with a grin. Friendly laughs came from all over the craft as the guns came

down, and someone tossed him a rope. Dusty pulled the boat to shore, and several men jumped out to secure it.

A large impressive one armed man rose from a chair strapped in the middle compartment of the first boat. "John Wesley Powell," he greeted with his outstretched hand as he jumped nimbly to the ground. "May I ask what you're doing here?"

"Dusty Winters," the cowboy answered, shaking the hand heartily. "I'm just ridin' through lookin' for an honest job, maybe in Colorado or back up ta Wyoming."

"Got any supplies?" Thompson asked, looking around.

"I left my horse up on the bluff when I saw yer boats," he answered. "I don't have anything but a bit of trail-made jerky in my saddle bags. It won't go far in this crowd, but yer welcome ta it."

"We're a geological survey team for the U.S. government," the big man stated. "We were supposed to meet an army detail with our winter supplies here at the mouth of the Dirty Devil, but they couldn't get through from either Glencove or Kanab."

"This is the Dirty Devil, then?" Dusty asked. "They called it the Fremont back at Junction."

"We labeled it the 'Dirty Devil' on our first trip down the Colorado in 'sixty-eight. Now we're following up to map the area. We were going to resupply here and winter at the mouth of the Paria, but we've had to change our plans. Now we'll resupply at El Vado, the Passage of the Fathers, and winter near Kanab."

"I just came along the Fremont from Junction," Dusty replied, rubbing his chin. "I wasn't in no hurry, but it took me nearly a month. I doubt that enny supply train could make it through that-a-way either. Had ta walk my horse n' double back a lot. That's plumb rough country, sir."

"Man!" Major Powell interrupted enthusiastically. "We're supposed to map that country. Can you sit a while and tell me what it's like?"

"Sure," Dusty replied, "If there's coffee. I ain't had a cup fer a month er more."

"Andy, bring the man some coffee," Powell called out to the cook. And Dusty recounted his trip in the minute details that only a mountain man or an Indian would have remembered, while Powell and Professor Almon Thompson, the second in command, scribbled madly on note pads.

After an hour or so, when Dusty was finished, the two geographers put their notes aside, and Dusty showed them an old Indian trail he had crossed on the way down the

bluff. They followed it on foot to a deep gulch a mile and a half downstream to see if it would be suitable for horses before returning to camp.

Meanwhile, the camp was a beehive of activity. After a thorough check of their larder, Andy announced that they only had rations enough for five or six more days. Captain Francis Bishop, who had been a teacher at Illinois State Normal School in Bloomington, Illinois, took observations for time, and recorded their position. He found a jack knife while kicking around on the campfire ashes from Powell's first expedition, and the Major was so thrilled with it that Cap gave it to him for a souvenir. Others busied themselves with minor repairs on the boats and catching up with their various reports. Andy made the standard meal of fried bacon, coffee, and fresh bread baked in a Dutch oven for lunch. Meals varied little for the group, except for an occasional pot of beans and rarer concoctions from dried fruit.

An amateur geologist named John Steward related the expedition's experiences rafting through Desolation, Grey, and Cataract Canyons. He boasted that this group had successfully run so many terrifying rapids that he wouldn't be afraid to "run the gates of hell" with them. He told of how they often had to unload the boats and let them down some of the more violent rapids with hundred foot ropes an inch thick. Sometimes a man or two would remain in the boats to hold them off the rocks as they were lowered through the rapids. Sometimes they would have to wade along beside the boats, horsing them over half-submerged boulders, all the while struggling to prevent them from being dashed apart against the rocks.

It was all so intriguing that Dusty would have volunteered to accompany them on down the river if it hadn't been for Buster. There was no way he would ever give him up, but he stayed with the group all day, sharing his jerky with them for their evening meal.

After supper, Powell came and sat down on a rock beside Dusty. "What made you come across the desert that way?" he asked.

"I quit my job cow-poking when they started talking range war," Dusty answered. "Un' I got fired from my job in the Fremont valley fer interferin' with how they was a'treating a very fine young lady. I didn't have nothin' ta do, so I just decided to head out this way fer the fun of it. I ain't sorry, neither. I saw God's country back there."

"You're not running from the law, then?" Powell asked directly.

"I try ta do right, Major," Dusty answered. "I ain't never had a run-in with the law, but there ain't much law out here, or there wouldn't be range wars. The Mormons seem ta be a law unto themselves," he added as an afterthought.

"Good enough," the expedition leader added. "You're just the man we need. Would you like a job as a scout with us?"

"I'd be obliged, sir, but..."

"You'd be working for the U.S. government on a basic military salary, and would have to follow instructions fully," Powell interrupted.

"I'd take it," Dusty replied, "but I've got a good horse with me that couldn't be brought along with the boats."

"Okay," Powell replied pensively, "but if you could meet us in Kanab this winter, we sure could use your expertise."

"I'll puzzle on it," Dusty replied. "Meanwhile, if you don't mind, I'll scout around a bit before dark to be sure we're safe tonight, n' be on my way tomorry or whenever ya's leave."

"Go ahead," the big man answered. "I'm turning in early."

So Dusty climbed back up to his original viewpoint to care for Buster, and spent an hour or so satisfying himself that there were no hostile Indians around before returning to the camp at dusk.

Chapter 10

The survey camp ran efficiently. Everyone was up at dawn, and breakfast was served well before six o'clock. Powell and Thompson decided to leave one of the boats at the mouth of the Dirty Devil, to provide transportation for the mapping detail that would work their way back to the Dirty Devil from Kanab over the next year or so. A young man named Fred Dellenbaugh seemed to be in charge of stowing it away. Dusty showed him a perfect hideaway that he had found a short distance downstream while scouting about the night before, where a huge slab of rock had fallen against a cliff of the river bluff. There was a space about twenty five feet long and eight feet wide between the cliff and the slab that leaned against it above their heads. Six men emptied the Canyonita and carried it to this "cave." Although the spot was about two hundred feet from the river and some forty feet above water level, driftwood in the area suggested that the water had risen that high in the past. They filled the boat with sand and rocks to keep it from moving in case the water got to it. Despite his youth, Dellenbaugh was so efficient that the whole task was accomplished by nine o'clock that morning

The Major and Mr. Jones climbed the bluff to survey the area while professor Thompson and Cap Bishop took the number two boat, the Nellie Powell, a mile and a half downstream to the gulch they had seen on the Indian trail the night before. They followed the trail another five or six miles and climbed out of the canyon to find that it was coming from the direction of the Unknown Mountains, which stood in snow-capped

majesty to the west-southwest of the camp. Steward measured the altitude of the canyon rim at 1950 feet and studied the Unknowns with a telescope. He reported that they were largely sedimentary rock interspersed with lava pockets jutting out of them like blisters. Finally, the first boat, the Emma Dean, was moved down to where the Nellie was moored, and camp was prepared for the night.

Dusty was particularly impressed with Cap. He was quite jovial, but in such a wholesome way that Dusty suspected he was a Christian. As they ate dinner that evening, Dusty asked him what he knew of Mormonism. "As far as I'm concerned," Cap told him, "it's based on the lusts of Joseph Smith. First he imagined that God the Father had sex with Mary to conceive Jesus. Then he based man's eternal reward on his sexual activity in this life. And finally he introduced polygamy so he could revel in sex."

"Sounds like one of the 'Other gospels' that the Apostle Paul condemned in the introduction to the book of Galatians," Dusty mused aloud.

"I certainly don't consider it Christian," Cap agreed.

That evening the Major and the Professor read appropriate selections of Tennyson and Whittier to the group, and Steward quoted several pages of Robert Burn's poetry by heart. They finished the evening by singing "Annie Laurie"--led by Jack Hillar with a mouth organ accompaniment by Steward. On an impulse, Dusty read the Nineteenth Psalm aloud and told the group how much he had enjoyed the passage in this environment. The Captain, especially, seemed to enjoy his input.

The geological party left early the next morning, while Dusty watched from the canyon rim. Then he sat down in the flaming orange light of the early morning sun to read his chapter for the day. He often found himself praying his heart out to God during these sessions, since he had developed a personal relationship with Christ. This morning he asked for guidance about where to go next.

Dusty's best options seemed to be to strike east across the Colorado--which he was confident Buster could swim in a quieter spot--head north to find a job punching cows in Wyoming, or strike out overland for Kanab to work with the survey team. The more he thought about it, the more difficult finding a wrangling job as winter approached seemed. Finally, he drew out the map of the river that the major had sketched for him, and started down the old Indian trail that headed southwest towards the Unknown Mountains in the general direction of Kanab. He knew it was well over a hundred miles by the river, although probably less by land, unless he had to double back too much. His only concern was whether or not the fall graze would be sufficient for Buster.

Dusty's old Indian trail was rough. It meandered around boulders, alongside of rocky cliffs, and skirted deep canyons of soft eroded sandstone containing miles of white and red layered badlands--often without visible creeks at the bottom. The trail soon veered more easterly, and wormed its way into the Unknowns. Although it tended to stay in the

valleys, Dusty encountered heavy snow squalls that made for a bitterly cold campsite on the third night, when it took him over the top. He would have feared to ride a lesser horse than Buster through the new fallen snow on the narrow overhangs he encountered on the way down the next morning. As it was, he wisely dismounted and led the horse through some of the more dangerous passages.

By noon the next day Dusty was safely down in the valley again. He killed a deer and smoked a lot of jerky at his campsite near some dry graze for Buster that night. A horse's snort awakened him before dawn, and he grabbed his Winchester and faded into a cluster of boulders beyond the light of the smoky fire. Hunkering down in the pre-dawn chill, he scarcely breathed as he waited for further developments. Suddenly, he felt the prod of a six gun in his back, and a snarling voice ordered him back to the fire with his hands up. Unfortunately, the intruder had been just behind him.

"Watcha doin' here?" the ill-kempt stranger queried as they reached the fire.

"Tryin' ta pick my way across to Kanab," Dusty answered steadily.

"You ort'a watch yer fire better," the man advised. "Now yer a'goin' to lose yer horse and yer gun, 'cause this old prospector needs 'em," he continued. "But first, I want ya ta make us some coffee."

Under the prospector's armed gaze, Dusty carefully brewed some of the coffee that the survey team had given him. Then pouring a cup he handed it toward the unkempt man's outstretched hand. Just as the man touched the cup, Dusty jiggled it hard enough to spill the hot liquid all over his hand. Dusty was ready when the man cursed and jerked his hand back. In one smooth move he grasped both the stranger's wrists and twisted them until the gun fell heavily to the ground.

"Guess you ought ta watch my fire better too, mister," he said easily as he shoved the stranger backward and picked up his gun. "Buster don't like your attitude none, so he's a'stayin' with me. Now sit down on that rock across the fire from me 'thout making enny false moves, n' we'll both have a cup a' coffee before we freeze ta death."

So they drank the whole pot of coffee together while Dusty asked why the man was being so ornery.

"Just a prospector down on my luck, I guess," the man admitted. "An' yer people won't help a feller none. Can't buy no supplies anywhere around here."

"If you're referrin' ta the Mormons, they're not my people," Dusty retorted. "But if ya don't offend 'em, I'm sure some of 'em will help ya a bit. They're probably just like enny other folks. Some er kind and some ain't. But what ya really need, Sir, is God's help," Dusty advised. The man just guffawed.

It was light enough to see by the time they had finished the coffee. Dusty picked up his gun belt and buckled it around his waist. Sticking the prospector's gun in his own back, he marched him to where he had hidden his horse. It was a rather malnourished Indian pony that had seen better days, still saddled and bridled with an old Winchester rifle tied to the saddle. Bringing them back to the campfire on foot, he sat the prospector on a convenient rock away from any close cover. After he packed his bed roll, he filled his saddle bags with the new jerky, leaving a generous amount for the prospector without comment.

"I'm gonn'a leave yer horse n' guns a couple of miles down the trail," Dusty told him. "You'd die out here without them. You kin walk down n' pick 'em up in an hour or so. Meanwhile, think about gettin' right with God," Dusty pled. "He really does care about ya." Then, leading the Indian pony, he rode briskly down the trail a couple of miles, where he tied the paint before riding on at a trot.

"I hope I did right, Lord," he prayed conversationally.

The trail was scarcely visible when he came out of the mountains around noon, and Dusty was about to start cutting more southward towards Kanab when he remembered what Missy had said about the wagon rut west from Junction. Seeing the prospector's scrawny paint had gotten him concerned about Buster. He still had the thirty dollars from the ranch plus the three dollars from picking apples on him. That, with the forty dollars he had already saved up, would be more than enough to buy food for the horse plus whatever he needed. They could cut south to Kanab along the established road when they got to the other side of the unmapped canyon lands. He didn't really make a conscious decision; he just found himself drifting back toward the north, hoping to intersect the rut a bit west of Junction.

What Dusty found himself thinking about was that little Missy girl. Somehow the fact that she was crippled seemed to be fading into the background of her personality. And besides, she was downright cute, except for that limp.

So it was that he found himself cutting more and more northward towards Junction, instead of beyond it. And the more he thought about Missy, the more anxious he became to see her. He began to resent all the cliffs, and impassable canyons that he had to go around. He became frustrated when he had to double back to get around large areas of badlands. And in his frustration, he became careless of his own safety, the trail he was leaving, and even his campfire.

Chapter 11

Dusty's frustration and carelessness led to the inevitable. About noon ten days after he left the Colorado, he saw a small group of hard-riding Indians on his trail. Buster was

more than equal to the task of outrunning Indian ponies, but Dusty wasn't sure how much stamina the roan had left in him after nearly two months of nothing but desert graze. He ran the horse for a few minutes, and seemed to be outdistancing his pursuers, but there was really no good place to hide. He finally turned into an area of weird rocky formations and found a defensible pile of boulders big enough for both him and the horse. Buster scrambled gamely into the hideaway and Dusty pulled out his Winchester and peered down his trail between the boulders.

Shortly, the band of Indians thundered by in the direction Dusty had been going, and just as he let out his breath someone jumped on his back. Wiry dark arms pinned his arms to his side and guttural voices indicated that there were several assailants. His gun was jerked from his holster. Dusty swung around desperately, bashing the Indian on his back against the rocks so hard he heard his ribs crack. Grabbing the arm that was trying to raise his gun, he twisted until something snapped and the Indian went down to his knees. Then something hit him on the back of his head and everything went black.

Dusty awoke in the dark. He was cold and ached all over. He was lying on the ground with his arms bound tightly behind his back. When he tried to rise, he found that his feet were tied together. Waves of nausea and dizziness added to his confusion.

Lying there in the dark he struggled to comprehend what was going on. Slowly the details came back to him. He was obviously a prisoner of the Indians, maybe in a hut or a cave. He was probably brought here draped over a horse. That would explain why he ached so much.

Sitting up, he waited until the dizziness passed. When he felt stable, he stood up, banging his tender head on a pole so hard that it knocked him back to the ground. "This must be a totally enclosed wickiup," He told himself. He must try to escape.

The cowpoke struggled with the rawhide strips around his wrists for what seemed like hours without accomplishing anything but a good chafing. As the light of dawn filtered into the wickiup he looked for something to cut the bonds, but couldn't find anything that would serve the purpose. When he began hearing activity outside, he moved to a sitting position directly across from the door. Finally, the boughs were pulled back at the entrance, and a graceful Indian woman peered into the semi-darkness of the wickiup. Satisfied that he was still bound, she entered and held a bowl of water to his lips so he could drink.

"Thank you," he said softly. And then she was gone without saying a word.

An hour later, two young braves came in and grabbed Dusty roughly by the shoulders, half dragging him out the door. As his eyes became adjusted to the light, he saw that he was in a fair sized village with well over a dozen wickiups, which were nothing more than conical arrangements of cedar boughs about seven feet high with variably sized uncovered openings for doors. He tried to look around for Buster, but the braves

manhandled him unceremoniously into a larger wickiup that had a small fire burning in the center of the floor. They plunked him down on a log across from the door, and sat down on either side of him.

Soon an impassive older Indian flanked by two escorts entered and took a seat on a stool placed on a bear skin rug directly across the fire from Dusty. He stared coldly at the prisoner's eyes for fully five minutes without uttering a sound. Dusty returned the stare without wavering, trying not to betray any emotion at all. Finally, the chief spoke.

"You put up good fight, hurt two men."

"I had no desire ta hurt anyone; Chief, but yer men attacked me. I was fighting' ta keep my scalp on. It's too cold ta lose it this late in the year," he added

Despite himself, a faint twinkle played for an instant in the chief's eyes. "White men pushed us here. Now you come here too. We kill."

"Chief," Dusty replied, "I am only passin' through. I have no quarrel with Indians."

"White men kill my father," the chief said savagely.

"Indians killed my father," Dusty retorted evenly.

"You fight for life," the chief said with an air of finality. "You run line at hot sun. If you live, you go with horse and guns. If you die, we keep horse and guns. Finished." The chief arose and exited regally.

Dusty was taken back to his original wickiup, and shoved through the door. A few minutes later the door was pulled away, and the squaw that had given him water brought him some thin soup. As she held it to his mouth so he could sip away at it, she whispered, "You good man. Eat, rest, run well, fight hard, they let go." Then looking furtively at the door, she quickly loosened his bonds considerably. "You feel better this way," she whispered, "but keep on till fight," she commanded. Then he was alone.

Dusty prayed for wisdom, for help, and for safety. Then, feeling at peace, he lay down and drifted right off into a deep sleep. After what seemed like only a few moments, his guards arrived to escort him to the line.

Indians of all ages had formed a double line about forty feet long. They were in a festive mood, laughing and chatting like they were at a sporting event or something, but they fell quieter as Dusty approached. Each held a weapon of some kind to hit him with, from sticks and stones for the smaller children to heavy clubs for the braves. Even the woman who had fed him appeared to be taking an enthusiastic part in the festive occasion. Two guards stood behind Dusty with bows and arrows ready, to prevent his escape while he was loosed. His hands and feet were numb, and he jumped up and down rubbing his

wrist to get the circulation back. Only then did he realize how much the squaw had done for him in loosening his bonds. But there she stood in the line with a stout two inch thick stick in her hands.

As Dusty looked down the line, he saw everything from amusement to downright hatred on the faces. One larger brave stood in spiteful readiness near the beginning with at least a ten pound club raised above his head. Dusty had a minute or so before silence fell as the chief took his place beyond the line, where he would judge the victim's performance without interfering.

