

NORMINA FALLS
By MJ Politis, Ph.D.
Copyrighted, Feb 22, 2017
All rights reserved.

CHAPTER 1

You and the writer are both familiar with the maxim that war is hell. And hell is long periods of boredom punctuated by brief periods of terror, despite the fact that others define that place or condition as being stuck living in Secaucus, New Jersey or in a bedroom with your ex- who wants to restart your dysfunctional (but at times, happy) relationship for all the wrong reasons. So, as you peruse these words in the quest to find your own within the Silence and cocophony of your own Soul, which are you most threatened or oppressed by now? Boredom or terror? Or putting it in terms that geeks who wear thick, black glasses long before their time would 'state'---Do you seek relief from procedural under-stimulation or shelter from the unpredictabilities of overstimulation? Of course, in the middle of both extremes lies, nay STANDS, *challenge*. Such a state of self-obtained Enlightenment is perhaps what you, and the writer, are engaged in now. In a laboratory where we are both experimenter and experiment. The over-educated but under experienced researcher with the black rimmed eyeglasses and clean white lab coat doing the experiment, or the rat in the cage who doesn't have to worry about getting tenure, staying published, or how's he (or she) is going to keep the rent paid on a scientist's salary? Of course, being the experimenter comes with responsibilities, and the experiment with---perks, such as real experience. Even if it is getting zapped with electroshock just when you figure out how to get the cheese. But no, that's not the lab the writer (hereby known as Simpson, so we can stay connected in ways that getting personal prevents) intends. So where shall we, and if you so choose, you, go to next?

Simpson says, nay, pontificates, nay, suggests that....You are atop a white horse who is an extension of your body, mind and, as you realize when you allow him to carry you up the snow covered hill leading to the plateau on top of the mountain, Soul. A brush of snow overcomes you as you and the steed penetrate through a doorway of white powdered branches. You close your eyes, feeling the gentle wind speak more loudly, then at the other end of the leafed gateway, you hear Silence between your ears. Ears that are chilled in a way that you neither mind nor take heed of. Between the leather chaps on the saddle, you feel fresh, white powder that your eyes say should be cold, but...if anything the sensation you feel is warmth. The air smells white as well, as you ascend up another small hill towards the plateau.

It's been a while since you are here, at least in this season, and you feel disoriented. Lost amidst a snow-filled garden of Eden that means you nothing but good, most particularly when you surrender yourself to it. When you do not know where North, South, East or West is. When you realize that where you came from on this first day this mountain pass can be traversed is as irrelevant than where you are going. But, the horse eventually needs to eat, and you need to feed yourself with something more cerebral---Purpose.

Said Purpose awaits you on the cabin you built within a holler on this plateau which has tree cover to keep out the wind, and a stream that operates all year round. You hear the movement of the water amidst the Silence from a distance but which direction it is coming from, you cannot determine. You think 'let me let the horse have its head', as those beasts know where home is wherever they are. You, currently occupying the body of a Mountain Man they call Professor Jack in the barely literate town below, decide to trust the horse to take you back home now, so that you don't get stranded in the snows. But the horse decides to conspire with Mother Nature, and perhaps the Creator who set up that irrational, unbridled and temperamental Mistress in business.

The horse takes you to woods that look even more foreign than the ones you have been riding through already for the last half hour, according to the clock in your head that is now more oriented to the fading sun than any timepiece the townspeople use to measure time with. You are overtaken with disorientation that feels like fear, or if you forge onward, discovery. A lightness which feels like accomplishment takes you over, as you envision that yes, maybe this is your ascent into Valhalla! The afterlife that is going to be enriched in kindness, intelligence, and that most essential of element for the Alive spirit---creative challenge. You resolve yourself to that Fate, big F, with joy! Then, just as the fear dissipates, and you are prepared to renounce where you have come from and pass up the opportunity to stagnate where you were headed to, all of your senses come back into focus, and definition.

"Now I know where we are," you tell yourself, then the horse. You direct the steed towards the cabin, having known every bush, rock and favorite spot for a bear to take a dump from the multiple rides on this path which you have taken again and again. One which changes enough each time you have ridden it to make it interesting, most particularly when you let the horse lope over it.

The horse snortles as you trot, then go into an intense yet gentle hand gallop on the path which is now covered with snow, as he redefines the path with each magical step treading over crystallized water.

After breaking some more trail so you are sure you can get through it for the rest of the winter, which no doubt will bring another three feet of powder on account of your experience with Old Man Winter and yourself, you reach the clearing, then the holler, then the cabin. All is as you left it, just a few days ago. You feel at home, wondering why you ever left such a haven where the world leaves you alone, yet you do not feel lonely. But the moose meat on the back of your horse, your recently filled ammunition belt, as well as the books, paper and writing impliments in your saddle bag would not be obtainable had you not left high-country home.

You reach the cabin, let your feet reconnect to the ground, unbridle your horse, and check in with your fingers to see if the freezing, tingling and pain have made them turn black,

or gone. As for your toes, you'll find out whether they will remain in your boots or stay connected to your foot after you get the fire started. They always were, for reasons that defy all of the biology of exposing yourself to this kind of weather in the high country.

After the horse has been led to the fenced in pasture where his buds have been waiting for him, and you throw out hay, grains, and greeting to them all, you look down the mountain to a collection of buildings that seem big and endless when you are amongst them, but from here, seem so small and insignificant. A thought overcomes you once again, when you look at the cabin.

"Yeah, I can't do without either of you," you say to the town that considers itself a city, and the cabin that requires no label at all, no matter how many times you expand, re-enforce or fortify it. You feel drawn between two worlds, each one having what you need to feel and be truly Purposeful, leaving you in want wherever you are.

CHAPTER 2

You wake up from a restless sleep, recalling that the dream you just had made you more tired than you were before you surrendered your consciousness to slumber. You know you should remember what happened as the sun penetrates into your eyes through the window, but by the time you get to the pencil and paper next to your bed, memories of the dream state are gone. "Maybe next time I'll remember what happened in that state the Yaqui Indians call the huya aniya that will explain why I'm here doing what I'm doing in the 'awake' state," you tell yourself. "Now, should I get up or, no, go back there?" you ask yourself, and think that yes, there is a lot of merit in that strategy. "Just one more dream and I'll be able to figure out how to deal with reality," you tell yourself. But your bladder has other agendas. "No, wetting the bed is just going to make it worse," you remember. "And evacuating my bladder and bowels IS something to look forward to, sort of," you try to tell yourself.

So, you shift your body, let your feet touch the ground, then challenge them with the weight of your body, this torso being one that is not too bad to see when you pass by the mirror, but....Purpose before pleasure, you tell yourself. So you sit on the seat with the hole in it that the manager of the hotel you're living in provided for you, and you alone. It's a ring of wood that's been polished well enough to get rid of the splinters, but still it feels cold to your bottom. There is one wish you have right now as you feel the morning chill against your not yet acclimated deriere. "God, I wish I was a man so I can do at least half of this standing up!"

After closing the lid on the remains of what you ate and drank yesterday, or perhaps imbibed in your sleep, you wash the morning gunk off your face in the water basin. The hotel manager has provided water for you in a large pail, which is a damn sight better than you having to go to the pump in front of the hotel to get water. You are thankful that you have your own privy, inside. The cowboys have to use the outhouses, as do the other girls on the floor. But the manager likes you, for now anyway. As long those

wrinkle lines on your face can't be seen in a room where you can pull the curtains closed. And those breasts of yours don't balloon out the way they did for your mother when she was your age, or your sister who became a mother of 5 by the time she hit the big three O. And the mane of long, auburn hair flowing over your shoulders onto the small of your back stays long, thick and auburn. But you have other talents as well, which you observe when you feel the skin of your legs against the stockings you slip over them. "Yes, they'll come off, just like most everything else sent from the dress shop in Saint Louis that the saloon manager tells me are from Paris, once I'm into the 'heart' of the 'dance'" you whisper to yourself, and then to the cat who appears on the ledge of your window that you knew you should have closed last night. You wonder who else may have come in for a look at your slumbering body, a whiff of your perfume or a feel of your soft flesh that still, thankfully, is not harboring a new life cursed and blessed to come into the world under your care.

Your thoughts go to that child who you have always imagined there, and the one you once were. The cat meows, then nuzzles next to your calf, as if he knows exactly what you are thinking or, more frighteningly, feeling. Then a knock comes on the door.

"Ten minutes tttto sssshowtime, Miss Olivia," 'Old Henry', the chief cook and bottlewasher of the 'establishment' says to you with a subservient stutter. "A ffuullll crowd of handsomely dressed gentlemen thhhiiss tyme," the short, hunch backed assistant to the owner of the Wildcat Hotel informs you.

The cat meows, looking into your eyes. He paws at the buttermilk remaining in your glass from last night that you thought would prevent you from getting a hangover this afternoon. You wonder if the cat wants you, or what you can do for him. You recall your mother who sent you out here with her blessing, and the hope that your special 'dancing' talents will make you rich enough to send money back home so your sisters, nephews, and nieces back in Philadelphia will be able to eat twice a day. Or to dine as many times a day as they want, if you wind up on the winning end of a relationship with a 'well dressed gentleman' who struck it rich in the cattle business or the gold mines. It's all a fantasy, as you well know by now, but such is a good thing, as your stare is held hostage again by the orange feline whose white halo you can't help but see every time you look into its green eyes, "The dancing on stage, when I strip off all this Parisian fashion...It's the client's fantasy, not mine," you assure him. You assure yourself that if the right gentleman sees you dance, he will see you as art rather than flesh, and book you in to be a prima ballerina, on a real stage, in Paris, or a cowtown in the wretched 'natural splendor' of the North American West that he will make into a New Paris.

By now the cat has finished the buttermilk and hears something outside. He rushes out the window, as you are summoned out the other porthole of your chamber by another knock from 'Old Henry', who is two years younger than you. Then again, both of you have aged faster than you bargained for. If it is a good thing or a bad thing you do not know. But such is as irrelevant to you as the fantasy the 'well dressed gentlemen' downstairs on stage will have of you.

CHAPTER 3

It's Sunday, a day of rest for everyone else, a work day for you, depending on what you call Work of course. As this town you came to so many years ago is now, justifiably, calling itself a city, morality has to be structuralized for it to be effective. A new ordinance says that all City Officials and Merchants, both spelt with caps because of the importance they give themselves, must attend Church on Sunday morning. You were very much behind making that Ordinance which is in effect but not on the books possible. "A good thing," you think to yourself as you take the pulpit, glancing over all of the men in black coats, the women in their most modest dresses. And the children, whose presence in the town of Normina Falls requires that it be called the most rapidly growing city in the territory, soon to be a State, if you have anything to do about it.

But all that's politics. Today, officially anyway, it's about matters spiritual. You look over the notes you made for yourself on the pulpit, stroke the well-trimmed beard that makes you look and feel scholarly, feel the wind coming through the window on the bald spot growing larger and larger on the crown of your head that feels old, then take in a deep breath. Entering into your nostrils are the various smells that make Normina Falls what it is. Freshly-baked bread from the bakery to the left of the Town Church mixed with manure from the corals to the right holding the cattle ready to be shipped to Chicago for slaughter mix, blending in with the smell of fresh lumber awaiting to be converted into houses and shops, topped off with the unmistakable odor from the black soot coming from the mines, pulp mills and oil rigs. The wind brings in the latter far stronger than any of the former. As for the congregation, the women have scented themselves with perfume, the gentlemen with cologne, the working class stiffs of both genders with sweat. "At least it's not blood, semen and gangrenous flesh," you say to yourself, recalling how it was when Normina Falls was a trading post caught between the worse elements of Redskins and Palefaces, or the War back East which was said to have brought the country together, but which only made the divisions between North and South even more personal. The absence of any well-dressed Black gentlemen in the pews, the presence of overweight Black-as-coal female cooks and laundresses and the interspersing of attractive light-skinned Negro 'dancers' are a testimonial to that.

But, "stability comes before order, law before honor, and individual prosperity before shared wealth", you tell yourself as you enjoy a second, then third private breath before speaking, smelling your own flatulent gases this time. You feel the wooden cross behind you getting larger and larger, its noble inhabitant enveloping you with Light. But then as you allow your body to imbibe His Presence, you feel pressure around your wrists, then ankles, then a prickling sensation around the rim of your head. A head that has somehow survived forty-five years, and two marriages. One of them ended in death of your beloved, the second in your leaving on your own accord to seek a 'higher calling', as you said to the young maiden who turned into a idealistic Revolutionary Anarchist after YOU took her to New York City, with money YOU earned. She said that you stole it 'from the struggling masses' in your former career as a budding industrialist and coal mine owner, but she and all of her Socialist friends are deluded. They know nothing about the way the

world really works, or the way God has willed it to be. They still think that being wise is better than being clever, and that global cooperation will replace good old American competition. But without that competition, a man can't distinguish himself. He can't provide for his family the way HE wants to. He can't re-create the world according to his own free will.

The crowd mumbles, wanting you to begin. "Reverend Wilson?" Larry Jones, the best horseman in town and the worse cattle salesman says. "Herr Mayor," utters Manfred Wolff, master blacksmith from Hamburg who can mold metal into anything you want or need. "Father?" you hear from a high pitched voice in the middle of the crowd, her eyes more concerned with your welfare than anyone else in the room, including yourself, or the ghost of Jesus whose presence you secretly fear more than love.

You smile at the 5 year old girl who addresses you by at title which accurately describes her biological relationship with you, but not your appropriate title. Lorena McDougal, former freelance dancer, now overly-paid schoolmarm, nudges her daughter before she can say anything else that is embarrassing, disruptive or accurate.