When the chief gave the signal, Dusty sprinted through the first few children and squaws, who rained relatively harmless blows on him, most striking too late to get a solid hit. Then, as the brave with the big club began his swing, he stopped short, letting the brunt of the blow fall ahead of him. Seizing the club, he wrenched it from the surprised Indian, and sprinted down the line, parrying many of the blows with the club. He noticed that the squaw that had treated him so kindly had taken a position across from a fierce looking brave, and managed to swing her stick so awkwardly that it blocked his vicious well-timed blow. He had to do some fancy stepping to throw off some of the real warriors' timing, but he ran the entire gauntlet without receiving more than a couple of staggering blows. Pulling up short before the chief, he produced an exaggerated bow, and announced that he still had his scalp, making motions as if trying to remove it for the chief's inspection. The whole crowd cheered, and the chief pronounced, "Good! Son home tonight. You stay for feast, leave tomorrow." Then he rose and went to his wickiup.

Dusty was left unbound, free to roam the village at will. Everywhere he went, the children followed, gazing wide eyed at him like he was a circus exhibit. He finally grabbed up one of the braver children and placed him astraddle his neck for a ride. This was an instant success, and he ended up giving many more rides for the next hour or so.

A hunting party returned to the village in the middle of the afternoon, and after dispensing the meat its leader came to investigate the laughter of the children gathered around Dusty. As he approached, he suddenly grinned and grabbed the cowboy by both shoulders. "You saved wife, remember?" he asked. Dusty finally realized that this was the Indian whose wife had given him the cougar skin. "I tell my father. He chief."

Dusty ended up a hero at the feast that evening. He ate with the chief and his son. He learned that the chief was Screaming Eagle, and his son was Hunting Bear. Hunting Bear's wife, who had shown him so much kindness, was Bashful Doe. The name suited her well.

Dusty slept in the empty wickiup on his own blankets with his guns at his side that night. Hunting Bear brought Buster, saddled and bridled, to Dusty early the next morning. They rode together to the place where Dusty had been captured. Dismounting, they sat on a rock and Hunting Bear got directly to the point.

"Why you leave such plain trail like that?" he asked. "You very careful before. Now act crazy, like in love."

"I guess I am," Dusty admitted. "She's a girl in Junction with a limp."

"You mean Missy?" asked the Indian.

"You know her?" Dusty asked incredulously.

"Everyone know," Hunting Bear replied. "She good; she kind; she help all."

"She was sure good to me," Dusty reflected.

"Cook good, make good squaw," Hunting Bear continued, rubbing his stomach. "Look good too," he added mischievously. "I take you there two days."

"I don't know if she wants to see me," Dusty objected.

"Not find out here," the Indian ventured. "I show you village, leave. You talk to Missy."

Dusty tried to object to Hunting Bear's kindness, but the Indian replied, "You saved woman I love. We are brothers," and started his horse across the desert leaving Dusty to follow.

"Thank you, Hunting Bear," Dusty answered from behind. "I am proud to be your brother."

Although Dusty considered himself trail wise, he was totally intrigued with the Indian's ability to pick his way through the desert without leaving tell-tale signs that could be followed. Several times the native of the desert pointed out unnecessary signs the white man was leaving, and how they could be avoided. By evening, Hunting Bear was grunting his approval of Dusty's ability to put the Indian's savvy into practice.

Late in the afternoon of the second day, Dusty could see the red edge of great reef that stretched westward from Junction. Hunting Bear reigned in an hour or so later, and Dusty pulled up beside him. The Indian pointed out the rocky landmarks that would lead Dusty the rest of the way.

"Thank you, Hunting Bear," Dusty said genuinely.

"It was nothing, my Brother," Hunting Bear replied. "I tell tribe Missy your woman," he said with a hint of a grin as he turned his horse to return to his village. Suddenly alone, the cowboy felt painfully bashful, without the slightest idea of what to do next.

Chapter 12

Dusty rode to the Fremont a bit east of Junction and made camp in a clump of cottonwoods just before the western edge of the Canyon petered out. At dusk, he hid Buster in the trees, exchanged his boots for some Indian moccasins, and struck out on foot for the Johnson farm. He slipped Indian fashion through the trees behind the barn and crept through the open door just as Missy finished milking.

"Missy," he whispered loudly.

The girl put her bucket down and turned toward his voice.

"Over here, Missy," he whispered again, coming closer. "It's me, Dusty."

The surprised girl let out a muffled squeal and literally threw herself toward his dim form.

"O Dusty," she whispered as she hugged him close. "I thought I'd never see you again."

Dusty held her tight for a long moment. She felt so soft and warm and wonderful against his body that he wanted to hold her there forever, but he wasn't sure if she greeted every long-lost friend that way, or if she really felt a special affection for him. He grabbed her arms and pushed her back to gaze at her face, and then her lips were coming to meet his. It was the first kiss for either of them, a holy one as full of purity as desire. Dusty broke it off. "Missy," he whispered, "ya don't know how bad I've been a'wantin' to see ya.

"Dusty," she answered through her tears. "I've hardly been able to eat since you left. I can't believe you've come back."

"You gotta get back ta the house before they come a'lookin' fer ya," he said. "How do ya think folks here will feel 'bout me...about us, I mean?"

"I haven't heard your name mentioned here since you left," she whispered. "I don't think they actually hate you, but no one around here would be very happy about me associating with a Gentile. They'll probably try to run you off. Why don't you wait for me in the barn, and I'll slip back out here to talk in a little while, after everyone's asleep."

"No! It ain't right fer me ta be sneaking around Mr. Johnson's place. He could easily turn it into a legitimate complaint against me. I'm camped just around the edge of the canyon down there. I'll be watching fer ya if you can think of an excuse ta come down that way. Otherwise, leave a note in those trees where ya met me when I left here, and I'll pick it up after dark."

After another reassuring hug, he was slipping back into the trees behind the barn, feeling ten feet tall. Missy picked up her milk pail and walked back to the house, scarcely feeling the ground beneath her.

Chapter 13

The next morning Nina mentioned that they needed to get a steer butchered for more fresh meat. Seeing her chance, Missy replied that it sure would be nice to have one last batch of fresh fish before the river froze over. Nina fell for it and sent her down to the canyon to catch some trout.

Dusty winced as he watched Missy limping down the trail from his vantage point behind some rocks on the canyon wall. When she turned the corner behind the wall he scrambled down to meet her. Their second kiss was just as wonderful as the first, maybe better. When they backed off, she told him she had to catch some fish and get home in a reasonable time.

“Great,” he answered, grabbing her hand. They walked slowly to his campsite where he got his line and hooks from his saddle bags. When they got to the river bank, they took off their shoes and socks and waded into the shallow water.

“Does it hurt ya ta walk?” he finally got up the courage to ask.

“Not a bit,” she smiled back at his concern. “I’ll tell you all about it sometime, but it doesn’t hurt a bit.”

The two of them caught about a dozen trout in about an hour and a half. Then she brought out a couple of bread and jelly sandwiches for lunch while he scaled and filleted the fish.

Dusty never took his eyes off Missy while they ate. Every feature of her profile intrigued him. She was perfect as far as he was concerned.

“That bread was great, Missy,” he told her. “Huntin’ Bear said ya’d make a great squaw,” he continued, rubbing his stomach in a perfect pantomime of the Indian.

“You’ve met him?” she asked.

“He calls me his brother,” Dusty answered.

“You’re lucky,” she replied. “He feels that the whites forced his tribe into the canyon lands, and now they want that too. I don’t blame him for being bitter. The only reason he tolerates us here is because of Bashful Doe. She and I used to meet each other

picking berries, and we became best friends. She taught me a bit of the Paiute language, and I taught her enough English that she came up with 'Strutting Cock' for Mr. Blake all by herself. She taught me how the Indians fish, and I taught her how to bake light bread. I wonder how she's doing?"

"She was fine three days ago. She treated me well." Dusty said. "And Huntin' Bear brought me here ta see ya. He said he'd tell the tribe that you was my woman now."

"Huh," she sniffed. "Isn't that my decision?" But by now he already knew what she had decided.

"Missy?" he asked, "Have you been readin' the Bible?"

"Some," she said a bit evasively. "Why?"

"Because if ya'd read it ya'd see how inconsistent this Mormon myth is with the Word of God."

"How can I be sure, Dusty?" she pled. "I'm afraid to buck it. If Joseph Smith really got those revelations from God, we'll be damned if we reject it"

"Honey," he argued earnestly, "the Bible teaches holiness. Joseph Smith's religion was nothing but an excuse fer him ta sin. Didn't ya tell me he had over thirty wives? That's downright sinful! I want you, Missy," he continued, turning bright red, "more'n anything I've ever wanted. But I want ya in holy matrimony. Just the two of us walkin' together with God, n' enjoying each other the way He intended it."

"That part I agree with," she replied. "I'm not sharing you with anyone else."

"How can ya believe part of it n' reject the rest of it? Smith was either a prophet of God or a blatant liar. Un' the unholy way he used his new religion ta get all those women pretty well proves which. It's that simple!"

"Oh, Dusty, be careful! Don't blaspheme!" She pled, looking around as if she half expected instant judgment on the spot.

"Honey," he said as she buried her head in his chest. "Read yer Bible! That's how I found my personal relationship with God."

"You mean you think you have some special relationship with God that no one else has?" she asked angrily as she pushed back from him.

"No," he answered calmly. "Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are the ones that claimed a special relationship with God. The personal relationship that I have with God is open ta everyone. It's based on bein' born again by admittin' that we ar' personally hell-

deserving sinners, repentin' of ar' sins, n' acceptin' the death of Christ on the cross as the payment fer 'em. If the wages of sin is death, then Christ died fer ar' sins so we could live."

"You call others sinners when you drink coffee and the like?" she asked heatedly.

"Missy, folks can't just decide that coffee is sinful n' polygamy ain't. Cap Bishop told me that the Mormons seem ta think right n' wrong are just whatever God happens ta choose at the moment. He said that Mormon men hope ta be gods of their own planets someday. Then they'll git ta decide what's right n' wrong there. But right n' wrong ain't like that. Even God can't change 'em. He couldn't just overlook ar' sins 'er He wouldn't be holy ennymore. That's why He had ta send His Son ta die fer 'em in order ta save us."

"Let me think, Dusty," she replied in a calmer voice. "I want to believe you, but I'm afraid. What if you are wrong?"

"Don't believe me, Honey, believe the Bible. Ya just gotta start readin' it regular-like."

"I will, Dusty, if you'll try reading some Mormon writings."

"It's a deal!" Dusty replied.

Suddenly she noticed the sky and sucked in her breath. "Whoops, I'd better get back and bake that bread."

"Missy," he said solemnly. "We can't keep a'hidin' like this. I've got a job waitin' fer me in Kanab, working fer a government survey team. I'll get back whenever I can. Please study the Bible while I'm gone. Write me if you kin, n' get word ta Huntin' Bear if ya really need me. We'd better say goodbye now so's you kin get back."

A tearful hug, and a passionate kiss, and each turned to go.

"If he only knew how much I need him," she murmured as she trudged home with the fish.

"If she only knew how bad I want 'er," he muttered to Buster.

Chapter 14

Dusty skirted Junction wide enough to keep out of sight in the afternoon sun. He headed west along the rut that followed the Fremont River. It was a rough but tolerable ride on horseback, and he could imagine that it would have been a downright difficult trip with

a team. Alone with his rested horse, he sorted out his emotions. The one thing he knew was that he wanted Missy terribly.

He made good time, passing a couple of homesteads on either side of the river. No one was visible at either place and Dusty passed them by without stopping. He covered nearly twenty miles before turning up a small creek that flowed into the Fremont, where he found a secluded campsite in a cut that was hidden by a clump of small trees. There was graze for Buster and enough fresh water for a bath before dark. There was enough jerky in his saddlebags for about two meals.

The next morning he forced himself to read a little, and finally put his Bible down and fell on his knees to pour his bursting heart out to God. His prayer was for Missy, her safety, and that somehow she would find her way out of this cult that held her in such fear. Comforted, he mounted up and rode back to the Fremont, where he easily killed a fairly large buck. He field dressed it on the spot, tied the 150 pound carcass on Buster, and led him back to his campsite. This late in October it was cool enough that he could butcher it properly and save some of the choice portions for steaks. He jerked about twenty-five pounds and smoked the meat the rest of the day and throughout the night. The dried graze in the area still had some heads on it, and provided excellent nourishment for Buster. The night was cold enough that he slept close to the fire, confident that there would be few marauding Indians out this time of the year.

The next day was brisk and beautiful. Dusty struck out for the road that ran south along the Mormon corridor that stretched along the mountains from Salt Lake City all the way to Kanab. He rode steadily without stressing his horse, camping early in defensible areas that were sheltered from the weather, and allowing Buster plenty of rest and grazing time. Twice he was given evening meals and a berth in the barn of some plucky Mormon settlers, neither of whom appeared to have more than one wife. They impressed him as hard working, hospitable family men that were relatively free from the real doctrines and practices of the Latter Day Saints.

It was nearly November when Dusty finally hit the established road at Marysvale. The town was a small but enterprising community, boasting both a hotel and a livery stable that served the steady traffic between the LDS Headquarters at Salt Lake City and their southern Utah settlements. He left Buster at the livery barn, where he would get his first real hay and oats in several months, and carried his saddlebags to the hotel, where he booked an upstairs room.

The cowboy's next order of business was at the general store, where he purchased a new outfit from the skin out, including boots. Then he headed for the hotel's common bath at the end of the hall, where he enjoyed a long hot soak, removing the trail grime with a large bar of lye soap.

After shaving, Dusty donned his new clothes, strapped his gun on, and strode out to find a meal. He was impressed that the Mormon community did not have the saloons and

brothels of the “Gentile” cow towns, and for the first time he began to see why Missy might be afraid to renounce the religion. He ate a steak and potato dinner at a quiet restaurant and retired for the night.

The traveler had bacon and eggs for breakfast at the restaurant, before stocking up on bacon, flour, salt, and ammunition at the general store. It griped him that there was no coffee to be had in the whole community. He found Buster as fit as a fiddle, and rode south from town around nine o’clock in the morning. The road was good and dry this time of the year, and Buster had no trouble making well over thirty miles that day, and a bit past Panguitch the next. He spent the fourth night at Mount Carmel and arrived at Kanab late in the afternoon of the fifth, on the second day of November. He purchased a copy of the Book of Mormon in keeping with his promise to Missy, before putting up for the night at the hotel. He found Major Powell just down the hall from his room preparing to leave the next day to bring his wife and their three month old baby back from Salt Lake City. The major was overjoyed to find that Dusty had come to work for the survey team. They had congenial dinner together at a local restaurant.

That evening Jacob Hamblin, the famous Utah Indian fighter and statesman, arrived in town with some prospectors and a few friendly Navajos from Arizona. The survey crew had ferried the Hamblin party over the Colorado at the mouth of the Paria while they were waiting for an overdue supply train from Kanab. Hamblin’s crew had not seen the supply train along the path, even though it had left Kanab nine days before. Everyone was concerned that the group, guided by an older resident of Kanab named Magnum, must have met with foul play.

The next morning Hamelin sent part of his party back to the survey crew at the mouth of Paria with fifty pounds of flour and some butter from Powell, while the Major dispatched Dusty to find out what had happened to the missing supply train. He was to direct the survey crew to move from the Paria to House Rock Springs, which was closer to Kanab, when he met them at El Vado.

It didn’t take Dusty long to realize that Magnum didn’t know where he was going. He trailed the supply train out into the desert, where they seemed to have meandered aimlessly in the general direction of El Vado. They were obviously lost, and had doubled back frequently. Worse than that, they had not found much water. On the third day he found a dying burro that they had abandoned, and had to shoot it because it was too far gone to survive. Finally, he found where other boot tracks joined theirs. After studying the tracks, he figured out that they had received help, probably from part of the Survey team itself that had set out to find them. He followed their footsteps and found them recovering from their ordeal at the survey camp on the Paria that evening. He reported Powell’s instructions to move on to Professor Thompson.

Dusty was glad to be reunited with the survey team. Although he had only spent a couple of days with them at the mouth of the Dirty Devil, he had never felt so at home with any other group of men. Even though most of them were college graduates, they

seemed to recognize his natural intelligence, and accepted him as one of themselves. He was sorry to find that Andy's knees had swollen so bad he could hardly walk, Stewart was so sick he could barely stand up, and Jones was on crutches from a recurring bone infection due to an old Civil War leg injury. Hamblin's Mormon sidekicks kindly volunteered their horses to take the invalids back to Kanab with the Professor.

Chapter 15

The Professor started back on the trail towards Kanab with the bedraggled invalids at noon the next day. Dellenbaugh and Dusty went back to the spot where the missing supply train had been found to recover Riley's canteen, which had inadvertently been left there. They returned to the camp at the mouth of the Paria to find the rest of the party out of breath from chasing a small steer that the supply train had brought with them for beef. Dusty and Buster roped the animal in moments, and the party broke camp and caught up with the slower traveling sick men along the Vermillion Cliffs of the Paria canyon before nightfall.

The party intended to camp at a spring called Jacob's Pools the next evening, but some of the disabled hurt so badly they just couldn't move fast enough to make it. The sky was spitting snow at dusk, and they finally stopped at dark for the invalids' sakes. They obtained enough muddy water for a scant cup of coffee apiece by digging in a moist spot, but were unable to water the animals that evening. The temperature dropped to eleven degrees and there wasn't enough wood lying around to make a decent fire, so they spent a miserable night there. The next morning they found they were only two miles from Jacob's Pools, where they would have been much more comfortable.

The following night was spent under two large slabs of rock that had fallen together in such a way as to make a rude sort of open-ended chalet. Some previous traveler had scratched "Rock House Hotel" on the wall, so they named the place "House Rock" on their official map. They butchered the steer the next morning, leaving the offal in a nearby gulch. They smoked the meat all day and throughout the next night, and found that wolves had disposed of the offal during the night.

Prof, as Professor Thompson was called, headed across the Kaibab for Kanab with Stewart and Jones the next morning, leaving Cap, Dellenbaugh, Clem, Andy, and Dusty at House Rock. They pitched a heavy tent to sleep in and rolled a few good sized rocks around the fire to sit on and made themselves at home. They explored the area thoroughly, finding many ancient and more modern Indian relics, while awaiting further orders from Kanab.

Fred Dellenbaugh was actually a couple of years younger than Dusty, but Dusty admired his intelligence and pluck. He had never so much as slept outside before he joined the expedition, but he was game to try anything. They became close friends, and Dusty

taught him much about tracking and trail savvy. On the other hand, Dellenbaugh saw that Dusty was quick at mental math, and introduced him to the basic concepts of algebra. "As long as you do the same thing to everything on both sides of the equation, they stay equal," Dellenbaugh told him. "So you just have to do whatever's needed to get your unknown by itself on one side." During the time they spent at House Rock, Dusty learned how to work simple algebraic equations with a real understanding of what he was doing.

Wolves were abundant and brash, stealing any meat or leather goods left within their reach. At times they had to drive them back with stones. Dusty helped Cap Bishop rig up a six shooter trap that would go off whenever a baited string was tugged. Cap collected quite a few wolf pelts with it, but one night the wolves even got to those, and mangled them all.

Prof returned with supplies and mail a week later. The area was full of dry Pinyon Pine seeds, which burned like candles, so they were able to read at night. Dusty had a short letter from Missy that Hunting Bear had posted for her. It assured him that she was reading her Bible, and that it was growing more and more on her. This stimulated Dusty to keep his end of the bargain by applying himself to the Book of Mormon. As far as he was concerned, it seemed full of internal conflicts and sometimes didn't even seem very coherent. He hated it, but he forced himself to stay with it for Missy's sake. The rest of the group read and reread the newspapers and magazines that Prof had brought.

Cap told Dusty more of the history and claims of Joseph Smith, which confirmed Dusty's suspicion that he had been less than reputable. Dusty would have liked to learn more, but Cap was beginning to develop nervous complications from an old gunshot wound, and confided in Dusty that he was going to have to abandon the survey project. Dusty also had to talk Clem out of leaving due to a bad case of homesickness.

Major Powell finally got back from Salt Lake City with his wife and child and the professor's wife, who was Powell's sister. They set up camp just outside Kanab, and sent for the Rock House group to come and help plan the winter's activities. The whole group had become totally bored, and were more than ready to leave immediately.

Chapter 16

The geological survey camp was located about three miles east of Kanab. Three large tents were set up, one for the Powell family, one for the Thompsons, and one for the rest of the men. The wolves were just as bad as they had been at House Rock, but never became aggressive towards the people. Dusty worried that they would get Mrs. Thompson's short-legged Dandy Dinmont Terrier, but they never did. Dellenbaugh fired Riley's shotgun at a brazen one that had invaded the cooking area one night, but only managed to perforate a bunch of tin soup plates in the mess kit.

By this time Andy had recovered his health. Prof. and Mrs. Thompson took Cap, Clem, Andy, and Jones south with a couple wagon loads of supplies to set up a camp from which the party would establish a reference line for surveying the area. Jacob Hamblin had negotiated a fairly stable peace with the Navajos the previous year. Later that year, at Brigham Young's suggestion, Powell had hired Hamblin to introduce him to the Kaibab Navajo chiefs in preparation for the Expedition. The Navajos had agreed not to harass the group, so the Indians in the area did not seem to be much of a threat.

Dusty and Dellenbaugh rode into Kanab on Sunday afternoon, and were much impressed with the planning and organization of the settlement. It had been started and abandoned because of Indian hostilities several times since 1858. Although the present settlement was only a year going, fruit and shade trees were already planted in strategic places for future commodity and beauty. Domestic livestock were well cared for, and eggs and dairy products were already easily available. They received mail from Salt Lake City twice a week, and there was even a telegraph office in town.

"These folks are improving the land, instead of fleecing it like everyone else does," Dellenbaugh remarked admiringly.

"They sure are good organizers," Dusty admitted, "un' it shows."

By the time Dusty had finished the Book of Mormon, he was so sick of it that he secretly burned his copy. Still, it had done him a lot of good to read it. He appreciated the significance of the Scriptural doctrines like the Trinity, the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the rapture more clearly now that he had seen them perverted. When he found that Kanab had regular mail service, he posted a letter to share what he had found with Missy:

Dear Missy,

You don't know how much I miss you. I never kissed anyone before, but it must be addicting. I'd give anything for another one right now.

When I see how happy the major and his wife are when they're together, I can hardly stand being away from you. And when I hold their baby, I just plain get jealous.

Honey, I've read the whole Book of Mormon, and it doesn't do anything like the Bible does for me. What amazed me was that it condemns the plural marriages of the Old Testament:

"Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord." (Jacob 2:24)

And three verses down, it forbids plural marriages:

"Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none." (Jacob 2:27)

If the book Joseph Smith claimed to have gotten from God contradicts his later claims, none of his claims should be considered reliable.

Please write to me in care of Major John Wesley Powell at Kanab. I'll be waiting anxiously to hear from you.

Emma Powell, the major's wife, was a graduate of Wheaton College, which was a reputable Christian school near Chicago. Her degree was in Biology, and she could hardly wait for spring to come so she could start studying the botany of the region.

Dusty's gentle manners caused Mrs. Powell to suspect that he was a born-again Christian, and she wasted no time in finding out where he stood.

"Dusty," she asked point blank, "are you a Christian?"

"Yes Ma'am," he replied. "I love the Lord, even if it doesn't show very well."

"It shows," she assured him. "I could tell right away by the way you talked."

"Thank you, Ma'am," he answered. "Sometimes I wonder."

Mrs. Powell was about fifteen years older than Dusty. Before long she was assuming a sort of big sister role to him that was the closest thing to a mother that he had known in years. When she teased him about being single, he confided everything about Missy to her. She was more than worthy of his confidence, and promised to pray for his

sweetheart every day. She also advised him not to let the embers of Missy's love grow too cool by too long an absence.

The Major's wife was amazed at how well versed this uneducated cowpoke was in the Scriptures. In one of their spiritual conversations Dusty couldn't remember where he had run across something in the Bible. She looked it up for him in her Cruden's Concordance. This opened a whole new spiritual arena for him, especially when she showed him how he could trace a word or theme through the Scriptures with it. When they saw how much he borrowed their concordance, the Major and his wife ordered Dusty a small one that would fit in his saddlebags.

The Major was supposed to pick up the payroll checks for the group in Salt Lake City right after New Year's. Emma was afraid folks might think he was carrying cash, and would consider the one-armed man easy prey. She talked him in to sending Dusty, who was supposed to be good with a gun. Of course her secondary motive was to give Dusty a chance to see Missy.

Before he left, she called Dusty to their tent and asked him to read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 aloud to her. She expressed her hope and belief that Missy would see the error of the religion she was struggling with, but warned Dusty of the consequences of marrying someone who was not a Christian. "You could never truly be one with someone who does not share your love for Christ," she told him. At first, he was a bit miffed with her meddling, but as he thought about it, he had to admit to himself that she was right. He anguished over it all the way to Salt Lake City, but finally resolved not to marry Missy if she did not come around.

Chapter 17

Dusty left for Salt Lake City the day after Christmas. Since he was on Government business, he could leave Buster at livery stables, where he would be well fed and cared for every night and morning. They made good time because Dusty ate his morning and evening meals at restaurants, so he didn't have to stop so often to prepare much food along the way. He found he was received hospitably everywhere as long as he did not advertise the fact that he was not a Mormon.

The scout picked up a sealed leather case of checks at Fort Douglas, in Salt Lake City, and placed them at the bottom of his saddle bags. In the morning he headed back down the road that went through Provo towards Marysvale, where he intended to detour over to Junction to see Missy.

The cowboy was anxious to get to Missy, and got started off right at dawn on his second morning out of Salt Lake City. It didn't take the trail-wise cowpoke long to suspect that the mounted traveler behind him was up to no good. When he slowed down, so did the

rider; and when he sped up the rider kept up. Dusty began searching the terrain ahead for likely spots for a hold up to take place. After about five miles, just as the trail entered a wooded area, the rider drew right up behind him, and Dusty drew his Colt, holding it under the flap of his half-buttoned sheepskin jacket.

Suddenly another rider rode out of the trees and stopped his horse directly in front of Dusty. "Hold it," the man commanded, drawing his Colt as Dusty reined Buster in.

"Let's have a look in those bags," the other man said as he rode half way up beside Buster and leaned over to unbuckle the saddle bag on that side.

"Sorry, guys, it's all in checks," Dusty replied, sitting stock still in his saddle, still holding his Colt hidden inside the flap of his coat.

"It had better not be," the bandit replied threateningly as he dug deeper into the saddle bag.

Dusty waited until the man's hand was deep in the bag before spurring Buster hard into the horse that was trying to block his way. Buster was well fed and in perfect shape, and literally bowled the other horse over. The bandit was jerked so hard that his shot went wildly into the trees, and his horse landed so hard on his leg that he lost the gun entirely. Buster's lunge had jerked the man whose arm was in his saddle bag off his horse, nearly twisting the arm out of its socket. Now Dusty sat above the injured men, gun drawn and ready, as they cursed each other for the muddled robbery.

"No need to blame each other," Dusty cut in. "Yer both to blame for anything so amateurish as that." After searching both men, he tied their hands behind their backs and followed them with his gun drawn and ready all the way to Provo, where he turned them over to the Mormon authorities for prosecution. Dusty thanked the Lord that he had not had to shoot someone in the incident.

It was evening by the time Dusty had given sworn statements to the authorities, so he found the livery at Provo and paid for Buster's care. After rubbing the horse down, he booked a room at the hotel and moseyed over to the restaurant that the stable hands had recommended. While eating his dinner, he saw Thomas Blake across the room. Although he drew his hat down and averted his gaze, it wasn't long until he could see the glint of recognition in the Mormon official's eyes. Presently, the man arose and hurried out of the building.

Hoping to avoid any trouble, Dusty waited a couple of minutes before slipping out the door and walking briskly to the hotel. He quickly gathered his things into his saddlebags, and hurried over to the corral where Buster was penned. Whistling for the horse, he saddled up quickly and rode south to the edge of town on a side street. Then, cutting back to the main road, he galloped Buster until he was blowing a bit before slowing to a more maintainable speed.

The man and his horse turned off the road about fifteen miles south of Provo, and picked a strategic campsite well hidden in the cut of a small stream. Dusty tied Buster in the trees, and spread his blankets back in the trees away from his fire. He snacked on bacon and coffee, and intentionally left his camp fire smoldering to decoy any followers.

Sure enough, he heard a couple of riders at the campsite about midnight.

“He’s been here, but must have heard us coming,” one voice commented.

Dusty strapped on his Colt and slipped to the edge of the trees, where he could see two mounted riders. One dismounted and looked carefully at the tracks he had left around the fire. “It’s him, all right,” he affirmed. “Can’t be far. We can wait here and arrest ‘im in the morning.”

“OK with me. Let’s get some sleep,” the other rejoined as he dismounted.

“Why don’t ya just drop yer guns real easy-like and tell me why we’re a’lookin’ fer ‘em?” Dusty called out authoritatively as he stepped into the open with his gun drawn. The riders’ hands came up, and then dropped slowly to unbuckle their gun belts very carefully, letting the holstered guns fall to the ground.

“Cause you threatened one of our leaders with a gun, that’s why.”

“Did he tell ya why?” Dusty asked.

“Don’t matter,” the other answered. “He’s the law around here”.

“Then your law goes around harassin’ crippled women?” Dusty asked, disgust on the edge of his voice.

“He’s got special privileges from God,” the first answered, almost apologetically.

“You ortta be wonderin’ what’s wrong with a religion that gives immoral privileges to its leaders,” Dusty retorted. “You tell that reprobate that I’m carryin’ a government payroll, n’ any interference from him will be investigated by the army. They won’t be too impressed with his status in the church, neither. I’ll be reportin’ this n’ that hold-up attempt ta the officer in charge of the Army post in Spanish Fork tomorry. Meanwhile, I’ll shoot any man fool enough ta follow me, n’ make no mistake, I’m dead accurate.”

“You got that?” he demanded at their silence.

“We got it,” one of the men answered more softly. “But don’t think you can buck the church in Utah. They’ll gitcha, son,” he added genuinely.

"Thanks," Dusty replied. "I don't aim ta stay here long after I git what I'm here fer, but I'm not leavin' till I've got it."

"Good luck," the other added, more skeptically than angrily.

"I want you guys ta walk up the creek a bit so's ta give me some movin' room," Dusty commanded. "When I'm gone ya's kin come back and get yer horses n' guns. Un' please don't force me ta shoot ya further down the road, cause I won't be handin' out enny more peace offerin's." When the riders were sufficiently distanced from their guns, Dusty slipped back to Buster, and rode the few miles to the military outpost at Spanish Fork by the light of the moon.

In the morning, he reported the robbery attempt to the officer in charge, who assured him that he would send a detail to Provo to pick up the robbers. Dusty had to leave sworn affidavits here too.

When he was done, he told the officer about the attempted arrest during the night. The officer told him that most of the Mormon leadership was reasonable enough, but problems with this particular individual were not unusual. "He'll let you alone now that he knows you're on government business," he said, "but he'll get you blackballed in every Mormon establishment from here to the Arizona border, and there's nothing anyone can do to stop that."

When Dusty rode out, he found that the captain knew what he was talking about. When he applied for services down the road, folks at restaurants and hotels replied that they only served worthy Mormons and their families. It didn't take long to figure out that his description as an undesirable had been telegraphed all along the road, and Dusty found himself camping out in the dead of winter. There were, however, enough non-Mormon and occasional cooperative "So-what" Mormon establishments to keep him in supplies.

Disgusted with the treatment he got at Manti, Dusty stocked up for the trail at a Mormon outfitter's, who sold him all he wanted at the back door after dark. "What are they sayin' against me?" He asked the merchant.

"Just that you are a blasphemmer of the Prophet," the man replied. "Same as they say of anyone they have a disagreement with."

"Thanks," Dusty replied. "I guess I'm guilty as charged, n' totally unrepentant, too."

"Yer not quite as alone as it may seem out here," the man replied.

After stocking up, Dusty camped a few miles south of Manti. The next morning he struck out across country through the mountains on an old established Indian trail that the merchant had described to him. It was rough going, with snowy altitudes that sometimes reached about two miles above sea level. Still, he preferred it to the

resentment he felt along the Mormon corridor. It also saved him a couple days travel over the Marysvale route.

The trail-worn traveler reached the familiar trail along the Fremont River three hard days out of Manti. He figured he was still about three full days from Junction when he made camp that night, if Buster held up well.

Chapter 18

The three days to Junction seemed to take forever. He could hardly wait to get Missy in his arms, and yet he had growing fears that she might not receive him, considering how he felt about Mormonism. It was well past dusk when he circled around Junction to his old campsite just inside the canyon east of town. He wasted no time in securing Buster to a tree, and slipping through the trees along the river to the dairy barn behind the Johnson house. He had the milking done before Missy showed up for her chores. She puzzled over the full bucket of milk for a moment before calling Dusty's name in a loud whisper as she turned towards the hay loft.

"Yes?" Dusty answered, stepping up to embrace her from behind. "How'd ya' know it was me?"

"You're the only one that's ever done the milking for me," she giggled, squirming around to face him. And then they were lost in a kiss that said everything that was pent up in their hearts. This time neither broke it off until they needed a breath.

"Dusty," she said, snuggling into his arms. "I miss you so much."

"I just can't stand bein' away from you either, Honey," he answered. "Did ya git my letter?"

"No, did you really write me?"

"Sure did," he replied. "Told ya what I read in the book of Mormon."

"Oh," she said, "guess what I found there."

"What?"

"No one should have more than one wife. It's in black and white in the book of Jacob."

"That's what I sent ya," he said.

"Dusty," she said, burying her face in his chest, "I know it isn't true. My mom warned me not to buy it long before she died, but it scares me so much when I wonder if it's just my stubbornness that rejects it. I used to think I was pretty good 'cause I never did anything extra bad, but since I've been reading the Bible I realize that I'm not very good--I don't deserve you." She was crying now.

He stroked her hair, letting her cry.

"Missy," he said as her sobs subsided. "That's what bein' a Christian is all about. We see that we are really hell-deservin' sinners, just like God says we ar'. And then we find that Christ bore ar' sins as His own on the cross. He died fer 'em so we wouldn't hafta die, n' as we receive this, we're born again as children of God."

"That's beautiful," she smiled up through her tears. "I'll stand on it."

"Missy, will you marry me?" he asked breathlessly.

"Of course, Dusty. I've never wanted anyone else."

He pulled her into another kiss, one that he felt really belonged to him, and she gave it willingly.

"How kin we get married out here?" Dusty finally asked?

"You're not getting married!" a voice cut in from the barn door as Mr. Johnson came charging in.

"Missy, you get that milk in the house right now!" he commanded. Then turning to Dusty he spat out, "I figured you'd be sneaking in here some time when I saw that letter you sent her. She's not available for a Gentile."

"You stay right here, Missy," Dusty countered. "We are gettin' married, Mr. Johnson."

"She's my daughter, and the church won't let her get married without my permission," he shouted.

"I'm not your daughter, Mr. Johnson. You married my mom without telling her you had other wives, and she always warned me not to have anything to do with your religion. I'm a born again Christian now, and I'll never join your church."

"Your mother was a stubborn Gentile that never converted," he shouted back, "But I've raised you a good Mormon and you're going to obey me."

"You've always treated me more like a slave than a daughter, Mr. Johnson. I've slaved in your kitchen and done everything your wives dumped on me ever since I was able. I've more than earned my keep here, and I don't owe you anything."

"Mr. Johnson," Dusty interrupted as his hand dropped dangerously close to his gun. "Missy and I are leavin' here tonight."

"And you call us immoral!" he answered sarcastically.

"We'll behave until we kin git married," He said, reddening.

"Dusty, I can't leave yet," Missy interrupted. "I have a half-sister three years younger than me upstairs who is paralyzed from her waist down. She can't leave the house, and I'm the only one that loves her enough to care for her. She's dying now, and I can't leave her to die alone."

"I'll stay as long as Mary lives, Mr. Johnson, but I am marrying Dusty when the time comes."

"Go on in, Honey," Dusty replied. "I'll talk ta Mr. Johnson."

"There's nothing to discuss," Mr. Johnson stated as he turned back towards the door.