"And the Lord said that every man shall take a woman to his heart, and every woman shall take a man to his heart," you say, directing it to Lorena. Both she and you know that it's you who came up with that quote, but she doesn't care. The relationship between you and her was always about matters earthly. And of course, the way things are done between mortals, involving economic exchanges of paper and bits of metal, without which nothing makes sense.

You feel the wallet in your breast pocket, knowing that is filled with money, and you contemplate that 'it's easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven'. It's a saying that you impose on your congregation just before you extract out their donations to your church, and your Mission. What that Mission for the town, and of course, to you, is has to be kept secret. It's something that you can't confide in Lorena, Jesus, or even your own Soul. But as you know, from the world God created, anything is for sale. For the right price, you can buy anything, or hire a Manfred Wolff to custom build if for you. Even a Soul.

CHAPTER 4

You feel the hard pebbles embedded into the muddy ground on your soft feet, smell the odor of urine on your sunbaked dress and long, curly blonde hair you tried to keep so clean, and hear laughter as you come down the street, not at a walk but in a sort of dance as you play your fiddle. People are making fun of most everything you do and are. They make jokes about you for being a seventeen year old woman who they say has the brain of an eight year old, and, when they are on a happy drunk, the heart of an angel. They ridicule you for knowing a little about where babies come from, but not as much as the two smarter sisters you grew up with who became married women with real husbands. They mock you for cleaning toilets and outhouses for a living instead of, as one of your old playmates said, 'knowing how to shit on others'. The look down on you for smiling

more than frowning, laughing more than crying and...for letting others make fun of you without doing anything back except playing your fiddle for them.

Yes, they like your fiddle, your smile, your dancing and your ability to make them laugh at you. But, you remember, as the townsfolk finish up shopping at the Normina Falls General Store. The cowboys stumble out of the bar, and the well dressed 'important people' lock their shops so they can go home to the houses you just cleaned. Without you, they would be frowning all the time. Or worse, they would make jokes directed at each other.

You remember what happens when they do that. When a cowboy makes a joke about a banker, or a lawyer makes a joke about a cowboy, or a schoolteacher says something that sounds smart and insulting to one of the women who work at night in the saloon. "They get into fights," you tell yourself as you listen to them all laugh at you. "They hit, punch and sometimes even kill each other," you recall from the last time you decided to walk home like a normal person instead of dancing like a clown, with your best friend, 'Kelonida', the fiddle. The fiddle knows you as a name it never told you, but you know you are not 'Loony Lois'. At least not a 'Lois' anyway.

You finish your walk to the end of the street, and make a turn to the outskirts of town where you live in a shack behind a house that Mayor Pastor Wilson owns. The family who lives in the house are nice people. They let you clean their floors, cook their meals, chop their firewood, wash their clothes and tell you stories about themselves that they ask you to not tell anyone else in the family. You feel sorry for them, because you get to live in the barn they have to stay inside the house where the beds are made of feathers, instead of straw. And where there are no animals. And where in the summer the walls keep the heat in, and in the winter, the snow always stays on the roof. You like summer winds, and winter snow, and the company of animals. They talk to you in a language you feel but can't understand all the time. But you can answer their questions with your violin and every time, it seems to be the answer that makes them happy, except for the dog who howls whenever you play a note that's too high up.

"So, what did you do today?" you ask a cow, who you call Daisy.

"Nothing the inside people would think is important," she answers.

"Same here," you reply with your voice. "Such as..." you say with your mouth, continuing the conversation with your fiddle.

Daisy replies with a moo that feels like a laugh, then says something with her other mouth, the one just under her brown-stained tail. It smells disgusting to the people in the house, and if they find out you didn't clean it up, they'll feed your dinner bisquit to the chickens. So, you shovel up Daisy's cow paddy, look up at the darkening sky outside of the hole in the barn wall which you call a window and see something smile at you.

“I’m not supposed to be talking to you,” you say to the ghost as you tend to your chores inside the barn. “Pastor Mayor Wilson says you ghosts are sent by the devil, and Doc Halston says that only crazy people see ghosts. The kind of people who get locked away in places where there ain’t no windows, no animals and no violins that you can use to talk with,” you say to the Old Indian who decides to come into the barn and sit in front of you, whenever you try to turn away from him.

Finally, you give up, and give in to him. You grab a pitchfork, hand it to him, and say, “You wanna have another powwow here in the barn, YOU clean up where we sit this time.”

The Old Indian smiles, then nods ‘no’. Then he shrugs his shoulders. “I don’t make the rules about how or why people like me talk to people like you,” he says with his eyes that seem very old, nestled in a face that has more wrinkles in them than you can count.

“Alright,” you say, bringing a log in for you and one for the Chief. He seems like a Chief anyway by the way he stands up so erect, and doesn’t seem to laugh and smile like the other Indian ghosts you’ve had conversations with. “So, what do you want me to do to make things right between your people and my people?” you ask him with your mouth, and then your violin.

“You mean between the living and the dead? The Red Skinned People and the Pale Skinned People, along with the Black skinned people they think they are better than? Or between normal people and special people, like you,” you hear between your ears with an echo as he moves his lips, mostly in tempo with the words this time.

“That’s...” you say in words. “Funny,” you continue, with music. It makes you smile and laugh.

But the Old Indian doesn’t smile, or laugh. He looks sad, then mad, then seems disappointed in you.

So, you stop playing. “What do you want me to do?” you ask him, hoping that he’ll give you clearer answers than the other ghosts did. The White ones and the Red ones, and the two black skinned cowpunchers who you had conversations with.

“It’s ‘who’ this time,” the short Old Indian, who once introduced himself to you as which ‘TooTall’ in Paleface lingo. “A ‘Who’ who can and must change Normina Falls for the good this time, and the world around it.”

“And the ‘who’ is?” you ask, thinking of all the important people you know in town. The ones whose hands are always clean, clothes always washed, and never break a sweat.

“Professor Jack, and Lady Olivia,” he says inside your head, and with his mouth. The names of these two people you have seen once or twice, sweating and working hard like you do, echo in your head. You want to ask TooTall what you are supposed to do for

them, or with them, hoping he doesn't want you to do something TO them. You take in a deep breath and prepare to ask him for his specific instructions, thinking and maybe even believing that YOU may be someone important too. But before the first words come out of your parched mouth, the door to the barn opens.

"There will be two extra guests for supper tonight. Investors from St. Louis by way of Cheyenne," Mr. Olsen says to you as he hands the reins of his horse to you. "Big eaters, with particular tastes," he says to you, looking at your breasts, then commencing to primping up your hair. "Everything and everyone has to be presentable," the muscular, heavily mustached owner of the third biggest ranch in town says to you with a kind and lopsided smile you have never quite seen before from him.

The Old Indian clears his throat, shaking his head 'no' to you.

"Something wrong, Lois?" Mr. Olsen asks you. "You being Loony again?"

"Nnnnoo, Sir," you said to him with head bowed, as you have learned that you get less beatings that way, and more praise. Particularly with insecure people like Mr. Olsen who needs other people to bow to him so he can feel important, and worthy.