"Sir," Dusty said in a voice that made him turn back. "Missy's twenty-one now, and kin legally make 'er own decisions. Ya may have put one over on her mother, but yer not putting anything over on her. If Missy stays here we'll be seeing each other openly whenever we choose. You stole one letter. The next one had better git through. Un' iffing anything happens ta her you'll be answerin' ta me."

"You talk big while I'm unarmed, young man," the salty settler replied. "You'll sing a different tune when I've got an equalizer on. And rest assured, the church will never let you marry one of its members."

"May I remind ya that Missy never joined enny church," Dusty stated, rather than asked.

Johnson grunted something under his breath as both men turned away, and Dusty returned to his campsite in the dark.

Chapter 19

While Dusty was cooking his dinner that night, Hunting Bear stepped quietly into the firelight. Dusty's hand was already drawing his Colt when he recognized him.

"Huntin' Bear," he called out joyfully as he dropped his forty-five back into its holster.

"My Brother," Hunting Bear laughed. "You fast. I speak first next time."

"Sorry, Huntin' Bear," he said as they gripped each other. "Are you well?"

"I am well. Bashful Doe greets Missy."

"Missy agreed ta bein' my woman tonight, Huntin' Bear."

"She never leave sister," Hunting Bear stated. "Never."

"She says 'er sister is dyin'," Dusty replied. "I will wait fer 'er."

"Good!" Hunting Bear grunted. "Good woman."

As they sat around the camp fire Dusty introduced Hunting Bear to coffee. He made a wry face, but drank the whole cup. He even took a second when Dusty offered it, but the cowboy found where he had poured it out behind the bolder he was sitting on after he left.

"What white men do at Kanab?" Hunting Bear asked.

"They're measurin' the land," Dusty replied. "They'll ask the big chiefs at Washington ta let the Indians keep their land."

"One Arm OK?" Hunting Bear queried.

"Yes, they're all OK."

"We will keep peace," Hunting Bear declared.

"Thank you," Dusty answered. "I will tell One Arm," and they were soon asleep in their blankets not too far from the fire.

The next morning Dusty asked Hunting Bear to wait while he visited Missy.

"I will watch," Hunting Bear promised, taking up a niche in the canyon wall that offered a good view of the house.

Dusty walked in plain sight right up to the barn where Missy should be milking. She was there, waiting for him with another delicious hug and kiss.

"Ennything more happen last night? he asked."

"Nobody's spoken to me," she replied. "Not even a word."

"What are ya goin' ta do?"

"I'm going to keep up all the chores I've always done, just like nothing ever happened," she said. "It'll be rough for a while, but it will blow over until you show up again."

"I gotta git back ta Kanab as soon as possible," he told her. "I've got the survey's payroll in my saddle bags. Write me often, and let me know iffing yer receivin' my letters."

"Why don't you get Hunting Bear to tell you how to cut across the desert?" she suggested.

"Good idea" he replied. "He's watching from the canyon wall right now. Bashful Doe sends her greetin's"

"Dusty," she said. "My little sister is nothing but skin and bones now. She's so weak she can hardly roll over She can't last much longer. I'll get word to you when she's gone."

'You're doin' right," he assured her. "I'll wait as long as necessary."

Another kiss, and each forced themselves to turn back to their own duties.

Hunting Bear assured Dusty that the desert could be crossed if one knew the way, but said he was unable to lead Dusty across at the moment. The ceremony where he would replace his aging father as official chief was coming up in a few days, and he would be tied up for some time. Dusty understood.

"I will be brother to the chief," he announced.

"Yes, my Brother," Hunting Bear agreed.

So Hunting Bear went back into the desert while Dusty returned to Kanab along his previous route, avoiding any more contact with the Mormons than was absolutely necessary.

It was almost February when Dusty got back to the main survey camp near Kanab. Everyone was happy to see him, especially since he had the payroll. Beaman, the expedition's photographer, had decided to leave the expedition for good, and the Major could settle up with him now that the money was here.

Mrs. Powell could hardly wait to find out how things went with Missy. She had really sympathized with the young woman's struggle to get free of her fear of Mormonism, and tears welled up in her eyes when Dusty told her that Missy was definitely born again now. She let out a squeal of delight when he told her they were engaged to be married.

“She’s a good woman to care for her sister that way, Dusty,” she exclaimed.

“I’m right proud of ’er, ma’am,” Dusty replied.

Chapter 20

By the time Dusty got back to the camp at Kanab, the winter work was in full swing. Initial reference points on highly visible hilltops had already been established and flagged for use in mapping the area. When Dusty asked what purpose they served, Dellenbaugh nailed some small boards from an old packing crate together to show him the difference in the stability of three and four sided figures. The angles of the rectangular figure could be distorted so that opposite corners moved closer together or further apart, but the angles of a triangular figure were stable, and could not be distorted to change the distances between the corners. “We only need the length of one side of a triangle, and we can calculate the lengths of the other sides by measuring any other two angles of the triangle,” he explained. Dusty was intrigued with the simplicity of the principle of triangulation, and was able to work with a real understanding of why they were doing what they were doing.

The major and Mrs. Powell left for Salt Lake City on the first day of February, planning to return to Washington D.C. to get more funding from Congress. This left Prof. Thompson in charge of the expedition. He had been superintendent of the Bloomington, Illinois school system, and was a great organizer.

Six days after the major left, Clem and Bonnemort, the new photographer got back from trying to photograph the Kanab Canyon. They had lost his camera and much of his equipment when their pack mule smashed it in a fall. They were totally discouraged at not getting any photos at all. The prospector who had accompanied them had been educated at the University of Michigan, but came west to seek his fortune in gold. He didn’t find it in the Kanab Canyon.

On February sixteenth, the group abandoned the central camp at Kanab, breaking into small parties assigned to specific tasks. A week later Prof. and Mrs. Thompson, Dellenbaugh, Jones, Dodds, and Dusty started out to map the Kiabab Plateau, north of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Their pack train of supplies followed a wagon road south of Kanab most of the first day, finally breaking away into the mountains that skirted the desert. Their Mormon guide from Kanab showed them a nice campsite beside a refreshing spring, where they spent the first night.

The following day a fierce snow storm stopped them at the site of an abandoned saw mill, where the Thompsons pitched their tent while the single men found refuge in an old log cabin with half the roof missing. They were stranded there for three days before the snow stopped. The professor climbed the mountain to an elevation of about a

thousand feet, and then climbed a 125 foot tall tree for a look at the area. He thought he could see the Grand Canyon from his vantage point. Their group's immediate problem was that the snow had covered the graze for the horses and they had to let them go to forage for themselves as best they could.

When the weather broke the group split up. The Mormon guide and his assistant went back to Kanab for more supplies. Dusty, Dellenbaugh, and Andy were sent to the southwest corner of the Plateau, while Jones and Dodds were to take the southeast corner. After considerable trouble finding the horses that had wandered off in search of grass, they went on their respective ways. At first they found themselves braving chest high snow drifts in areas that would have been hard to navigate under optimum conditions, but within hours they had come down low enough that there was plenty of graze for the horses. The grass was already beginning to turn green in the mild climate of the Kiabab.

Dusty and his companions spent two weeks triangulating the area before the whole party packed and headed up the Kanab Canyon. Its rocky walls towered 1200 feet above them on either side as they rode along the edge of the creek. One of their pack horses fell down a gully, and it took some time to extricate the animal before they could move on. On the third day they cut up Pipe Spring Wash and climbed out of the canyon. Dellenbaugh remarked that the whole area was like a giant staircase from one geologic platform to the next. As Dusty considered this in the clear night sky, he thought of it more as a staircase to heaven.

The company reached Pipe Spring the afternoon of the third day. Mr. Winsor, the Mormon proprietor, graciously put a large vacant stone house with a huge stone fireplace at the group's disposal, though Professor and Mrs. Thompson chose the privacy of their own tent over it. There was a constant stream of prospectors through the area at the time, because of inaccurate reports of nearby gold.

Winsor was building two matching homes twenty feet apart, allegedly for defense against Indians and desperados. The walls of the houses were of sandstone blocks, fully three feet thick, and the court between the houses was protected by high log walls fitted with heavy gates. Water from the spring was piped unobtrusively underground from the spring into the complex. When Winsor bragged that Brigham Young himself was a partner in the project, Dusty suspected that this was where the Mormon leader intended to make his stand if the Gentiles ever tried to murder him, as they had Joseph Smith. The survey team spent two weeks triangulating the Pipe Spring area for topographical mapping.

On March twenty-first the survey party left Pipe Spring for the Unikaret Mountains. Clem remained behind to look for the gun he had lost the previous day when his horse ran away. They found no water on the first day, but found a great sparkling pool of rain water in a large hollow in the rock the second day. They spent about a week establishing reference points at high points in the mountains. Dusty found a human skeleton

complete with a wicker basket at the bottom of a water hole. The party was stopped dead by heavy mountain snows during the second week. They did what work they could, but were finally reduced to staying in their tents reading and writing reports. They finally gave up and moved into the lower country around St. George.

On the way down, the group was engulfed in a white-out of wind and snow. Advancing cautiously on foot, they found themselves at the brink of a tall cliff. Not knowing which way to turn with any degree of safety, they scraped the ground clear of snow and ate their dinner there. Later that evening the snow cleared, and they were able to find a better campsite shielded from the weather by some trees.

The geological party spent another month surveying the area along the Virgin River from the Pine Valley Mountains to the Grand Canyon, but Dusty's heart was not in it. He had not received any news from Missy, and was beginning to feel uneasy about having left her in Junction. How he longed to hold her in his arms again! Only his deep sense of commitment kept him from leaving the group altogether. He heaved a sigh of relief when they finally returned to Kanab to put their records in order so the geologists could begin preparations to resume their voyage down the Colorado River.

Chapter 21

Dusty reluctantly consented to guide Andy and Captain Dodds to the mouth of the Paria River to check on the two boats that had been left there. They spent a day and a half at Lee's crossing, established by a Mormon zealot named John D. Lee. Rachel, one of Lee's many wives, held the group under scrutiny at rifle point until Lee was satisfied that they had come in peace. In the end, Lee was a surprisingly good host, even if it was Sister Emma, his eighteenth wife, who served the dinner. He gave the group an evangelical dissertation on Mormonism, which Dusty would have contested if he were free to do so. Andy finally slipped up and cocked a gun behind Lee's back, which was quite disconcerting to the preacher.

Dusty didn't understand Lee's touchiness until they had moved on, and Dellenbaugh told him that Lee had been implicated as a leader in the infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre. The Mormons had incited the Indians to help them murder over a hundred emigrants in cold blood to prevent the Gentile infiltration of Utah during the Mormon War era. The LDS church had cut Lee off in an effort to distance itself from the crime, but Lee maintained to his death that the LDS hierarchy had ordered the raid. He told Dellenbaugh that he had not participated in the massacre at all, but had actually tried to stop it. Lee apparently lived in constant fear of retribution from the U.S. government.

The party found the two boats in good shape, although the oars and some of their cached goods had been stolen. Having accomplished their goal, they returned to Kanab, arriving there on May fifteenth.

There was finally a letter from Missy:

Dearest Dusty,

I have written you many letters, each of which was a replacement for the one before it. There's just no way to post a letter out here without help. Hunting Bear was at the barn tonight, and offered to send this one to Marysvale with a brave that was going there to trade some pelts. He said that Bashful Doe is pregnant, and I'm jealous in a happy sort of a way. He didn't kiss me like you do, so I let him go.

My sister is somehow holding on to life, although completely bed ridden now. I doubt if she weighs seventy-five pounds. I have shared the true gospel with her, and she has lost all fear of death. I read a chapter of the Bible to her twice a day, and she says it's like a taste of heaven. She just wants to die and be with Jesus now.

I am all alone except for Mary. The rest of the community shuns me entirely, and I would fear the blood atonement if I didn't know that they need me here to care for Mary.

*I love you so much! Please come soon,
Missy*

Dusty tried to get several of the Mormon employees of the expedition to explain the blood atonement that Missy referred to, but they all denied that they had ever heard of any such thing in the Mormon religion. He went to the Mormon book store in Kanab, but they curtly refused to sell the notorious Gentile anything at all. He sent a toned-down letter from Kanab by return mail, knowing that it would be read by Mr. Johnson, whether Missy ever received it or not.

Dear Missy,

I am sending this letter by registered mail to be sure that you receive it. My work here will be finished in another month or so, and I will come by for a visit just as soon as I can get away.

I am praying for Mary and the rest of your household. I am also studying the doctrine of atonement, as it is a topic that I never gave any thought to before. Keep reading your Bible.

*With all my love,
Dusty*

Chapter 22

Dusty grew more and more uneasy about Missy over the next few days. He finally went to Professor Thompson, explaining that he needed to leave the survey and get back to Missy. The Professor proposed that Dusty accompany a small party directly across the desert towards the mouth of the Dirty Devil, where the Canyonita was cached. "You can

leave the party when you find the trail you took from the Colorado River through the Henry Mountains. If you miss that you can lay over at Junction, and then guide them down the Fremont to the mouth of the Dirty Devil. Either way, you would probably reach Junction just as soon as you would if you took the road up to Marysville and cut over to Junction. Dusty agreed to this arrangement, and Thompson paid him in advance so he could leave the party at the appropriate time without delay.

On May twenty-fifth a small contingent started across the desert for the mouth of the Dirty Devil. Tactical problems like difficulty finding water, some party members getting lost, and some forgotten arrangements delayed them at Johnson, on the Vermillion cliffs. The frustrated cowboy was really chomping at the bit by the time they finally got underway on the last day of May.

The group camped at the small settlement of Clarksville the first evening out. They hired a Paiute Indian as a guide and interpreter. The next few days were spent traversing mountainous hills, canyons, and beautiful peaceful valleys. George Adair, one of the Mormons, marked out a claim for himself in a particularly beautiful spot, aiming to come back and settle there later. They passed a grave marker labeled E.A., which stood for Elijah Averett, a victim of the Utes back in 1866. The grave had been unearthed by predators, and the ground was strewn with his bones.

On June sixth the party arrived at what the rest of the group thought was the Dirty Devil River. When Dusty heard them call it that he insisted, "I've ridden the Fremont and Dirty Devil complex from one end to the other. This is neither the Dirty Devil nor the Fremont, as it is called upstream from the Muddy River junction." After some discussion, the geologists agreed that this river flowed south of the Henry Mountains, while the Dirty Devil was north of them. They decided to label the newly discovered river the Escalante, after the early Spanish Catholic explorer. Now they understood why none of the supply trains had been able to get to the mouth of the Dirty Devil from Kanab.

The Escalante was a wild thing, enchanting and treacherous as a woman right out of the Proverbs. It ran for miles through solid grey rock canyons rising up hundreds of feet on each side of the river at an angle that could sometimes be traversed by foot. Great cracks in the rock offered footholds for some scrawny root-bound junipers, and occasional larger trees. Dusty considered this the wildest and most infatuating country he had ever seen, and he'd seen plenty. But although this was quite a discovery for the white men, Dusty realized that Hunting Bear's tribe probably frequented the area regularly.

The group was unable to cross the raging Escalante at this time of the year, and was forced to turn in a northerly direction, proceeding all the way to the Potato Valley. The Indian guide became quite uneasy in this area, and was given enough supplies to return home. At Potato Valley the group split into a contingent that would return to Kanab for supplies, and a group that would continue on to find the Canyonita at the mouth of the Dirty Devil. Dusty was to assist those continuing on towards the Canyonita.

After several days more travel, Dusty's party ran across an Indian village. On seeing them, the inhabitants fled into the trees and rocks, but after some time they were persuaded to come back to the village and smoke a peace pipe together. Eventually the Indian chief was able to communicate enough by a mixture of sign language, English, and Paiute to tell them the way to the mouth of the Dirty Devil. It was basically the same path that Dusty had followed when he came across the Henrys after his first meeting with the survey party, and was therefore judged reliable. With the acquisition of this information, Dusty was free to leave the group for good.

As he took his leave, Dusty warned the professor that they would be skirting Hunting Bear's village. He advised them to tell any Indians that he met that they were friends of Missy and Hunting Bear's brother, Dusty. Then he was off in the direction of Junction.

Chapter 23

By striking a large arc north and east, it only took Dusty a few hours to find the trail Hunting Bear had used to take him from his village to Junction. Now that the survey party was off his mind, he was gripped with a sense of urgency to get to Missy. He would never forgive himself if anything had happened to her in his absence. How he longed to hold her in his arms. He rode as fast as he could without hurting Buster, and the strawberry roan seemed to sense his urgency, hurrying along without much urging. They rode right up to the barn at dusk on the second day.

Entering the barn, Dusty found one of Mr. Johnson's secondary wives doing the milking. She gasped and sat up straight as he walked in.

"Where's Missy?" he asked anxiously.

"Gone," she answered, burying her forehead in the cow's flank and attacking her milking ferociously.

"Where?" he asked desperately. "Where'd she go?"

The thin straight lipped woman paused to stare vacantly in his direction. "Mr. Johnson took 'er away after they buried Mary."

"Which way?"

"West along the rut."

"When?"

"'Bout two weeks ago."

"Where's Mr. Johnson?" Dusty's hand drifted unconsciously down toward the butt of his gun.

"Ain't back yet."

"Sairy, where's that milk?" a querulous voice complained as the door swung open.

"Oh! It's you," Nellie spat out as she saw Dusty.

"Sairy, you git in the house. I'll handle this blasphemous Gentile."

Sarah obediently picked up the milk pail and headed for the house. When the door slammed in the distance, Nellie turned vehemently towards the cowpoke.

"If yer lookin' fer Missy, you can forgit it."

"What happened ta 'er?" Dusty asked commandingly as he regained his composure.

"She married a worthy Mormon and went ta live with 'm," she replied arrogantly.

"Who?" Dusty asked incredulously.

"Mr. Blake, the one you tried ta chase away from here," Nellie answered smugly. "And you'd better leave a'fore I tell the church that I caught ya in the barn with Sairy," she retorted triumphantly.

"I don't believe it." Dusty said, shaking his head.

"Don't make no never mind what ya believe," she replied saucily.

"Where are they now?"

"Didn't want ya ta know, so they wouldn't tell a single soul where they was a'going."

"If ya weren't a woman I'd get ta the bottom of this right now," Dusty declared through clinched teeth.

"Ain't no bottom ta it when ya buck the church," she sneered, turning and strutting back to the house.