The Old Indian says his final words to you as he vanishes. "Professor Jack, and Olivia. Within five days, you have to..."

Mr Olsen steps in between you and TooTall. He gives you a dress.

"Fer cleanin' or stitchin'?" you ask him.

"For wearing," he says with that smile that you want to trust. And that you do as you follow Mister Olsen to the barn door, with HIM opening the door for YOU this time. You look behind to see what the Old Indian has to say about it, but he's gone. Yet you can feel something in the wind. It's a warm wind that feels chilly to your skin, and puts a ringing into your ears. But, somehow you trust it, along with whatever is supposed to happen for, with or to Professor Jack and Miss Olivia.

CHAPTER 5

You find yourself being a sensor with no motor. A seer with no eyes. A hearer with no ears. A feeler with no skin or tongue, and not even a nose to detect the nature of the odorous ethers. You are, as those with such sensing machinery say, a ghost. But there are some advantages to being such. You don't have to worry about where you're going to get your next meal, how to pay the rent, how to get rid of the venereal disease you got when you fucked with a mortal's head or fellow ghost's mind, or how to find an outhouse when the shit inside of you has to finally come out. But, birds gotta swim and fish gotta fly, so you do what you can, which for the moment, involves watching and observing those with minds still connected to bodies going about the business they call life.

But your Soul can still feel something, other than of course the pains and pleasures of being alone. You feel the agonies of seeing Looney Lois leave the house she cleans up, limping to the shack behind it smelling of love juices, trying to wash the stench off her clothes, skin and bones. Seeing her scrub that skin raw, then crying herself to sleep. The next morning, when the sun opens up her eyes, and startles yours, you see her get on a horse and head up to the hills. She leaves behind everything she owns and once thinks she would value, most notably her long, curly blonde locks, which she tried so hard to wash after the 'dinner' with Mister Olsen. But she keeps her violin, thankfully.

You know that she will be hunted down as a horse thief by time the sun rises towards High Noon, as she took Mr. Olsen's favorite horse. A steed who loves Lois more than he ever bonded to his legal owner. But Looney Lois knows as much about law as she does about love. Or what happens at the other side of what mortals who still have bodies call 'death'. You want to tell her that what lies on the other side of that line so many humans fear is not so bad, but you can't. She's been lied to enough already. And she needs your help. So, you allow yourself to be whisked off into the wind she follows her, and then become that wind.

CHAPTER 6

You can't recall how long you've been on the top of the mountain, as you see, feel and smell the world through the senses of Professor Jack. Those senses are more intense today, and you don't know why. But the sense of time...this is something that eludes you, as you have given up counting how many days you have been in your laboratory. Or is it a philosophical workshop? Or a coffin? The books you have read can't give you an answer, and the most recent one you have written won't give you a solution to your various dilemmas and challenges either. It measures time in chapters. According to this most recent historically-based, and very personalized, work of fiction, it's been twenty-two chapters since you've been down below, said chapters describing what you have seen there, what was there and what you feel should be there. But will it be read? Only the wind knows, and it has been silent today. The clear blue sky has been replaced by fog. It is so thick in places that you think you see ghosts in it. Or maybe you've become a ghost, you consider. The world you have created in print is one in which such beings exist and have more import than those with physical bodies, corporal desires and non-Platonic passions. It's the latter that you think about as you ride your horse around the plateau that has no name except 'home' to you and the animals who live there anyway.

You look at the fog as it decides to play tricks with your eyes, then your inner vision. One of the figurines with trees as bones, and earthbound clouds as muscle and skin, looks like the Old Indian Chief who used to call this place home too. But then he turns into a coyote, a real one this time. You greet the coyote in Souix that you learned from the Chief, Latin that you acquired from the Missionaries you met on the way West, Ancient Greek from thesis advisor Professor Dimitropolis back at Harvard just before you decided to advance your education by LEAVING the university system, Bavarian German that

the old prospector taught you, then finally the last resort in communications with other life forms here. “Hey, great day for a day dream!” you say to the half-wolf, half-dog, all-independent canine. “Or a Vision,” you continue to him, having gotten a response by using the least colorful of tongues you can speak.

He answers in coyote, a mixed howl and bark, but he stands his ground. He sniffs something in the air.

“I know, go for it,” you say, having recognized the aroma of menstruating rabbit, and then seeing footprints on the snow between you and the coyote who you respect enough to not assign a human name. “This one is yours,” you pledge to the beast. “But if there are any more in there, we share, okay? Each gives according to his ability and takes according to his needs.”

Just before chasing the big eared rodent wiggling its nose in a nearby snow covered bush, the coyote says something that you let yourself believe means “Yes, Comrade. We are all in this Life Endeavor and Experiment together.” You ponder, ‘Hey, it wouldn’t be all wrong. I feed him my table scraps, he can bring me a rabbit, beaver or left over elk leg. But he doesn’t because I suppose he has a family of his own that has to eat, and even though he’s a Socialist, like me, the lion’s share of your meager and hard earned daily bread you get does have to go to your kids first before it gets donated to the orphanage.’

It’s another one of those philosophical ideals that loses definition when you apply it to the real world, but achieves vitality when tested. You still believe in it, and the Revolution, even though the Revolution has betrayed you. Or was it your fellow Revolutionaries that fucked it up? Or maybe it was you who betrayed the Cause due to ignorance or cowardice? The Courtroom of Life made its judgement, and your sentence is to be on the top of this mountain, able to feed, cloth and shelter yourself better than anyone down below, with a brain that is working harder, faster and more brilliantly than ever. But the penalty for trying to change things down below is still too high. It’s those who you help who have, and will, suffer, if you continue this pipe dream of being a Crusader. It was declared so by the Mayor-Pastor-Commissar Wilson, who banished you to this ‘paradise’.

You could leave this mountain, and find another town, with another mountain you can hide out in when you want or need to. But you stay. Maybe it’s out stubbornness. Maybe it’s because you still believe in the people down below. Or maybe it’s because of one of the people down below, who finally decided to come up and relieve you of your penance. After all, it was her who suffered most from your ignorance and cowardice, or was it selfishness?

You call her by name. “Olivia!” you feel come out of your chilled, quivering, snow caked lips as you see the woman on horseback come closer. Her hooded silhouette makes her seem like an angel sent by the Heavenly Father who you have been negotiating with in print for the last three books. As she approaches, the hood falls off her head, short blonde rather than long auburn hair under it. Then you see that the rider isn’t the

Valkurie Brunhilde riding atop Grane, waiting to take you to Valhalla, where the coyotes bring you rabbits instead of making you chase after sloppy seconds after they are through hunting. It appears to be Sheriff Olsen, on a brown horse. The fog makes the duster bearing his badge seem even bigger than you recalled, “No doubt, he’s got weapons strapped to his belly instead of books, writing supplies and beans,” you tell yourself in a whisper as your horse is startled by the way he moves. Then he jumps to the side, preparing to head back to the corral at lightning speed as Olsen gets out of the deep snow, breaking into a trot, then a lope, using YOUR trail in the deep snow to make his advance.

Before you can decide whether you talk, negotiate, parle, or shoot first and ask questions later of the man who yearns as much as anyone else in town for you to be hanged, you feel a lightness of flight, then feel your hard ass on the ground, with no snow to cushion your fall. Face down into the snow, your horse looking down at you, you take in a deep breath, finding it painful. Then you try to move your arms and legs, and discover that you can’t. You breathe in again, prepare for the worst, and try again. This time you can move your fore and hindlimbs, but as for getting up, it’s a more painful sensation than the last five times your body said an abrupt hello to the ground while riding the horse that’s so good at everything except being spooked.

As for spooks, your mounted visitor approaches, bringing your horse in tow. Your reins are thrown in front of you hands. You take them, and slowly look up at their deliver. You prepare yourself for some quip that would make you sound witty, brave and colorful. All of course would offend Mayor Wilson and his chief enforcer, but ‘let the punishment fit the crime,’ you say to yourself.

But before you can utter a battle cry for Democratic Socialism to the enforcer of Industrial Capitalism, you connect to the rider’s eyes, and soul. “Lois?” you say to her. “What the hell are you going here?” you continue as you get up, noting her shorn lockes, oversized male coat, and terrified eyes.

“The Old Indian said you would tell me,” she says, begging for an answer. “He said you’re waiting for me. To do something important, I think. And hope!”

You don’t have an answer for this seventeen year old simpleton whose parents four years ago sent her to town with a one way ticket, after which they buggered off to places unknown. For now, Looney Lois, as you have known her, needs an answer to he asking you if she can stay with you and do something important. But first, the shivering mentally-challenged maiden needs a fire to keep her from freezing all of her fingers off, and no doubt a meal. And most certainly, someone who would listen to her with respect, even though most of her speech is about non-sense. “It would make for an interesting next chapter in my book,” you think to yourself as you take off your bearskin overcoat, and invite Lois bury herself and her fresh tears inside it.

CHAPTER 7

It's been a long evening, and it will be an even longer night. At least that's what you're thinking after the fifth dance on stage in the saloon, the owner having left you a note saying that you've been charged with the honor of doing three more upstairs for private audiences. Refusal to accept this honor, and the extra pay that goes with it, leaves you with an option of getting arrested for 'lingering charges' by the Sheriff that buys you ten years in the Pen, or being sold to the Indians. The latter would not be so bad, considering that the new Chief of the local tribe of Souix likes white meat more than red meat. But once he has tasted a bad meal from such, Big Wolf has been known to give away the slave-wives to his underlings, who still harbor major resentments for what had been done by Paleface Men to Redskinned women in the past. So, for the sake of extra profits you can send back home to your estranged family, a few extra creature comforts for yourself, and that cursed survival instinct that keeps you alive yet still feeling like you want to be dead, you accept the invitations from the three gentlemen.

"Sooooo, who'sssss first, Miss Oliviaaaa?" Old Henry asks you as you read the special love notes they submitted to the bartender, along with bids for being in front of the line.

The piano player's off-key version of what he thinks is Beethoven gone ragtime still drives nails into your ears as you listen to Old Henry mutter something in his native Gaelic which he thinks is poetic, and perhaps is. Looking at his eyes, you see that he's lost in his own world again, which maybe he'll find at the bottom of the flask of whisky he's hiding in his hip pocket. But between the lines, you can tell that he wants to be first, second, third and last on the line that leads to your bedroom, and heart.

You want to please him, but if you do, his boss will cut off his balls and feed them to him for breakfast. Knowing Old Henry, he'd probably eat them, not knowing that they are his, as they have never been used. By every sense available to women regarding me, he is offensive down to the core. From the foul breath coming from his nearly toothless mouth, to the one-sided smile that makes his half paralyzed face seem even more distorted when he tries to express himself, to his contorted that has more twists and turns in it than the path that led you to this loveable and, if given a chance, loving freak in the first place.

Yet, Old Henry, who biologically is probably no more than early middle aged, waxes on in Gaelic. Or maybe it's some other tongue of his own invention, since no Mick who came into the WildCat Saloon could make sense of what he was say-singing. You feel yourself getting soft, then open to the Old Henry. In a certain sort of light, he looks more interesting than repulsive. With the lights off, maybe he could find out that his penis is for something other than turning rancid beer into fragrant urine. You find yourself wanting to be the one to teach, and show him that. Maybe even the one who, with the right kind of dance movements under the sheets, can find the knot in his spine that will untwist his back, and the twist in his psych that will enable his mind and brain to discover an empowered Soul to connect them. You smile at his poetic verse, sipping your drink at the bar rather than gulping it down. Just as the highest aspirations of the impossible seems probable, and inevitable, you are brought back to earth by a clearing of the throat from the Man Upstairs.

No, it's not the Almighty, but someone more powerful than Him, or Her, at least in the Wildcat Saloon at the 'tipping hour', when whiskey flows like water and hard earned money from drunken customers flows into said Almighty's pocket. With his fingers, bloody-rags-to-cleverly-obtained-riches Emerson Nordenstrom shows various numbers to you, pointing to the clock, the door to your room, and then to three very different clients on the floor. He asks, nay demands, that you tell him who will be first for a magic one hour carpet ride above the clouds.

You assess the gentlemen desiring, and perhaps deserving, a relief from the excruciating mediocrity and loveless abyss that has become their lives. The first is Dimitri Vasilosovic, Russian immigrant who got lucky when prospecting for gold ten years ago then was cursed with a gold digger American born wife who trapped him into raising three kids she convinced him were his, and then became an expert in making him feel like the lowest, most undeserving, guilt-ridden serf in his native homeland. You saved Dimitri from committing suicide many times before, but still were unable to teach him the difference between pleasing and serving someone. Particularly when it comes to his wife, who knows every way possible to attack his manhood with her mouth, and knows that he is cursed with too much conscience and 'old world honor' to fight back with his tongue, or fist. He strokes his overgrown mustache with his right hand, his left fondling the handle of the knife in his pocket that created the scars on his arms and hairy chest which he claims were from fighting Capitalist-backed Christian Cossacks in the old country who burn down his farm, and Indians here who tried prevent him from building another one.

The second gentleman operates the largest mine in the valley, and everyone in it. The grey bearded, dark eyed spitting image of Robert E Lee is playing five card draw with cowpunchers who think they have the better of him, and is about to deal them cards that he seems to know the identity of before his fellow players do. Former Confederate Colonel Deforest Beaugard Young is a man who never takes orders from anyone, at home, at work, or even in the Wildcat Saloon floor. But as for upstairs, Mister Young, who really does consider himself responsible for seeing that the black, red yellow and white skinned workers under him get a 'fair, Christian shake' in life, wants and needs to be dominated. He feels liberated when he is called a worthless dog, is slapped around like a nigger bitch, and is made to lick the feet of his Priestess Olivia. The week after he's been punished by you, stories come back from his employees that he is smarter, and kinder than normal.