As Dusty considered his dilemma of how to wring the truth from a bunch of women, he realized that he might have to wait for Mr. Johnson to come home. Surely he wouldn't be gone too much longer. He finally went out and brought Buster into a stall, loosening the cinch but leaving him saddled and bridled. He helped the horse to a couple of scoops of oats from the bin by the ladder to the loft, and forked him a bit of hay by the

light of the lantern that Nellie had forgotten to snuff out. Leaving the door of Buster's stall open, he doused the lantern and leaned back to get some sleep in a sitting position in the corner of the stall closest to the barn door.

About midnight he heard Mr. Johnson's team at the barn door. The settler ran the wagon in the barn, lit the lantern, and unhitched the team, tossing the tack into the wagon as Dusty supposed he would. When he stepped back towards the barn door, Dusty stepped out of the stall to face him.

"Where's Missy?" he demanded.

Johnson went for his gun, and the cowboy's right hand literally streaked for his. Dusty's shot was off before Johnson's gun was half way up, and the bullet smashed the gun right out of the settler's hand. Stepping in, Dusty grabbed the big man's throat with his left hand and shoved him against the wall. Holding him there until he turned purple, Dusty eased up as he demanded again, "Where's Missy?"

The settler drew a hoarse gulp of air and rasped out triumphantly, "You're too late, she's married to Blake."

"Not willingly, she ain't," Dusty replied, increasing the pressure until Johnson's eyes looked like they were about to pop out. "Where'd ya take 'em?"

"To Marysvale," the big Mormon grated out gleefully after a couple wheezy gulps of air. "There's no way they'll let you get near her now."

"Ya dirty snake," Dusty gritted out. "I ort'a beat ya within an inch of yer life."

Suddenly a rifle boomed behind him, and Dusty was slammed against the wall beside Johnson.

"Nice shot, Nellie," Johnson commended as Dusty struggled to remain on his feet. Waves of dizziness fought to bring him down, but he literally willed himself to keep his feet. Catching a breath, he gave a stunted whistle and Buster thundered out to him, knocking Nellie flying. With a grunt of pain, the injured man threw himself into the saddle, spurring the big roan out the door at a gallop. Feeling the saddle slip a bit, he reigned up in the trees where Missy had met him before. As he dismounted to tighten the girth, he heard Sarah's whisper.

"Mr. Dusty."

"Yes?" he grimaced.

"They won't be a'comin'. They're too scairt uv ya."

Dusty got the cinch tightened and was about to remount, but felt so weak he wondered if he could.

"Mr. Dusty, are ya hurt bad?"

"I don't know, Sairy."

"I brought ya some food." she said. "Missy's the only one that ever treated me right."

"Thanks, Sairy. Can you help me up?"

"Sure," she agreed, giving him a surprisingly hefty boost into the saddle.

"Mr. Dusty...Missy wouldn't say 'I do.' Mr. Johnson was a'holdin' her from behind when Mr. Miller said, 'Do you take this man?' n' she yelled, 'no way!' Mr. Johnston said, 'I command ya to.' Then Missy says, 'Over my dead body,' so they tied 'er up. She was all mussed up from fighting 'em when they dumped 'er in the wagon n' headed up the rut fer the main road. I don't know where they was a'goin'. God help ya find 'er a'fore it's too late." Then she handed him a small sack of food, and disappeared into the darkness.

By now Dusty's side was really beginning to hurt. He could feel the blood soaking into his shirt as he started the horse down the rut as quietly as possible, to keep from arousing suspicion against Sarah. The further away he got, the more his side hurt, but he dared not stop. Buster sensed his weakness, and more or less balanced him on his back as they went through the night. The wounded man finally fished a rawhide thong out of his saddlebags and tied his hands to the saddle horn with a slip knot to keep from falling off the faithful horse.

Chapter 24

Dusty awoke astride Buster sometime after dawn. Looking around groggily, he finally realized that Buster had brought him to the first campsite he had established the last time he had followed the rut this way. Working his hands free with his teeth, he fell off the horse. He fainted when he tried to raise himself, and woke up feeling cold an hour or so later. Buster was still right beside him. With a supreme effort, he pulled himself up with a stirrup, and got hold of the saddle horn. Steadying himself for a moment, he was finally able to fumble the buckle on his saddlebag loose, and get some matches out. Dragging his bed roll with him, he slipped back to the ground and lay there exhausted while the sun warmed him up.

By noon Dusty felt a bit stronger. He crawled stiffly over to the creek and had a good drink. Pulling himself to a sitting position, he pulled his bloody shirt off and examined his wound. The rifle bullet had entered the back of his right side about an inch below the

ribs, and exited on the front at about the same level. Although its trajectory must have been nearly an inch deep, it did not seem to have entered his abdominal cavity. At least he wasn't sick at his stomach. He decided that his weakness was more from the shock and loss of blood than anything more serious.

The drink seemed to clear Dusty's thinking a lot. He crawled around and gathered enough sticks to light a fire to boil some water for cleansing his wound. As he took stock of the situation, he remembered that this was a well-chosen camp site in which he could hole up relatively safely. The weather was warm enough that he would not need a fire at night, though one would be handy for cooking. He crawled back to Buster and dragged the saddle and bridle off. The horse nuzzled him a bit, and then trotted over to the creek for a drink. Dusty was confident that he would graze nearby, and come running at his whistle. Finally, he opened the sack that Sarah had given him, and found a sandwich of summer sausage and a few potatoes from the garden. He ate the sandwich with gusto, and crawled into his blankets for another sleep.

Dusty awoke at dusk. He pushed his sticks back together and lit a fire for coffee. He drank some of the stiff brew before frying a bit of bacon and a potato. He didn't have the energy for anything else, so he doused the fire and wrapped up in his blankets again. He never woke up until dawn.

The wounded cowpoke could hardly believe how hard it was to move the next morning. There was little pain as long as he lay still, but his wound, being mostly muscular, burned like a red hot poker whenever he moved. It took him ten minutes to crawl out of his blankets, but after that he loosened up more quickly. The pain was severe when he stood up, but the dizziness was gone. He whistled for Buster, and the horse came thundering to his side in a moment. They evaluated each other, and both seemed satisfied, so Dusty slapped him on the rump and sent him back to graze.

As Dusty considered his options, he began to realize that he needed the Lord's help to find Missy. He stopped everything and read his chapter for the day. Then he poured out his worries and needs to God, and felt much relieved of his anxiety.

He realized that he would be recognized, and probably expected, along the corridor from Salt Lake City to Kanab. He might be able to hide behind a heavy beard and mustache if he got a different horse, but that would be questionable, at best. He could find Hunting Bear, but the Indians would not be free to circulate in the white man's company very well. He needed an insider, but how could he ever find that? What he really needed was divine help, and so did Missy. He began breathing up prayer after prayer to God as he struggled for a reasonable plan, and he felt the peace of God returning to his soul.

In the morning, Dusty saddled Buster and headed out into the desert to find Hunting Bear's village. He hadn't shaved in three days, so he already had a head start on the beard. He found the trail from Junction to the Indian village before dusk, and got a few

miles of southerly riding in before dark. He was absolutely exhausted by the time he curled up in his blankets that night. He felt stronger in the morning, and rode all day without stopping except to water the horse from a pool of rainwater. He finished the last of his food that night, and rode into the Indian village tired and hungry late the next afternoon.

“My brother,” Hunting Bear greeted him. “Sairy said you hurt. We ready to look for you, but you find us.”

“Thank you, Chief,” Dusty replied. Blake took Missy.”

“Strutting Cock bad man!” Hunting Bear said, shaking his head angrily. Eat now, then talk.”

Bashful Doe brought Dusty some venison stew, which he ate so fast she brought more. She was showing just a bit, and Dusty thought she never looked cuter with her face glowing so happily.

After dinner, Dusty told Hunting Bear everything he knew about Missy’s disappearance. The chief’s face grew harder and harder as the story progressed. “We kill now,” he said, standing up abruptly.

“Wait!” Dusty pled. “What will that accomplish?”

“Settler hate my brother,” he stated simply. “I kill.”

“No! Huntin’ Bear. My God teaches me ta be kind ta my enemies.”

“No kill,” Hunting Bear finally grunted. “Chase away. Chief Hunting Bear has spoken.”

“Please don’t,” Dusty held his ground. “What about Sister Sarah?”

“Your God is weak,” Hunting Bear grunted.

“It is harder ta love your enemies than ta hate ’em,” Dusty argued.

Hunting Bear grunted and rose to leave.

Dusty changed the subject. “Kin ya keep Buster fer me, n’ maybe lend me another horse?”

“You choose horse, my brother,” he said as he pointed towards the Indians’ rotunda.

“I need one the Mormons won’t recognize.”

“You ride Hunting Bear’s horse,” the chief replied, pointing to a well-built paint. “I ride yours.”

“Thank you, my brother,” Dusty replied.

The exhausted visitor was given a wickiup to sleep in, and he slept soundly from dusk to dawn.

Chapter 25

Dusty felt pretty good when he awoke in the Indian village. Bashful Doe filled his saddlebags with jerky, dried fish, and pemmican for the trail. Hunting Bear brought his horse, which became restless when saddled and downright spooky by the time the saddle bags were added. This relieved Dusty’s fear that the fine animal might have been stolen from a white man. He didn’t need to be accused of stealing horses in the unfriendly environment he was about to infiltrate.

It would be impossible to actually track Missy’s captors, but Dusty had been trying to figure out how they would think--trailing their minds. Since Blake was advancing in the Mormon society, he would not want to get too isolated from the opportunities to further his career at Salt Lake City. They would expect Dusty to come searching for Missy, if he was still alive. They would figure that he would come along the rut to Marysvale, probably turning north on the main road to Salt Lake City as the obvious place to start his search. His other option would be to head south at Marysvale, but they would be forewarned by telegraph long before he could reach the southern settlements. Why not retrace his steps around the Escalante River and slip unexpectedly into Kanab or St. George? Dusty thought. He would get a pack mule and pose as a prospector while he checked out the Mormon corridor from south to north.

Hunting Bear’s horse put on a real bucking exhibition when Dusty mounted him, and Dusty met it with a clinic on western riding that impressed even the Indians. When the animal finally stopped, Dusty was soothing it with a calm voice and a firm but gentle hands, while the Indians were rehearsing the episode with frank admiration. He didn’t let on how much the ride had hurt his healing wound.

The paint was wiry and game. It seemed to know the desert. Whatever direction Dusty turned, the horse soon found a trail to follow. Dusty wondered if this pony hadn’t run wild in the area before Hunting Bear acquired him. The cowboy was on the hills of the Wasatch cliffs overlooking Potato Valley in three days flat.

Three days later Dusty met a discouraged prospector at a secluded campsite situated a couple of hours out of Mt. Carmel. The down and out soldier of fortune had responded

to the recent false rumors of gold in the Grand Canyon, and was flat broke. He literally jumped at Dusty's offer to buy his pack mule and prospecting tools.

Although Dusty's beard was fairly heavy by now, he rested that evening, waiting until just after dark to ride through the newly resettled Mt. Carmel. He was unable to get much farther in the dark, and had to hole up a short way out of town. It took three more days to reach St. George, where he intended to start the search for Missy.

Dusty circled into the desert south of St. George late in the evening, camping three or four miles from town. He rode into town the next morning looking every bit like a prospector just passing through. He tied his beasts outside one of the general stores, and moseyed around through the merchandise a bit, listening to the idle talk of the customers. He purchased a few necessities and moved on to the livery stable, where he left his animals. He finally went into a busy looking restaurant and ordered a steak. He kept his ears open, but might just as well have been out in the desert, for all he heard. Blake was a church man, and Dusty desperately needed information on his whereabouts from inside the church. But how could he get it?

That afternoon Dusty tried the general store again. "Any place a traveler can buy coffee around here," he asked. "Try the Gentile store on the north edge of town," the proprietor advised. Walking up to the non-Mormon establishment, Dusty struck up a conversation with the clerk.

"How's business?" he asked.

"Terrible."

"Mormons resent yer invasion of their town?"

"They don't buy here unless it's absolutely necessary," the man answered, looking up curiously at Dusty. "What's bothering you?"

"Enny way to crack the system?" Dusty asked.

"They let me stay to lure the prospector and Gentile business to town, but you can't buck the church."

"How would a guy go about findin' out where a specific churchman happens to be?"

"Looking for Thomas Blake, are you?" he asked.

"How'd ya know?"

"He's the bad apple around here—a protégé of Bishop Snow. Why don't you just join the church and get inside?"

“Ugh!” Dusty responded wryly. It was an idea he hadn’t even considered.

“Yeah,” he told himself later that evening as he sipped his coffee from a tin cup at his campsite south of town. “I could be my own insider.”

He prayed about it, but got no peace about it either way.

Dusty returned to the Gentile store the next day to ask how the Mormons dressed for church. “Just wear your best,” the proprietor advised. “New shoes and a black suit wouldn’t hurt anything. And don’t ask a lot of questions about the controversial stuff, or they’ll suspect you.” So the cowboy turned prospector purchased some city clothes.

What amazed Dusty was that no one at the Sunday service seemed to question whether he was a Mormon or not. He sat in the back, near the door, and listened to a sermon on marriage. Not being acquainted with Mormon perversions of religious terminology, he couldn’t follow the sermon too well. Apparently their successive marriages after the first one were called “spiritual marriages,” though they were obviously quite physical. What was more significant to Dusty was that marriages outside the Mormon temples were only for this life, whereas temple marriages were for eternity. This gave Dusty the distinct impression that Blake’s alleged marriage to Missy was more to spite the cowboy for humiliating him than from any genuine care for Missy. The preacher also confirmed that the Church’s hierarchy had the right to marry the wives of the laity “In order to secure them a higher status in the after-life.”

Dusty left the church with little hope that another trip would get him any closer to finding where Blake might be. He was not all that disappointed when one of the Mormons that had worked with the Survey blew his cover by greeting him by name on the porch as he walked out. There would be no further advantage to masquerading as anything else now.

The next best thing Dusty could think of was to go back and talk to the officer in charge at the army post at Spanish Fork—the one who had mentioned some previous run-ins with Blake. He wasted no time in hitting the road northward, keeping his eyes and ears opened for any chance clues along the way. He tried to buy supplies at Cedar City, but was pointedly snubbed at all the Mormon establishments. The town boasted the first iron refinery built west of the Mississippi, and drew more Gentile craftsmen than most Mormon communities, so he had little trouble finding other sources of supplies. He sold the mule to a passing prospector.

One of the Gentile merchants was bemoaning the fact that he was not allowed to sell alcohol. “These Mormons are so blasted religious that there’s scarcely a saloon in the whole state of Utah,” he griped.

"I'm just as happy you kin buy a meal without going into a drinkin' establishment," Dusty told him. "But as far as I'm concerned, half the homes around here ain't nothing' but private brothels fer the man of the house."

"You got something there," the merchant replied thoughtfully. "Maybe they're not so all-fired better than everyone else after all. Maybe their avoidance of coffee and alcohol makes them seem so pious that it takes everyone else's attention off their polygamy."

"Refraining' from coffee may seem righteous," Dusty observe, "but there's nothing' in the Bible that indicates that God doesn't want us drinking coffee. It's not like it's so addicting that folks end up stealing and killing ta git it, anyhow."

The paint wasn't as good a road horse as Buster was, but Dusty encouraged him along at a fair clip from dawn till dark every day, camping off the road in defensible seclusion by night. He met Major Powell a ways north of Panguitch on June twenty-first. The Major was returning to Kanab to resume the Geological Survey's expedition down the Colorado after his successful trip to Washington for more funding. He had ridden the railroad to Salt Lake City, and was finishing the journey to Kanab on horseback with several friends. While they ate lunch on the road together, Dusty told the explorer about the discovery of the Escalante River, which really tickled him. "That will impress Congress," he gloated between bites of jerky that Dusty had offered him.

Chapter 26

Dusty rode into Spanish Fork late in the afternoon of the eighth day after his chance meeting with Major Powell. He left the paint at the livery stable without any trouble, and checked into to a hotel without any problems. He took a warm bath and put on the city outfit he had purchased at St. George. It was already dark by the time he crossed the street and walked a couple of blocks to get a meal at a restaurant. No one challenged him there either. He was beginning to feel uneasy about the change in attitude towards him when Mr. Johnson walked in with two men armed with single barrel shotguns.

"That's him, all right," he called out excitedly as the two leveled their guns at Dusty.

"It's me all right," Dusty replied. "What's this all about?"

"You sent the Indians to burn me out," Johnson answered heatedly. "That's what it's all about!"

"I'm sorry if the Indians burned ya out, Mr. Johnson," Dusty replied. "But I had nothin' ta do with it."

"No! You had nothing ta do with it!" Johnson echoed sarcastically. "That's why their chief was riding your horse."

Dusty felt sick. Evidently Hunting Bear had gone ahead with his threat to drive the settler out. "He had my horse because we traded horses so I could use his ta cross the desert after your wife shot me," Dusty retorted.

"We've got a right to shoot anyone we catch snooping around in our barn," the settler replied. "We shot you there, and we shot an Indian there a couple of weeks later."

"No one was snoopin' around," Dusty replied. "I came there ta see Missy, n' found that you had helped Thomas Blake kidnap 'er."

"How can you say we kidnaped her?" Johnson queried angrily. "It's my responsibility to do what's best for her."

"These people need to know that Missy's not yer daughter, n' she didn't marry Blake, n' you and Blake hauled 'er away against 'er will. Furthermore, that Indian probably came there ta see if Missy was back. If you'd let folks speak ta members of yer household in the open, they wouldn't have had ta do it in the barn. How did ya think the Indians would respond ta shootin' one of their men? By bringin' ya flowers? Looks ta me like ya got exactly what ya asked fer."

"Is Sister Sairy all right?" He asked as an afterthought.

"We all escaped with our lives despite your intentions," Johnson said as the men moved in to arrest Dusty.

"Ya wouldn't have survived if the Indians hadn't wanted ya to, and you know it," Dusty replied, waiting for the armed men across from him to come right up to the heavy oak table where he was seated. As they got there Dusty flipped his edge of the table up against their shotguns, throwing himself on the floor behind the tilted table top. The edge of the table came up so high it prevented either shotgun barrel from dropping enough to stay on target, and a shower of buckshot ripped into the floor several feet behind him as the guns boomed in unison. Knowing how long it took to reload a shotgun, the cowboy rose calmly with his Colt drawn.