The third client is someone you don't recognize. The man with no stubble on his cheeks, and a neatly trimmed handlebar mustache, is clad in a plain black suit, his boots unscuffed on the side, indicating that they have never met the flank of any horse. He sits alone in the corner of the saloon, reading a book instead of the eyes of the card players in front of him. He sips tea rather than whiskey. Between pages of "Tale of Two Cities", he looks around at people in the bar, seeming to pity rather than judge them. Indeed, he has the learned and perhaps compassionate eyes of the author of that Dickinsonian novel which was written to elevate the qualities of compassion and intelligence. You wonder

what he is doing here, and why he wants to spend an hour with you instead of the other girls, who are far more attractive and flattering to the customers than you are. And for the price in Greek drachmas on the letter he wrote to you while you were dancing. It's written in French, a language that you have told no one here you understand. Maybe it's a ploy, or maybe he knows something about you that you have forgotten, and should be remembered.

You get lost in future dreams and past nightmares, then wake up to Silence from Old Henry, as he has finished his poetics. And a final clearing of the throat from Boss Nordenstrom. You have three seconds to decide which gentlemen you'll take upstairs first. For reasons that you feel are infused into you by fate, or a perhaps the ghosts you feel floating around you, you write a note to the Dickensonian client, sending it to your boss through Old Henry. You wonder how he will receive it.

Nordenstrom, as always, hides his real thoughts, intentions and plans behind a hand that strokes his mustache and chin whiskers. He nods 'yes' to it, and sends Old Henry back down the stairs to the only reader in the saloon. The stranger with the familiar eyes reads your note, smiles then chuckles.

"Good, he has my sense of humor, thankfully," you tell yourself. "And I still have a sense of humor, maybe, thankfully," you consider from an even deeper place. "It will make pleasing, and serving, him for the night more...interesting," you continue in the dialog between mind and soul between your ears. "And for a price that he determines at the end of the night..." you recall regarding the terms, being the gambler that you have to be in the Wildcat to make any kind of living. In a wilderness town where every day is a gamble for survival, expansion and the sanity to enjoy those two hard earned accomplishments.

CHAPTER 8

The iron horse fills the air with smoke. It makes you cough, and want to barf up the very expensive lunch you had an hour ago. But it's worth it, you say to yourself as the locomotive pulls out of the train station you build two years ago. It should bear your name, 'Wilson Crossing', but if it did, you'd make less money on it. As with mines and oil fields from which you extracted raw materials here in the West that are needed in the East, which is where the money, power and influence is.

Your ears clamor with the voices of workers in many different languages. You don't understand any of them but they are all saying three things. "I didn't escape slavery in my country to be a slave here." "If I work hard enough, my children will not have to do what I'm doing." And of course, as they sneak a look your way, "One bullet into that bastard Wilson's head and everyone here will be better off."

But you know that the rule of this new land, which to you is still new, is that he who has the money makes the rules. And he who owns the people who have the guns makes the

laws. As for who makes the honor, as that ethereal ideal is invented rather than intrinsic to the character of man, or woman,....that is always up for 'discussion'.

Discussing that matter, one way or the other, is the man standing next to you as the last shipment of raw materials go out, and you look at the chest of gold bars, bank notes and cash money that came in. They are in small boxes that are locked, and guarded by well paid men. Or malleable ones. You know that maintaining order in such a place, which is required for EVERYONE to eat, requires such. And that being the asshole behind the scenes who keeps order requires that the rich remain on top, so the anarchist hotheads on the bottom don't burn down everything is a dirty job, but someone has to do it. The workers don't get that. Not yet anyway. The unwashed faces of the labourers around you are embedded with eyes that seem pitiful and tortured. But if any of them were in charge of things, they would be more a more vicious asshole than you ever were. Proof of such is evident in the foremen who you promoted, and how they abuse the men, and women, under them in ways you have never even imagined.

Your glance is taken hostage by the ringing of the Church bell in town, calling in the women of the town for a prayer meeting. It's a non-political prayer meeting centered around how to deal with their drunken husband's at home, their representative told you. Or so the scantily clad Olivia, the dancer at the Wildcat, assured you after you agreed to the arrangement. For the moment, the steeple of the town church is higher than any other structure in this community. And for the moment, it's the wives over-clad in black rather than the dancers sporting every other color who dominate the congregation.

"A good day for the Lord, and for business?" you hear from a man behind you.

"So far, Sheriff Olsen," you answer, intentionally not looking at him, as it is beneath your necessary position to do so, and he may see the fear in your eyes. That most disabling of emotions overtakes you, like a wave of weakness that comes up from your freshly shined boots to the top of your recently barbered head, making the neatly trimmed hairs stick out in directions of their own. You try to press them back into place, feeling the grease that not only keeps those sparse locks you still have in place, but hides the smell of sweat that's coming out your forehead. So, you wipe your brow with a handkerchief---Sheriff Olsen's. He doesn't seem to mind, or doesn't show it in his face anyway.

As for faces, the one you are wearing at the time flashes back to you through a mirrored reflection again in another box containing more salary money that has been taken off the train. "What'ya want us to do with these eh.. books, Reverend?" a man with skinned darkened by both genetics and soot asks you, so proud of himself for being able to read the label on the metallic 'carton'.

"The Church," you tell the Negroid laborer, instructing him as to the way to the basement through the back door. He goes on his way, followed by Sheriff Olsen, who is followed by you. You know that if this laborer finds out what he is really carrying, or wants to open the box to advance his own literary education, you'll have to kill him. Or get Sheriff Olsen to do it, as such would be his pleasure and passion, having survived the

War between the States by enjoying rather than enduring armed combat. For the moment, having him on your side is good currency, and required procedure. Until the time when you of course will have to replace him with someone else. Or someone else replaces you, as almost occurred one failed Revolution ago here. But said uprising didn't make the papers, or was written down in any books. Not in any that anyone has written or read yet, so you think, and fear.

CHAPTER 9

You feel a chill penetrating through your head and going down your spine, even though the window in Professor Jack's cabin is closed, and he just put another log on the fire. He apologizes for not being able to make it warm enough for you, and offers you his a beaverskin hat to put on your head. You accept, and put it on your head, and try to pretend that the hair on the hat is your own, but, it isn't. 'You really did chop off your hair when you left the Olsen ranch, Lois,' you tell yourself. But thankfully you didn't do it below the scalp. For now anyway. But it had to be done, you rationalize to yourself, having never experienced being so naked. Just like stealing Sheriff Olsen's coat, horse and whatever food you can carry. After all, he stole something from you after he asked you to pleasure his dinner guest, then had desert at the expense of what was left of your soul himself. What he stole when he and is guest opened up, as well as penetrated, your most private parts you are not sure of, but perhaps you will find out what he stole in the books you are reading. And maybe the man who wrote those books can tell you how to get it back, whatever it is.

That man, Professor Jack, pours more tea into your cup and puts another two bisquits on your plate. He then sits back on the smaller and by the looks it more uncomfortable chair in the cabin and asks you what you think about the book.

"It's...good," you say, trying to make him feel good about himself, but apparently not convincingly enough by the way he pulls the smile back into his pursed lips. Before his eyes turn downward, yet again, you say "No, this book is great! It makes me smile, and laugh...and...think," you continue. "Sometimes all three at the same time."

"Yeah? Which parts?" he asked you, wanting and needing an answer as he leans forward. "Can I hear those attempts to put the etherial Truth into spoken words, from your voice, as said voice has become absorbed in so many others, I do know if I am writing the book or the Core of that endeavor is writing about me," he answers.

You don't know what he is saying, or meaning, and do your best to hide it.

"The right answer," he smiles back, after which he looks downward thinking about something, then back up again. He looks into your eyes, needing your approval for something. Like you're the smart one and he's....you. The dumb one down below who feels like the smart one here. Unless Professor Jack is playing games with you. But

whatever game it is, it's one where he means you no harm, so it seems. After all, the Old Indian ghost would not lead you to another man who meant you harm.

You take in another sip of tea, then take another bite of the bisquit. "Good, very...good," you say, regarding the drink and food that you eat now for the taste of it, your belly having been filled already by the meal last night.

"The book you mean?" he asks again. "Which I'd like to hear in your voice," he continues.

You look at the marks of ink on the page, recognizing most of them as words. Most of them you can pronounce and know the meanings of. But the long ones, and a lot of the shorter ones, make no sense to you. Still, you do your best to read them to Professor Jack, whose real name you never knew, or cared to. He crouches down on his chair, his head below yours, as you read what you can in the book like your mother, then your sister, read to you when you were a little girl.

The Professor seems to not like it when you mispronounce the words that you don't recognize. So, you decide to make up your own words and stories when you find a whole string of the words you can't read, or understand. He seems to like your stories and words better than your own, so it seems. He takes notes on them, and asks you to continue every time you want to stop.

Then you hit a portion of the book about good people fighting against bad people where nothing makes sense. You get an idea. You lay down the book, pick up the violin and start to play. You ask Professor Jack to read his own words while you play music. At first it feels strange to him, then it feels right to him. As you play music to what he reads, often with words and ideas you can't understand, it feels like you are both writing a new book in your head, together. He is anyway. You get new ideas about songs you can make up from his words, and the way he reads them.

The logs in the wood burning stove run out, and the room gets cold, but you don't care. Neither does he. He wants to keep reading, and writing, and you want to keep playing. You look around to see if the Old Indian is there, but you can't see him. Yet, you can feel him. You can feel something bigger than yourself, and the Professor who everyone in town, even the Indians who are still alive, says is bad medicine. But you feel and somehow know it to be something...good.

After a few more chapters and songs of 'good', the Professor, who asks you to call him Jack, pulls out something from a table he converted into a desk. He takes out five sheets of paper with portraits of important, well dressed people who look like they have constipation, or are sour about something they didn't eat. There are numbers on the corners of them.

"I need to know your name, for these bank notes," he says to you.

“Lois, Loony Lois,” you answer with a smile, this time proud of what people have called you, as maybe not being loony made them miserable, like the people on the bank notes.

“Not Looney anymore,” he continues. “They won’t honor it unless I give you a last name.”

“What about yours, Jack?” you inquire of him, as you never liked the last name you were born with, and couldn’t spell it right anyway.

“An interesting proposition,” he says to you, as he looks at you like a father, friend, or brother, then writes something after ‘Lois’ on the note. But, no, he looks at you like you are something else. Someone who thinks you can save him, like the puppies, cats, pigs and mice who have stumbled their way to you so many times. But what does he want? He certainly doesn’t want you to see the last name he wrote on the note. He didn’t want you to cook, clean or pleasure him. You decide to ask him why he wants to write your name on the bank notes. He tells you, as he hands the first two to you. “Two for now, for when I am alive,” he says.

“For doing what?” you ask him.

“Promising to kill me, so you can collect the rest of these notes afterwards according to the terms on them,” he informs you. “With this,” he says, handing you a small pistol, which you reluctantly take, not really knowing how it works. “When the time is right, so you can take care of my children, and keep them alive,” he says pointing to a shelf full of books behind him. “I’ll see that you don’t go to jail, or get blamed for it,” he continued, leaning back on his chair, then looking out the window at the dark, night sky. He stares into the stars, humming the tunes you just made up, losing himself in them.

You want to find out where his soul went, but you are needed for something else. The horse you stole from Sheriff Olsen whinnies at you, wanting to get fed. So do the horses who own Professor Jack. “In a minute, fella’s,” you say to the geldings scurrying around in the big coral. It’s something you can do for the Professor, whose last name no one in town knows, or admits to knowing anyway. So, you look at the bank notes, as his last name is now yours. “Jorgenson. Louise Jorgensen,” you read on the note, realizing that the ‘e’ on your new first name is very small. “Or Louis?” you say to yourself as you sneak a look into your reflection on the only mirror on the cabin, pushing back what is left of your hair, thinking about how it would be to go through life as a boy. Or whatever Professor Jorgenson needs you to be, aside from, you hope, the person who kills him.

CHAPTER 10

You wake up in the morning feeling like you want to embrace the day rather than to have this day be the one that ends this endeavor called ‘life’. Maybe it’s the way the sun shines in through the window, lighting up and warming your face. Maybe it’s the sound

of the birds outside, feeling more like music than random chirping. Maybe it's the pile of money that lays in your locked draw next to your bed, paid by your recent client. Or maybe it is that client, who addressed you as Lady Olivia in a way that he meant it, never once touching anything except your hand while kissing it, and your heart after he opened it. But what did he want from you? Maybe it was for you to believe in the fairy tale he told you about making this Territory its own country, ruled by its own people. White ones, black ones, and perhaps even some red ones, and with some minor participation from some yellow ones.

Mister Dickenson, as he called himself, did sleep with you last night but he was fully clothed. You watched the well dressed dude from the East mumble something in his sleep, in several languages. You didn't recognize most of them, but he sounded like a gentlemen in all of them. Even more so, like a noble gentlemen advising other gentlemen, and a few ladies, as to how the kingdom should be ruled. He listened to others in his imaginations as well, and considered what they had to say. He also listened to you last night when he asked you to tell him about you rather than wanting to talk about himself.

Of course, you embellished your life story. You initially told him tales about being an opera singer at La Scala and a dancer in Paris, when in actuality the only halls you ever performed in were in Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Trenton, New Jersey. You regaled him about tales about your father and mother being musicians who both entertained and taught children born to the Russian Czar, the Hapsburg Emporer and the Queen of England. He politely said that he was unaware of Queen Victoria having any children, and let you rant on, after which you hinted at the hard working side of the family who fought the established order in service of a Democratic Ideal, starting with a German Uncle who really DID die on the barricades in 1848, and another who was forced to flee to Texas after the Kings and Capitalists destroyed 'the people's' Revolution. He seemed to like the darker side of your real past more than the one you made up.