"I'd suggest ya drop those things before somebody gits hurt," he ordered. Picking up the shotguns, he backed to the door, keeping the room covered with his Colt. Leaping from the boardwalk, he dropped the guns in a watering trough at the edge of the street. He dashed straight across the street, ran between two buildings, and cut parallel to the road down to the back door of the hotel. Running up the stairs three at a time, he slipped into his room and grabbed up his saddle bags, leaving the old prospecting outfit in a heap on the floor. Slipping back out the door, he ran down to the bath room at the end of the hall, locked the door, dropped his saddlebags out the window. He slipped

feet first out the window. Hanging by his hands from the window sill, he dropped about ten feet to the ground, grabbed the saddle bags, and ran away between some houses. The commotion back on the street warned him that he would not be able to get to the livery undetected, so he walked carefully out of town perpendicular to the highway, scarcely leaving a trail that could be followed. About a mile out into the wilderness, Dusty began to circle towards the Army post near the town.

Dusty slept in a clump of boulders about a half mile from the inactivated Fort Crittenden, at Spanish Fork. It irritated him that he had lost Hunting Bear's horse, but he had every confidence that the Indian would be perfectly capable of retrieving the paint if that became necessary. He arose as dawn streaked the sky, and carried his saddlebags to the Army post, where he was welcomed by a skeleton crew that had been left to maintain possession of the fort. The commanding officer invited him to breakfast with the few soldiers who were there; and Dusty began telling him the story of Missy's kidnaping. The officer was sympathetic, but reminded Dusty that it was a matter of his hearsay word against their actual witnesses, so there was probably nothing he could do except to privately alert Dusty if he gained any knowledge of Blake's or Missy's whereabouts.

Before Dusty got to his being shot, the officer was called away, and Dusty was left to finish breakfast alone. When he came back, he was accompanied by two armed soldiers. "I'm sorry," the officer announced, "but I have got to arrest you for inciting the Indians to attack a settler."

"Why do ya take Johnson's words over mine?" Dusty asked evenly.

"You've got to admit that they've got a good case," the officer answered. "You've already told me enough to establish a motive, and folks are claiming that the horse you left at the livery is Hunting Bear's. Is that true?"

"It's Huntin' Bear's horse," Dusty admitted, "but ya haven't heard me out."

"I'm arresting you, not convicting you," the officer replied. "I will investigate everything both sides have to say, but I'll have to keep you in custody for now. Besides, they'd probably lynch you if I didn't. The U.S. Army will be responsible for your safety here."

The two soldiers were prepared for a scuffle, but Dusty assured them that he would come peaceably. "I'm not afraid of the justice here as long as you don't turn me over to the Mormons," he told them. Receiving assurance that he would get a fair trial, Dusty raised his hands and let them remove his Colt. He felt totally vulnerable without it.

Dusty was led to the post jail and put into an empty cell. "Just let me know if you need anything reasonable, and we'll get it for you," the young guard assured him.

"I'd like my Bible from my saddle bags, n' maybe a key to my room, sir," Dusty replied.

"I'll get your Bible," the soldier agreed, "but the last guy we gave a key to left without giving it back, so we don't have an extra one," he quipped.

At least the guard isn't unpleasant, Dusty mused.

That afternoon the commanding officer came to Dusty's cell to hear his side of the story. Dusty told him everything from his conversations with Sister Sarah and Hunting Bear to his reason for coming to Spanish Fork in the first place.

"Do you have any witnesses of where you were on June twentieth?" the officer asked.

"Probably not," Dusty said thoughtfully. "But I ate dinner with Major Powell near Panguitch on June twenty first. If I had been enny where near Junction on twentieth, there's no way I could have gotten to Panguitch by the twenty-first."

"It may take a while to check that out," the officer mused.

"Try the telly-graph ta Kanab," Dusty urged: "But don't wait until the Major starts his crew down the Colorado again, or I'll be in here forever."

"The bed's soft and the food's good," the officer teased, but Dusty felt that he believed his story.

The telegraph was sent that afternoon, and the Major responded two days later when he learned that he had a message at the telegraph office:

CAN CERTIFY THAT I ATE LUNCH WITH DUSTY WINTERS 15 MILES NORTH OF
PANGUITCH JUNE 21, 1872 / WILL VOUCH FOR HIS CHARACTER ANYTIME.
MAJOR J.W. POWELL, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

The officer came to release Dusty immediately after receiving the telegram. "As far as I'm concerned the case is closed," he informed Dusty. "I'll inform the Mormons that anything that happens to you will be investigated." He had already taken custody of Hunting Bear's horse, and advised Dusty to get the Paint and Buster exchanged again as soon as possible. He also promised Dusty that he would be trying unofficially to locate Blake and Missy while the cowpoke went back to the Indian village to exchange the horse with Hunting Bear.

Chapter 27

Dusty resented taking the time away from his search for Missy to find Hunting Bear, but felt he had no choice. He started for the Fremont as soon as he was released from the army post, and was riding east along the wagon rut five days later when a group of

Indians in full war paint stumbled across his trail. He was over a mile ahead of the yelling savages, and felt he could outrun them with Hunting Bear's Paint. After twenty minutes all the Indians but one had dropped back quite a ways. The lone Indian appeared to be gaining on him, despite an all out run. Finally, Dusty cut south of the rut into some low hills where he could make his defense. Passing a good place for an ambush, Dusty circled back through the rocks and trees to the spot and hunkered down with his Winchester to wait for the faster Indian. Two or three minutes later Hunting Bear came charging into view on Buster. Dusty laid his rifle in the rocks and stepped into full view of the chief, who drew up astonished. The two just stared at each other for a moment, and burst out into guffaws that would have done justice to a frontier Saloon.

"My brother," Dusty finally eked out between laughs. "You seek my scalp?"

Hunting Bear was off Buster in a second, and the horse stepped up to nuzzle the cowboy. "Your scalp would spoil my collection," Hunting Bear laughed as they sat down to wait for the rest of the raiding party.

It was with great difficulty that Dusty was able to convince Hunting Bear to stop harassing the few settlers along the Fremont. "There are bad men everywhere," he reminded the chief. "You do not punish your whole tribe for one man's wrong. Would you kill all settlers because one shot an Indian."

Hunting Bear listened patiently, and finally grunted. "We will return to our village, but the white men have been warned."

"I will explain this ta the soldiers," Dusty replied as he transferred his gear from the paint to Buster.

"No wonder Buster outrun Paint," Hunting Bear remarked at testing the weight of Dusty's saddlebags. After quick good-byes Dusty mounted Buster and headed for Spanish Fork while Hunting Bear's war party headed home.

Dusty arrived at Spanish Fork five days later, to find that two more settlers had been driven out of the Fremont valley. The Officer in charge was planning a disciplinary counter attack when Dusty talked to him.

"I don't think ya have anything more to fear from Huntin' Bear," Dusty pled. "Johnson shot one of his men who was probably tryin' to find out if there was enny news of Missy from sister Sarah. What would ya expect from the Indians if ya shot one of them? Hunting Bear told me that the white men had been warned, and he would stop harassin' 'em, but if ya come down there looking fer trouble, they'll consider it self-defense ta resist."

"Do you really think he'll stop?" the officer asked.

"If the settlers let him alone," Dusty replied. "He calls me his brother, n' he gave me his word."

"Can the settlers go back safely?"

"I think all but Johnson would be OK," Dusty replied thoughtfully. "But if they rile the Indians up again they're asking fer trouble. Missy was best friends with Huntin' Bear's wife, n' they resent what Mr. Johnson did to 'er. I don't know what would happen if he went back there."

"I think we'll let well enough alone," the officer announced after a moment's thought.

"Thank you," Dusty replied with a sigh of relief.

"By the way," the officer said offhandedly. "There's some fairly credible rumors that Blake is swimming with the big fish in Salt Lake City."

"Thanks," Dusty replied as his eyes lighted up. "I'll git started fer there right away."

"You be careful," the officer warned.

Chapter 28

By the time Dusty reached Salt Lake City, his strategy had changed. Blake had made it very plain that he didn't actually care for Missy, and the cowboy was certain he had kidnaped her primarily to spite him for interfering with his treatment of the girl at Junction. If Dusty spoke openly against Blake's behavior, the vindictive man was likely to try to taunt him at some time when he thought he had the upper hand. Dusty would make his business known, and hope the pompous churchman would call his hand.

The first thing Dusty did when he came into town was to purchase a couple of hacksaw blades. He slipped one into the lining of his left boot. He used his knife to slit a few of the stitches that held the sole of his right boot on, and worked the other blade between the sole and the under sole of the boot. When this task was done to his satisfaction, he began asking everyone he met if they knew where he could find a churchman named Blake, who had kidnaped his fiancée. Most people pointedly ignored him, looking the other way. A few stared unbelievably at him, and once in a while some well-meaning soul would warn him to be careful what he accused a churchman of, or he could get arrested. Dusty kept it up here and there throughout town most of the day, slipping out of the city to make camp after dark. The next day he left Buster in a patch of graze a ways from town, hid his guns and tack nearby, and walked into town. He went right up to the temple inquiring for the whereabouts of Mr. Blake.

Before noon a crusty looking individual wearing a star on his vest asked Dusty why he was looking for President Blake.

“Because he kidnaped a woman from Junction to try to force her ta marry him,” he replied.

“Why don’t you come over to the office and file charges?” the wily Sheriff invited.

“Sure will!” Dusty replied, telling the lawman what had happened as they walked to the Sheriff’s office and jail.

Once inside, the Sheriff drew his gun, and had a deputy search Dusty. Gleeefully snaking the saw blade out of Dusty’s boot liner, he handed the boot back for Dusty to put on. “That’s where they all put it,” he remarked nonchalantly as Dusty tried to look disappointed, “Thought you might be better’n most.”

“What’s the charges?” Dusty asked, taking a seat on the cot in the otherwise empty cell.

“Officially,” the Sheriff replied, “Disturbing the peace. “Unofficially,” he continued, “You know as well as I do.”

“You mean you arrest ennyone who objects ta immorality in yer church’s leadership?” Dusty asked innocently. “I wouldn’t wanna be associated with any religion that sanctioned immorality.”

“If you knew your future, you wouldn’t want to be associated with anyone around here,” the Sheriff retorted, stepping back out the door.

Dusty was handed a plate of fairly good food for supper. The jail was guarded throughout the evening, so he rolled up in a blanket and catnapped. About nine o’clock the guard slipped out the door to go home, after checking on his prisoner. After a few minutes, Dusty crawled out of his blanket and fished the saw blade out from the toe of his right boot. Dipping his bandanna in his drinking water and wrapping the first bar with it, he quietly sawed all but through the bottom of the bar in less than half an hour. He had four bars in a row ready within a couple of hours. When he was done, he packed a putty of spit, iron filings, and dirt from the floor into the defects to hide his handiwork before returning to his cot to sleep away the rest of the night.

Throughout the next day he badmouthed Blake to his jailors mercilessly. He told them Blake was a pompous hypocrite, an immoral abuser of helpless women, a deceiver of the upright, and everything else insulting that he could think of. He wanted the vindictive churchman as angry as possible, and it worked.

About eight o’clock that evening Blake knocked softly at the jail door, and was admitted by the jailer. Brushing a trace of rain off his coat, he came up to face the prisoner. The

man was drunk with triumphant rage. "Hello, you loudmouthed cowpoke," he chided Dusty. "Thought you could outsmart me, didn't you?"

"I'd beat the stuffin' out of ya if I weren't locked behind these bars," Dusty replied, egging him on.

"Write that down for the trial, will you, Jake?" Blake urged the jailer. "See what a vicious criminal he is?"

"Is it criminal to try to rescue a woman who's been kidnaped by a religious hypocrite?" Dusty asked.

"May I inform you that this woman came to this city because she married me?"

"You brought her here tied hand and foot because she refused ta marry ya," Dusty charged.

On and on they bantered, Dusty doing everything he could to stretch out the encounter until it was time for the guard to leave. It ended up being nothing short of an oral bar room brawl, with Dusty getting in most of the licks, only letting his opponent score a point whenever he seemed ready to break off the conversation. Finally, about five minutes before nine, Dusty suddenly asked, "How is Missy, anyhow?"

"She's really happy to be rid of you," Blake smirked. "She and I are getting along just great together," he added with triumphant grin.

"Yeh, I could tell," Dusty replied sarcastically, "by all those scratches on yer face."

Blake was enraged. "She'll find out what happens to insubordinate Mormon women."

"She's not a Mormon," Dusty replied. "She never joined the LDS church, n' she never married you, and you'll answer to me if anything happens to 'er."

"You won't be around to see what happens to her," Blake chuckled. "She'll either be my wife or atone for her stubbornness with her own blood."

That one shut Dusty up. "So that's what the blood atonement is," he thought as Blake strutted out the door with the jailer, feeling totally victorious.

Dusty stood there in the darkness, listening for which way their horses went. Then, jerking the filed bars loose at the bottoms, he bent them out of the way and sprawled out the window. Pausing long enough to pull the bars back in place, he headed off in the direction the horses had gone at a dog trot. The sky had cleared, and a child could have followed the tracks in the damp earth, even under the muted light of the last quarter moon. They led him straight to a large white house on the north side of town.

Chapter 29

Dusty's dilemma was that he would be a wanted man by dawn. He could either try to find Missy now and try to escape to his secret camp tonight, or go back to the campsite for his horse and his guns, and return to take Missy by force tomorrow. He decided that tomorrow would be too dangerous, after his jail break. Besides, they might move the girl when he turned up missing.

Leaving his boots outside the house, Dusty tried the back door. It was locked. He tried a couple of side windows that were also locked. Slipping barefoot to the front door, he cracked it open easily. Easing it back slowly so it wouldn't creak, he slipped in and waited for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. There was an ornate wooden staircase to the left of the door, and Dusty slipped over to it. Feeling the carpeted treads with his hands, he slipped noiselessly up to the second story, where he paused to listen. Soft snores came from under one door, heavy breathing from another. Tiptoeing beyond the opened door of an unoccupied bedroom, he detected muffled voices through a heavy door at the back of the house. Creeping closer, he could make out Blake's gloating voice, too muffled to be understood.

Easing the door open, Dusty found himself in a double closet with another door at the opposite end. Blake was bragging that Dusty would soon disappear. Then Missy's voice; "No matter what happens to Dusty, I'll never be your wife."

There was the sound of a scuffle, and Dusty tried the door, but it was locked. Then an oath, and a threat about atoning for that. Then someone was stomping towards the door. Dusty slipped behind the clothing in the closet as Blake opened the door. The angry bully, turned to taunt, "I'll see that Dusty dies tomorrow for that," before shutting the door and turning the key in the lock.

Dusty waited until Blake had time to get to bed before trying the door again. The key had been left in the lock, and he entered the room, closing the door behind him. "Missy," he whispered, and she was in his arms in a second flat. After a long kiss, he broke it off.

"Are ya OK?" he asked.

"Yep," she said.

"We gotta slip away tonight. Git what ya need."

"This nightgown is all I got," she answered. "He sees to it that I don't have anything to run away in." Dusty took off his shirt, and she put it on over the light nightgown as

quickly as she could in the dark. "That's better," she said. "There's no windows in this room, so we'll have to go out through the hall."

They slipped through the door together, and Dusty locked it, leaving the key just as he had found it. Then they slipped past Blake's closed door, past the other bedrooms, and down the stairs to the front porch. Once outside, Dusty retrieved his boots, and they started through the city streets in the darkest part of the night. Other than an occasional barking dog, they had no trouble reaching the edge of town undetected. Dusty took Missy's hand and led her over the rocks in an attempt to slow the trackers that would be coming as soon as it was light. The first streaks of dawn were showing as they reached Dusty's hidden campground.

Handing Missy his city clothes from the saddle bags, he stepped behind the rocks while she put them on. "A bit of overkill for a disguise," she laughed embarrassedly as she returned his other shirt.

"This spot ain't good enough ta hide in, we gotta keep movin'," Dusty commented. So they rode double into the trees and headed southwest for the closest hill country. Dusty was never more careful to avoid leaving any signs that could be followed, and he circled back in rocky areas to leave false spurs several times. He paused frequently to study their back trail at strategic vantage points, but as far as he could tell they were not being followed yet. Still, he knew that their situation was downright precarious.

"Missy," he finally said, "we're in the clear fer now, but we're wearing Buster down, so I'm goin' ta walk while you ride. If they get wind of us, I want you ta ride like the wind while I hide. "You'll have the rifle, I'll have the Colt. Try ta get in touch with Huntin' Bear if we git separated. He'll protect ya until I git there." Turning a deaf ear to her objections, he started out on foot while she followed wearily on Buster.

The fleeing couple went until dusk without seeing any trace of civilization in the rocky forested hills. Dusty finally chose a campsite in a small canyon that would be virtually invisible from the surrounding area, where he built a fire for coffee to wash down some stale jerky. He put on his jacket and gave her the blankets to sleep under. She slept soundly, but he slept fitfully, waking often to listen for pursuers.

The next morning they had a breakfast of coffee and hot cakes before reading a chapter in the Bible and praying together for the first time. Then they sat down to discuss their situation. "I'll be considered a criminal fer breakin' jail," he said. "First, we gotta be sure we don't git caught. Then we gotta get another horse so we can stay together if they find us."

"I've got to get some decent clothes," Missy added.

"And," he continued, "we gotta get married, but how?"

“The way polygamy desecrates marriage, I wouldn’t want the Mormons to marry us, even if they would,” she mused. “Aren’t there any other churches in Utah?”

“There’s some in Salt Lake City,” Dusty replied, standing up and whistling for Buster. “But we don’t dare go back there.”

“Say, Missy,” he said as she brought the bridle, “Yer hardly limpin’ at all.”

“Oh,” she answered. “It’s just force of habit. Mary and I were in a runaway wagon that tipped over. It broke her back and bruised my leg where I could hardly walk. Mother insisted that I keep that limp until we could get away. I just kept on limping after I got better, even after Mom died. I figured the right guy wouldn’t let it stop him, and the wrong ones wouldn’t bother me. It’s worked pretty well, and it’s likely to reappear if we get caught,” she assured him.

Chapter 30

Dusty’s objective in starting out in a southeastern direction from Salt Lake City had simply been to gain the cover of the nearest forested hill country. Now he wasn’t sure where to go. He thought of striking northeast to Wyoming through the Uinta Mountain wilderness, but Missy would need proper warm clothing before they could even consider such a trip. They could go more directly east through the desert to Colorado, but the risk of discovery by hostile Mormons or marauding Indians would be significant that way. They could continue south through the forests to Hunting Bear’s deserts, but they would still be fugitives in the Utah Territory. Whatever they did, he was getting desperate to get married before their reputations were ruined. Besides that, he hardly dared to allow himself to look at Missy, let alone touch her when they stopped at night.

When the cowboy discussed their options with Missy, she told him she had some things back at Junction that they ought to pick up. “Several hundred dollars in gold, my mother’s wedding ring, my father’s will, and some papers Mom thought might be valuable someday,” she said. “Mom told me she never let Mr. Johnson know she had them.”

“The Indians are supposed ta have burned the house,” he reminded her.

“I always suspected they would,” she told him, “so I hid them in a glass jar behind a loose block in the spring house. It’ll be there.” They struck south through the forested wilderness keeping east of the main Mormon corridor.

That morning they struck an Indian trail that was going in the right direction, and they were able to make fair time, even with Dusty walking. He estimated that they would be about even with Provo by evening, and considered slipping into town after dark to try to

get help from one of the Gentile traders, but Missy nixed that. "We're still too close to Salt Lake City for that," she argued. He had to admit that she was right.

At dusk that evening Dusty spotted a poorly situated campfire in the valley below them. "That traveler is a greenhorn," he told Missy. "Let's find out who it is. Who knows, maybe he kin help us."

Approaching the traveler, Dusty asked Missy to hold Buster while he slipped Indian style up to the camp site. The man appeared to be unarmed, and was reading a book. As Dusty got closer, he was convinced that it was a Bible.

"Hello!" Dusty called out as he stepped into the light of the fire. The traveler jumped up.

"Whew! You startled me."

"Sorry," Dusty replied. "Just wanted ta know if that was a Bible yer readin'."

"The Word of God!" the man replied. "Are you a Christian?"

"I am," Dusty answered enthusiastically. "I read my Bible every day."

"I'm George Dodge," the stranger said, offering Dusty a hand, "preacher of the gospel and territorial Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the U.S. Government."

"Dusty Winters here," Dusty said, shaking the hand heartily.

"Praise the Lord, and right out here where there's not another soul for fifty miles."

"Don't count on it," Dusty warned. "There's always dangerous people about, and not necessarily Indians. Did you say that you are a minister?"

"I am, Sir. At your service in the name of Christ."

"Do you...Kin you marry people?" Dusty asked.

"Only in the Lord, Son," Dodge replied.

"Missy and I are both Christians," Dusty assured him. "She's back there in the trees waiting on me. We're running away from a Mormon that kidnaped 'er and tried ta make 'er a plural wife. He got me thrown in jail, but I escaped n' rescued Missy. They're hunting fer us right now, I'm sure."

"I'd have to pray about it," Dodge replied thoughtfully. "Why don't you bring Missy here so we can talk."

“Mr. Dodge,” Dusty answered, “Yer camp fire is inviting every Indian, prospector, outlaw, n’ the folks that are hunting fer us ta investigate it. I saw it miles back. Would ya mind coming along with us while I find us a safer campsite?”

“Whatever you say, but I thought this was great.”

“It’s a great place ta lose your scalp or get bushwhacked,” Dusty told him. “Come along with us, and I’ll find a better spot, but we’ll have ta git several miles from here. Saddle up n’ bring your horse,” the seasoned trails-man urged.

Dusty led the preacher back to Missy, who was glad it was too dark for him to see her in her outlandishly ill-fitting men’s clothing.

“Missy,” Dusty explained, “This is Mr. George Dodge. He’s the preacher we’ve been a’prayin’ fer.”

“Really?” Missy squealed, forgetting her appearance for the moment. “Glad to meet you,” she said, recovering her poise.

“Glad to meet you, too,” He replied, “Even in these unorthodox circumstances.”

It took Dusty about two hours to find a good camping spot, but he didn’t want it anywhere near the beacon the preacher had displayed. He finally stumbled on a wooded spot surrounded by large boulders on a mountain stream. He explained that they simply could not have a fire that night, so they ate the last of their jerky, and turned in for the night. Missy bedded down a ways from the men, and Dusty stayed awake for some time, listening for any sounds of danger.

Dusty allowed them a fire in the morning, and Missy fixed coffee and hot cakes for everyone, apologizing for her appearance repeatedly. Dodge observed their wholesome behavior, and their reverence for the Scriptures, and detected a real love for the Lord in their prayers. He felt satisfied, even enthusiastic about this marriage.

Chapter 31

Dusty and Missy told Mr. Dodge their entire story that morning. He was very interested in cultivating their good relationship with Hunting Bear’s tribe. The minister also had some suggestions for their marriage.

“Your marriage day is one you will want to remember with real pleasure. With a little patience we can make it that way even out here. I can ride into Provo and buy Missy some suitable clothes. Not a wedding gown, but something nice and practical that she

can wear on down the trail. If you've got the money, I can even get you a ring, though it might need resizing later."

"If you don't mind, we need a horse a lot more'n we need a ring. Missy has 'er mother's ring, which will have ta do fer now. Why don't ya git 'er several outfits n' a horse n' saddle?" Dusty requested as he fished more than enough cash from his saddlebags. "We'll stay here n' make some jerky."

"Fine," the minister agreed. "I know a fine Christian lady in Provo that would pick out some clothes for Missy for us, if you'll just tell me what size to get. I'll find a good horse. I may not be very trail wise yet, but I'm a fair judge of horseflesh."

"I've never had any store bought clothes before," Missy admitted. "But I think size six would fit." So Dodge started out on horseback for Provo while Dusty killed a deer for him and Missy to jerk and smoke.

Dodge did not show up that evening, but Dusty and Missy were so busy preparing a large amount of jerky for the trail that they didn't have time to worry. The preacher arrived so early the next morning that Dusty asked where he had camped.

"About a quarter mile downstream," he answered. "Close enough to observe your behavior when the preacher's not around. You are every bit as upright as I had hoped."

Dusty was impressed with the new horse. The little dun was a well-muscled gelding about fifteen or sixteen hands tall without any glaring unsoundness. His ears pricked forward and he took a friendly step or two towards Missy when she approached him. She absolutely fell in love with him. The saddle was a light western one that would be practical on the frontier trails. There were even tooled leather saddle bags. "He actually belonged to the lady that bought your clothes for you," the preacher told her. "She's getting a bit too old to ride, and really wanted you to have him, tack and all. His name is Nugget, and she says he's pure gold."

Missy slipped up the creek with one of her new outfits for a bath. She returned in a tasteful beige outfit, rosy cheeked and delighted. She was downright beautiful in properly fitting clothes. Dusty went the other way for his bath, and had to wash his best clothes in the stream. He left them on a rock to dry in the sun.

By lunch time they were about ready for the wedding, when Missy suddenly burst out, "Oh, I just thought of something. I want to be baptized before we get married."

"Me too," Dusty chimed in enthusiastically. "Would ya baptize us together, Mr. Dodge?"

The two of them were baptized, "Unto Jesus, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," in a little pool in the stream. Missy had to put her dry outfit on to be married.

The ceremony was simple. Mr. Dodge read Ephesians chapter five--about Christ and the church--without comment, and cut straight to the vows. Missy's voice was clear and positive when she responded, "I do." Dusty's had a hitch in it.

"I pronounce you man and wife," the minister finished up. "Now you may kiss." Dusty gathered his wife into his arms, and when the matrimonial kiss was over, Mr. Dodge was gone. A new blanket and a certificate of marriage was on a rock beside the fire, and they were alone. "I didn't even git ta give him nothing' fer his services," Dusty lamented.

"We can mail him something later," Missy mused. "Meanwhile, we need to decide what to do."

"We can't stay here." Dusty told her. "That preacher, bless his heart, probably left a trail that a blind man could follow with his fingertips." So they packed up and headed south. Nugget proved to be perfectly well behaved, and appeared to have limitless stamina. They made at least twenty miles that afternoon.

Dusty watched for a good camping spot early in the evening. He found one as scenic and secure as any he had ever seen, and they were done with dinner by dusk. The warm flickering light of the campfire and the music of the babbling stream lent a special enchantment to the evening. After kissing and hugging to their hearts content, they spread their blankets together on some sweet smelling pine boughs under the splendor of a brilliantly starry sky. Never was there a more spectacularly glorious marriage suite than the one they shared that night.

The morning was brisk, and neither Dusty nor Missy wanted to get up. They just lay their snuggling, and enjoying each other's warmth. Finally Dusty crawled out and lit a fire for coffee. When he looked up, Missy had climbed on to a boulder at the edge of the camp site. "Watcha doin', Sweetheart?" he asked as he joined her.

"I just want to fix this place in my memory," she said. "It was so lovely," she said as the tears welled up in her eyes. Dusty held her close as she cried a few happy tears. Finally, her sentiments satisfied, she pulled away and they ate breakfast. Then they were on the trail again.

Chapter 32

With their immediate needs supplied, Dusty and Missy struck out in earnest for the Fremont valley, keeping parallel to the southerly Mormon corridor, but some twenty to forty miles east of the main road. Dusty rode carefully, meandering along in a way that would leave as little trail as possible. Missy got exasperated. "Why don't you lead in a straighter line, without wasting so much time?" she asked.

“Ta keep from leaving a trail,” he replied. “Let me show you something.”

Circling around to return to their own path about a mile back, he showed her how much of a trail she was leaving, even when he had picked the general path. There were horse tracks in mud that could have easily been avoided by going three or four feet either side of a soft spot. There were broken twigs from riding too close to clumps of low vegetation. There was crushed grass where she could have ridden on rocks or harder earth just to the side of the tracks she had left.

“Why didn’t you show me before?” she asked. “Won’t they find us now?”

“They lost us early,” he replied. “They probably figured we went into the Uintas. I left an obvious trail for a few miles that direction before I rode into Salt Lake City that last morning. After that bit of rain, they probably couldn’t tell just when it was laid. But ya kin count on them tracking us in their minds. They’ll be looking for us down around Marysvale n’ all along the western Fremont Valley, as well as at Kanab, unless I miss my guess.”

“You mean it’s going to get worse?”

“I think so, Missy. If they come after us, you and Nugget head into the desert without leavin’ enny more trail than ya have ta. I’ll lead ’em away, and then come n’ find ya.”

For the next couple of days Dusty got Missy to lead, while he showed her how to pick her way through the landscape, scarcely leaving a clue that she had been there. She was already an excellent rider, and now she was becoming a fair trails woman. Under Dusty’s tutelage she quickly became as good as a lot of men that fancied themselves experts on the trail. It slowed them down a bit, but Dusty was downright proud of his wife’s new ability.

When they reached the headwaters of the Muddy River, Dusty took the lead again. The small stream increased in size as they followed it southeast along the edge of the mountains and out of the forest into the desert where few men cared to go. “You kin foller this river back ta the forest if enny thing happens ta me,” Dusty told Missy, “or you kin foller it ta the Fremont n’ cut back towards Junction n’ the country ya know.”

“Don’t you let anything happen to yourself, Dusty,” she shuddered, clasping him intimately to herself for a reassuring hug. “I just couldn’t stand it.”

Two days into the desert, Dusty began cutting more directly south by Hondu Arch. Skirting the arch, he led Missy over Cedar Mountain, where they spent a day resting up before their final jaunt down to Junction from the north. He figured that this approach would not be likely to be watched. They crossed the desert to the edge of Capital Reef the next day, and waited till after dark to descend into the Fremont canyon just east of Junction. They camped where Dusty had originally camped in the area. As before, Dusty

killed a deer the next morning, and they spent the day replenishing their supply of jerky in the seclusion of the canyon.

Early the next morning they filled their saddlebags with fresh jerky and rode to the edge of the canyon overlooking Junction. Leaving their horses out of sight, they climbed to a good vantage point on the edge that overlooked the burned out homestead. Dusty studied the settlement west of the farm for an hour or so before he decided that it was at least temporarily deserted. When he was finally satisfied that it was safe, they moved in for a look at the ruins of the burned out homestead. Missy went directly to the spring house, which was mostly underground and had suffered no damage. She threw the door open and groped for the loose block in the dark. She rocked it back and forth with her fingers, working it out of its place until it fell to the floor. She found her jar of keepsakes and papers in the hollowed out space behind the block just as she had left it years ago. Replacing the block, she put the ring in her pocket and the rest in her saddle bags before joining Dusty in sifting through the ruins.

The couple spent most of the morning collecting whatever salvageable iron cookware and tools they could find, which they stored in the spring house in case the Johnsons should choose to come back. "I feel sorry for them," Missy told Dusty. "They put everything they had into this and lost it all."

Finally, Dusty brought Missy up to the church. "I want to get rid of any false marriage record while there's no one else around," he told her. After a couple minutes of searching, they found the marriage records. "Thomas Blake and Missy Johnson" was the last marriage recorded.

"I didn't marry him," Missy growled angrily.

"Think we should burn the records?" he asked her.

Looking over his shoulder, she noticed that the false record was the only entry on that page so far. "All we have to do is remove this page," she pointed out, "and it will be gone without destroying anyone else's record." So Dusty carefully cut the page out with his knife, and Missy worked the remaining edge out of the sewn binding piece by piece so no one would ever suspect a page had been removed.

"That was a great idea," she told him. "I'm relieved that it's done and over with."

Being this close to Hunting Bear's village, they started across the desert in that direction, finding the trail to the village within a few hours. Missy could hardly wait to visit Bashful Doe and share a few womanly words with her.

When they stopped for the night, she handed her mother's ring to Dusty. It was of heavy yellow gold and looked as good as new. He slipped it on her left ring finger, and it fit perfectly. "Now you may kiss," he reiterated in a perfect rendition the preacher's

voice; that made her giggle as he pulled her into a kiss that she returned with newlywed passion.

"We'll git another when we kin," Dusty promised. But Missy wanted to keep it this way.

"It's the only link I have with my real parents," she explained, "Mom didn't get to wear it very long, so I'll wear it for her."

The couple arrived at the Indian village the next evening, and were received warmly by the Hunting Bear and Bashful Doe. A vacant wickiup was provided for their use while they were there. When Hunting Bear expressed surprise at Dusty having found Missy, Dusty explained that he prayed to God, "and He put thoughts in my mind that led me to Missy."

"Maybe your God is strong!" Hunting Bear exclaimed.

The Indian chief was impressed with Nugget. "Too good of horse for woman," he remarked. "Should be warrior's horse."

"She might need a good horse, my brother," Dusty replied. "The white men are after us because I broke out of their jail, and Struttin' Cock wants ta hurt me by hurtin' Missy."

The following morning one of the Indians was leaving to do some trading at Kanab. Dusty remembered that he had forgotten his gratuity to Mr. Dodge for marrying them, and posted a letter with a ten dollar note addressed to him at the Indian Bureau in Salt Lake City. Missy posted a card of thanks to the Christian lady in Provo that had chosen her clothes so well. The Indian came back a week later with a telegram from Mr. Dodge:

RELAX / BLAKE DEPOSED / NO WINTERS RECORD IN SLC. / LETTER TO FOLLOW

DODGE

Both Dusty and Missy suspected a trap, and decided to wait for the letter before exposing themselves. The problem was how to get the letter. They finally contrived to send an Indian with a pack horse to Kanab to buy a couple of hundred-pound sacks of flour to be donated to the village. He carried the cash from Dusty as well as a signed note asking for Dusty's mail. He returned about eight days later with an official looking letter from the U.S. Department of Indian Affairs:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Winters,

I'll never forget that wonderful wedding in the wilderness. It was my favorite, I think.

Thanks for the ten dollar gratuity. It wasn't necessary, but God used it to show me how to contact you. Please keep in touch by mail, wherever you go. You were such an encouragement to me. I wish my wife could meet you.

I heard rumors that Brigham Young had dethroned a younger cohort named Blake, who had become so ambitious that Young perceived him as a future threat to his leadership. He may have made advances to one of Brigham's many wives as well. On investigation, I have on good authority that Young stripped Mr. Thomas Blake of his advanced status in the LDS organization, and "banished" him to Arizona to oversee the LDS missions there.

I checked the court records in Salt Lake City, and found there was no record of your arrest. Apparently, whatever Blake was planning to do was going to be done off the record so it could not be traced. You may be persona non grata, but you are not a wanted man, at least not in the official sense. I'm sure Missy still wants you.

I would like for Dusty to consider working as an official scout for me at the Indian Bureau. His wilderness skills, and both of your abilities to befriend the Indians, would be invaluable to the government's objectives.

We would love to have you at our church in Salt Lake City as well. Please pray together about it.

*In Christ's service,
Rev. George W. Dodge
Utah Superintendent of Indian Affairs*

"I guess we've been a'runnin' fer nothin'," Dusty apologized to Missy.

"After the first day or two, anyway," she answered cheerfully, "But it sure made for a great wedding and wonderful honeymoon. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Dusty and Missy left the Indian village for Panguitch the next morning, intending to work their way up the main road to Salt Lake City as quickly as reasonably possible. Missy purchased a team and a buckboard wagon with some of the money from her jar, so she would not have to ride side-saddle in civilization. They would sell it again when they got to the Salt Lake. They were able to put the horses up in livery stables and stay in hotels whenever they desired, although both of them really preferred cuddling up together under the stars in secluded campsites along the way. It took them about two weeks to reach Salt Lake City.

* * *

Dusty and Missy applied at the Office of Indian Affairs on a Monday morning. Mr. Dodge greeted them with enthusiasm. "I hope you are coming to take the job we offered you, Dusty," he said.

"We're hear ta discuss it, Mr. Dodge. Exactly what would I be doing?"

"First," he replied, "You'd accompany me to the Indian villages as I try to improve relationships between the government and the Indians throughout Utah. You would be responsible for scouting, choosing routes and campsites, and insuring the safety of our party as much as possible. You might be called on to track down bad Indians that have raided mails, wagon trains, and settlers. And you would be expected to promote peace with the natives in a non-official capacity."

"I'd only do it as long as I thought the Indians were bein' treated fairly," Dusty answered. "I won't have nothin' to do with punishin' 'em fer retaliating against atrocities committed against 'em, and I won't participate in enny activity that I am not satisfied is just."

"Dusty," Dodge assured him, "I am committed to the fair treatment of the Indians. I want to be able to look them in the eye without reproach when I tell them about the love of Christ, and I'll resign my post and apologize to them if I can't do that in my official capacity."

"Kin we live safely here in the Mormon headquarters? Will Missy be safe while we are away?"

"So far, the Mormons have not harmed the fundamental Christians in the area. There are Episcopalian, Methodist, and Baptist churches here. Frankly, even if they wanted to, they want statehood bad enough to refrain from angering Congress. We'll help you find a place to live, and I think Missy'll be safer here than out on the frontier," Dodge assured him.

"If we kin git a suitable place to live, I'll take the job," Dusty agreed.

"Good," Dodge replied. "Come to our house for lunch, and we'll start looking for a home for you this afternoon."

The statesman minister escorted them on foot to his home, a well-built frame house on a quiet street lined with nice shade trees. "Honey," he called as he entered the front door. "This is Dusty Winters and his wife, Missy. Dusty's going to work for the Department, and Missy will be needing a friend."

"Welcome for lunch," Mrs. Dodge responded. "George talks about you so much that I feel I already know you. Missy and I can be temporary widows together while you guys

go around flaunting your scalps to the Indians. There's a vacant cottage just around the corner that would be just perfect, if you want to rent."

The two couples enjoyed a light lunch of soup and bread together, while Dodge told them about the church. "We have about twenty members," he stated proudly. "You guys would be a ten percent increase."

"We'll certainly give it a try," Dusty and Missy agreed together.

Dodge's sermons were filled with the Word of God, the love of God, and the Spirit of God. The congregation was close knit in their isolation from like-minded Christians in this Mormon stronghold. Dusty and Missy gained new understandings of the Bible regularly, and thrived in this spiritual environment. And Dusty did a credible job of filling the pulpit on the few occasions when Dodge was ill. This was bliss, except that Dusty and Dodge had to be away on government business entirely too much to suit their wives.

Dusty didn't just guide the Indian Affairs superintendent, he taught him. He showed him his own amateurish trail, much as he had shown Missy, and then he showed how to avoid advertising his presence. He taught him how to evaluate the signs of the trail, and how to pick a secure camp site. And although the man was an eastern city slicker, he became acceptable to ride with. "You'll do to take along now," Dusty finally complimented him.

One evening Missy asked the Dodges for dinner. During the conversation, Dusty dug the papers out of Missy's jar. "Do ya have enny idea what these are?" he asked the Indian Agent.

After looking them over, Dodge exclaimed, "These are founding stock certificates for a bank in Chicago. If it's still operational, they could be worth thousands of dollars. I'll wire my broker in Washington and find out what they're worth."

A few days later he took the couple aside after church. "That bank has thrived, and the stock has divided several times since its inception. You have about ten thousand dollars there, and more to come if you hang on to it."

The couple had no need for any more than Dusty's salary supplied, so they had the certificates transferred to Missy's name, and left them alone.

Chapter 34

When Mr. Dodge decided to invite all the Indian chiefs from the territory for a discussion, he sent Dusty down to talk Hunting Bear into attending. When Missy heard

where he was going, she insisted on going along. "Bashful Doe is about due," she reminded Dusty as she knitted a warm newborn outfit and a matching blanket.

The couple decided to take their own horses, and follow the general path they had taken on their nuptial flight. It was a second honeymoon, a time of reminiscence and re-commitment to each other and to God.

They spent an emotional evening at their wedding night campsite. They took a detour to meet the Christian woman who had sold Nugget to them. They found that someone was attempting to revive the old Johnson homestead, but they did not chance stirring up a conflict by revealing their proximity to the area. After traveling more than three weeks, they finally reached the Indian village.

Bashful Doe was the proud mother of a two-week old son. "Proud" didn't do justice to Hunting Bear's attitude. The Indian mother really appreciated the white woman's thoughtful gift, and cooed over her baby in the little knit outfit just like a white woman would have done.

Dusty took the opportunity to explain the love of God in giving His only Son to die for our sins to Hunting Bear. The Indian grunted without giving the slightest indication of whether he appreciated it or not. At least he didn't appear to be angry at Dusty's "Preaching."

Hunting Bear consented to come to the proposed meeting with Dodge, even agreeing to urge some of the other chiefs to accompany him. With Dusty's mission accomplished, the white couple struck out for the Mormon corridor northwards, arriving at the hotel in Panguitch three days later.

Missy felt too tired to eat that evening, so Dusty had dinner alone at the restaurant. Half way through his solitary dinner he saw a man enter the room, look around, and leave abruptly. If I didn't know better, he thought, I'd swear that was the evening jailer that guarded me in Salt Lake City.

Dusty bought a newspaper before returning to their hotel room. Missy was gone when he got there. Must be getting a bath, he thought. Sure left things in a mess. He flopped on the bed and read the paper while he waited for her return. After an hour or so he became anxious, finally asking a woman he chanced upon in the hall to check on her. "There's no one in the bath room," she assured him. He was returning to their room when he remembered the man he had seen at the restaurant.

Rushing downstairs, he asked the clerk if he had seen anyone that resembled the jailer. When he denied it, he rushed to the livery. The stable boy insisted that no horses had been taken that evening. Rushing back to the hotel, he found the tracks of three horses near the back door. There was evidence of a physical struggle there, and Missy's footprints were involved. The tracks were several hours old. Although he tried to track

the horses with a lantern, he found it impossible to make any headway in the dark, especially since the tracks were mostly obliterated by the heavy traffic in the town.

Returning to the hotel room, he found a note under Missy's pillow:

I have taken my wife back. Do not risk your life by interfering.
Thomas Blake

Dusty recognized right off that the note was more of a challenge than a warning. Blake would probably be waiting to dry-gulch him, and the vindictive beast would be at a tremendous advantage.

Grabbing the lantern off the dresser, along with his rifle and saddlebags, he locked the door and rushed to the livery. He saddled Buster in record time and he galloped to the northern edge of town before pulling up hard to dismount. He lit the lantern and studied every track on the road until he was positive those particular horses had not come this way. Remounting, he checked the road south of town, with the same results. Finally, he tried the trail that he and Missy had come in from the wilderness on. The telltale tracks were there as big as life, with no apparent attempt to hide them. Blake and the jailer had taken Missy into the desert, and they were daring him to come after them.

Dusty was forced to ride slowly, dismounting and lighting the lantern frequently to be sure the kidnapers had not turned off the trail. Finally, about midnight, he dismounted and lit the lantern for the umpteenth time. As he studied the trail, the lantern exploded in his face, throwing burning kerosene all over the front of him. He heard the boom of a rifle as he dove face first in to the desert sand to snuff out the fire. A couple more rifle shots spit sand nearby, but he was invisible to the gunman without the light of the lantern.

The shaken cowboy smelled like a singed turkey when he arose from the ground, but the sand had snuffed out the fire before he got any significant burns. He rode on in the dark, but when he finally dared to risk the light of a match, he found he had missed the trail completely. There was nothing to do but pray and wait for morning.

Dawn found Dusty walking Buster along his back trail looking for the tracks he had missed in the dark. Shortly after it became light enough to see, he found the tracks heading due east through the trees. The hair rose on the back of his neck as he thought of how easy it would be for them to circle back and pick him off. The only reason they wouldn't try to kill him would be that they wanted him to see whatever they were going to do to Missy. His fear for her drove his own danger to the back of his mind.

Dusty soon realized that Missy's captors were trying to play with his mind. They'd leave a plain trail for miles at a time, and then hide their trail so well that it would take him an hour to find it again. Once they actually split up and one horse circled back to a perfect

spot to ambush him, seemingly just to remind him of how precarious his situation was. They stayed well-ahead, slowing him down by one trick after another. There was nothing he could do but follow along like a sheep to the slaughter. His only comfort was a growing confidence that they wanted him alive, at least for the present. He was determined to be there when the time came, and they'd best be ready.

By evening the trees were thinning out, and they disappeared entirely by the time it got too dark to track. They were not following any established trail that Dusty could count on, so he simply bedded down for the night. Early the next morning he was at it again, as the tracks wended their way east across the desert. Occasionally, Dusty could get a glimpse of the three horses on hilltops several miles ahead of him, and he was sure they could see him just as well. He was more and more certain that they were headed for the Escalante area, with its canyons and cover. Why not get there first?

Dusty chose the wash of a small stream that would be a tributary of the Escalante for cover. Dipping into it, he rode beside the stream, and occasionally in it as it wormed its way towards the bigger river. The going was slow, and he was not sure how much he was gaining by his strategy, but he stayed with it until after noon. He finally climbed to the top to study the landscape where Blake should be. After some time spent working out the lay of the land, he concluded that Blake was on the other side of a distant ridge that stretched towards the Escalante. He would be safe from detection as long as he kept to his side of the ridge. Striking out parallel to this ridge, Dusty and Buster quickly made up for the time they had lost in the stream bed.

Just before dusk the exhausted cowboy climbed up his side of the ridge for a good look. He was surprised to see the renegades' horses picketed about even with him a couple of miles away from the ridge. They already had their camp fire going, and it chafed him to think of the harassment Blake was likely giving Missy. He would have ridden over to put an end to it all right now, but traveling blind in the dark in this weird and rugged terrain was too apt to be fatal. He'd have to wait.

Dusty slept on the ridge, hoping to be able to surprise Blake and the jailer at dawn. But the renegades had evidently become uneasy about his whereabouts, and pulled out at the earliest possible moment. The trail savvy cowboy dropped back down his side of the ridge and rode hard for the Escalante. About noon he climbed the ridge again, and saw that he was several miles ahead of Blake, who was obviously watching his back trail with some apprehension. The Escalante canyon was visible in the distance, and Dusty dropped back down the ridge and made for it as fast as possible in the increasingly treacherous sandstone washes.

Around the middle of the afternoon, when he could go no further on his side of the ridge, Dusty clambered to the top for another look. The broad buff white Escalante Canyon sloped precariously for three quarters of a mile down to the river below, rising back up like a giant mirror image of itself on the other side of the river. The other party was not in sight, and Dusty suspected that he might have gone beyond their intended

destination. So much the better! He could approach them from an unsuspected direction.

The cowpoke turned Buster loose on a miniature mesa of about five acres of graze land, confident that the Strawberry would come running at his whistle. Stuffing his pockets with jerky and filling his canteen from a rocky hollow full of rain water, Dusty scrambled back along the top of the canyon looking for signs of Blake. He moved slowly from one piece of cover to the next, be it a boulder, a juniper bush, or a crack or fold in the solid rock of the canyon. Within an hour he found a narrow path angling ever so gently down a fault in the canyon wall. He could see how Missy, probably faking her limp again, had managed to drag her boot on a rock near the entrance to leave him a clue. There were no other signs.

Dusty wished he could cross to the other side of the canyon for a direct look at this side, but instinct told him that time was running out for Missy. He backtracked about a mile, and started working himself down the precarious slope of the canyon wall. A ten foot slide to a crack with a stunted juniper to grab hold of. A quick run along the crack to a small rocky knob in the sandstone wall. A steep thirty foot scramble to the crack below, with a do-or-die stop before a hundred foot drop. A rest stop against a pithy dead fall that had toppled down from the canyon rim years before. Dusty slowly worked himself a quarter of the way down the sandstone incline to the major crack the kidnapers had traversed.

The desperate lover felt certain that he was beyond the renegade's hideout, and started working his way back up the wide crack, taking advantage of any natural cover he could find. After ten minutes or so he saw the jailer sitting on a jagged rock watching for Dusty with his eyes glued to their back trail. Slipping closer Indian fashion from bush to bush along the crack, Dusty began to see that a hunk of rock a hundred feet in diameter had been wrenched out of the canyon wall when the upheaval that caused the crack occurred. He could see what remained of it lying in the river bed a thousand feet below. Apparently Blake and the Jailer were holing up in the hollow it had left in the canyon wall.

Dusty slipped off his boots and advanced bit by bit towards the guard, who was still studying the incoming trail in anticipation of Dusty's overdue appearance. When he reached the platform of the hideout, Dusty sprinted noiselessly up behind him, clamping a hand over the big man's mouth and trying to throw him to the ground. The man was considerably larger than Dusty, and strong as an ox. Reaching backwards over his shoulders, he grabbed Dusty's head and heaved him over his own body. Dusty landed in a sitting position, his bare feet dangling over the precipice. The cowboy's grip on the jailor hurled the bigger man head over heels off the precipice by the violence of his own action. Dusty watched in horror as he fell, flipping over and over through the air to smash headlong on the canyon wall several hundred feet below. A sickening thud echoed back to announce his demise as his body rolled another hundred feet down the incline. It was as though he had fallen down the staircase to hell. Dusty sat there stock

still, suspended in time with his bare feet dangling over the cliff. There was no sense of victory, relief, remorse, or anything but shock, finally broken by a muffled yell from somewhere in back of him.

Scrambling up, Dusty was dumbfounded by what he saw behind him. Rocks had been brought in to build a stone house against the back of the hollow in the canyon wall. A rock fence restrained the horses. A spring bubbled out of the rock to provide water. It was as secure a hideout as any outlaw could imagine in his wildest dreams. Blake and Missy had to be in that house.

Dusty crept catlike to the window and rose up furtively for a peek. Missy lay on her back on the floor, her hands tied behind her, and her feet tied together; Blake leered down at her with a large hunting knife in his hand. "Soon as Jake brings that husband of yours in to watch," he gloated, "You are going to atone for refusing to marry me with your own blood. Brigham says it's the only way to get you to heaven. I say it's the only way to get even with Dusty. I can't wait to see his eyes bug out. I'll do it slow, I'll make it hurt, and then I'll put out his eyes with the same knife and watch him try to find his way out of the canyon in the dark."

Blake bent down over Missy to emphasize the horror of it all, and she lashed out like lightning with her feet, knocking the knife into his cheek. Dusty took advantage of the situation by slipping through the door behind Blake. The door creaked

"Got 'em, Jake?" the wretched man asked as he dabbed his bleeding cheek with his kerchief.

"I'm here, Blake," Dusty answered evenly.

Turning around easily to taunt his prisoner, he suddenly realized that Dusty was alone.

Blake shook his left fist threateningly at Dusty to distract him while his right hand went for his revolver. Dusty's hand blurred and his gun bucked just before Blake's flashed. Double reports re-echoed through the rocky room. Dusty felt the sting of a passing bullet along his right shoulder as he stepped to the left and fired again. Blake was down, trying to raise his gun, and Dusty fired a third time. The fiend's face contorted in hate as he fell back with three bullets in his heart. Dusty stood there trembling uncontrollably as he gazed at the body.

Missy let him stand there struggling with the shock a while. "Untie me, Honey," she finally called in a subdued voice.

"I killed him," Dusty said unbelievably as he moved towards her to comply. "I killed a man, Missy. I sent him to hell."

"Dusty," she said gently as she rubbed her tingling wrists, "You had to do it to save all three of us."

"Not Jake," he corrected her. "Jake fell off the cliff. He tried ta throw me off the cliff, and ended up going over the edge himself." By now he was coming out of his shock.

"Not him, Dusty," she interjected. "The baby. You're going to be a daddy."

He stared at her dumbfounded. "Me?...We're havin' a baby?" He could hardly speak for the wonder of it all.

"Yes," she reiterated. "In about seven or eight months we're going to have a baby."

He shook off the last vestige of his shock and pulled her to himself. His kiss was long, not so passionate as tender, more mature.

"Thank you, Darling," he said as he released her.

Chapter 35

It was too late in the day to leave the canyon hideout, so Dusty dragged Blake's body away from the house to the edge of hollow; there was no soil to bury it in. Missy lit a fire and cooked a good meal from the tinned goods in the larder. As dusk came on, they lit lanterns and searched the entire spot. They found leather bank bags full of gold, and a heavy Wells Fargo container that was locked.

"These guys were robbing banks or stages or something," he told Missy, and she was sure he was right.

The next morning they headed up the trail to the canyon's edge on the outlaws' horses. Dusty rode back to get Buster, who was not very happy about his riding another horse. "OK," Dusty laughed as Buster nudged him half out of the saddle. "I'll switch."

They hadn't traveled over a couple of hours before they met a hard-riding bunch of armed men, who accosted them rather rudely. "Have you seen two men around here?" the one with the U.S. Marshall's star demanded as he stared suspiciously at their horses.

"Might have," Dusty answered easily. "What'd they do?"

"Pulled off several bank robberies and hit up a stage near Prescott. There's a five thousand dollar reward out for each of 'em, dead or alive, and even more for recovering the money."

“Who decides who gits the reward,” Dusty asked innocently.

“I do,” the Marshall answered.

“Name’s Dusty Winters,” Dusty announced. “The men you are lookin’ fer kidnaped my wife n’ kid, n’ I come n’ took ‘em back.”

“Where’s the kid?” the Marshal asked, looking around.

“Right here,” Missy answered, coloring a bit as she patted her tummy.

The men couldn’t help a grin or two.

“You’ll find yer men down a narrow ledge on the canyon wall about five miles along the rim from here,” Dusty told the posse. “I marked the entrance with a pile of stones. After about three quarters of a mile the crack opens in ta a holler where they built the niftiest hide away ya ever seen, all of stone. You’ll see Jake’s body about three or four hundred feet down the canyon wall, and you’ll find Blake along the far edge of the hollow with some lead in his heart. There’s a lotta bags a gold n’ a locked Wells Fargo trunk in the house.”

“We gotta git the kid home,” Dusty continued with a grin, “but we’ll be a’waitin’ fer that reward at the hotel in Panguitch.”

The posse rode brashly off along the rim of the canyon, while Dusty and Missy headed out for Panguitch.

“What’ll we do if they really come across with that reward?” Missy asked as they crawled into bed after delicious hot baths at the hotel that evening.

“How’s about goin’ ta Wyoming and buyin’ a ranch?” Dusty asked. “I think we kin even trade that lifeless old paper stock of yer’s fer some honest ta goodness live stock, if we kin jist figure out how ta do it.”

“Sounds like a great way to raise kids,” she agreed as she snuggled up to him.

“Un’ maybe I won’t have ta shoot ennybody else,” he murmured sleepily as he pulled her closer.