You turn around to ask him if he wants to have a picnic for lunch, where you'll pay for HIS company, but he's not there when you turn around to see what is on the other side of the bed. There are only pillows, and a photo of him with someone who you recognize as none other than Professor Jack. Both men have no whiskers on their chins or upper lips, no wrinkles on their faces, and no worry about anything behind their optimistic eyes. These two men of learning are dressed as common laborers, with shovels, in the woods somewhere. Below the photo is an inscription: 'Gotta dig for the truth whenever life gives you a shovel to do so'. It's in English, and French. In that latter language, which always felt more musical to your ear than the one you were born to, he wrote a note for you, which he left on a prospector's shovel he left at the doorway. 'Let's make it a threesome,' it says with subtext that is romantic rather than crude. 'As soon as you can make it up there.' He signs it 'Albert'.

You wonder what why this man who is more about than respect than love knows so much about you. You become obsessed with knowing what past he had with Professor Jack, and what kind of future he came all the way out here to find with him. And you recall your own history with Professor Jack, when you were his 'student', or maybe his teacher. In an 'arrangement' that some would say was a marriage made in Heaven, or a relationship of betrayals and disappointments that was designed by the most Machevellian matchmaker in hell.

CHAPTER 11

The reason why you moved your body, mind and consciousness up the mountain was so that you could forget everything you experienced, and perhaps accomplished, down below. But down below has delivered you another visitor, who insists on talking about politics over the dinner table. All you want to talk about is what kind of roots and berries should go into the moose stew to make it taste more like stew than just moosemeat. But Albert Dickinson insists on reminiscing about the good old days back East. 'Comrade John', he calls you, despite your asking him to refer to you as Professor Jack. Or Jack. Or Professor anything. Professor Moron. Professor Asshole. Professor Absent of Mind and perhaps Soul. You've referred to yourself in the mirror with these terms, sometimes when you looked into the reflection in that reflective surface which you refuse to destroy, or cover.

You try to avoid looking into that watcher of your soul as you clear the table and give your visitor desert. It's something you never could have cooked yourself, and which you allowed Loony Lois to prepare. After all, she made your moosemeat stew eatable. She has presented herself to you guest as Louis when he arrived, then let her voice rise up in octave and swell in gentility as the evening progressed. By the way Albert thanks her for the pie she baked, he knows that Louis is really Louise. And though the words he uses to talk to her with are those within her realm of understanding, he doesn't consider her loony or stupid. As a matter of feelable fact, he seems to see a genius in her that you missed, either because you really are Professor Idiot or Professor Asshole. Which one is best determined of course not by the image on the other side of the mirror. Or 'Comrade Albert', who you fought three failed Peoples Revolutions with, two on this side of the Atlantic and one on the more civilized, and oppressive, side of the Pond. Or even in Loony Lois' eyes, which are incapable of portraying anything different than what her mind is thinking and her heart is feeling. As for the animals under your care who own you, particularly your two most utilized riding horses, and your hunting/sniffing dog/wolf, they always see the better part of you, God help and bless them. And as for God, who you have challenged and served longer than you remember, and who is always behind or within every thought and action, He, She or It gives you mixed messages as to whether you are an asshole or an idiot, or were such back in the day. But there is one living creature whose words you can trust, or decide to anyway.

That Oracle has come to you, and now sits in front of you at the table, taking a generous bite of the apple cobbler Lois has baked. Lois says that credit goes to you for the recipe if it tastes good, taking the blame for not following it right if it tastes bad.

“A perfect companion for you, Jack,” Olivia notes as she samples one bite of the pie, not saying if she likes it or not. “As long as no one below finds out about what happens behind closed doors here, and you don’t write about it,” she continues, taking an even larger piece of the delicacy into her small mouth.

“So, you like it?” Lois asks, as herself, feeling proud of herself, somehow. Like she was the one responsible for bringing you and your ex-’wife’ together. “You DO like it, Comrade Oliva, don’t you?” she presses.

“I’d like to, and maybe would, if I test some more of it,” the woman who gave up on you and the Revolution so many years ago continues. Putting her tentative capitalistic theories into practice, she gulps down the rest of her pie, then helps herself to the portions allocated to you, then to ‘Comrade’ Albert. Everyone in the room, including your Wolf-Dog, eagerly watches Olivia to assess her opinion. Finally, she sits back, strokes her chin in professorial mode, and after a tense pause, proclaims, “It was delicious. Best I ever tasted. Particularly because I will be the only one to taste it.” With that, she takes the remaining portion of the pie and offers it to your dog, who gobbles it up before you can say ‘Das Capital’ or ‘Liberty and Justice for All’. “Man’s best friend, who know that women are more reliable Comrades than penis bearing humans,” she smiles as she strokes the neck of the mixed blood canine, then whispers something in French to him.

The edges of Comrade Albert’s lips turn upward, indicating that he understood what Olivia said, and meant, being pleased beyond measure. Lois’ face reveals vicarious bliss and approval as well. Your ability to understand French, and the eyes of an upfront woman, are rusty, but the message is clear as day with regard to the proposal Albert came up here with. “One last Revolution, different... administrative structure,” you say, in words.

“With no delay or procrastination this time,” Albert proclaims with an utmost sense urgency, handing you a paper outlining the provisional plan.

“And no mistakes or miscalculations,” Olivia asserts as you look at it.

“We’re all only human,” you remind the two most recent intruders to your mountain haven and/or coffin.

“A luxury we cannot afford, Jack,” Albert informs you, as he hands you an envelope containing newspaper clippings from the town below, and the cities on the other side of the mountains, and the Pond. One of them hits you hardest, particularly when you read the names of the people who were arrested. Spies, Engels, Fischer and even Parsons, socialist anarchists, imprisoned for inciting the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago were all good friends of yours when you were getting your formal and street educations in the

East. They organized almost 50 thousand oppressed workers in that city to strike for the most basic rights of laborers trying to provide for their families, including an eight hour work day and outlawing the practice of having their 6 year old children being worked into an early grave at the sweat shops and mines. You recall your own failures in making things happen over here in the West. But you also recall some of your accomplishments in the East, and some of the good things that your most trusted Comrade, Albert, got right, and effective. You try to change the subject to matters more personal than political. “So, how’s your son doing?” you ask Albert. “Or more accurately, my surrogate nephew, Hans,” you request of your German born and American raised Freethinker who fought as a boy on the barricades in 48 back in the old country. “He was a brilliant boy, taking to the steps of his Freethinker father and Grandfather, as I remember, and is no doubt a wise and learned man now.”

“Who followed too closely in his father’s footsteps,” Albert answers regarding his son, a mixture of anger, guilt and regret competing to dominate his soul after you opened up a wound inside of him. Before you can figure out a way to heal that soul, or at least figure out the patho-physiology of the malady that is overtaking it, Albert averts his eyes, gets up from the table, puts on his coat, and stares at the stars. You walk to the door, to talk to him. A hand pulls you back. “Physician, heal thyself, before you fuck up anyone else,” she says.

You turn to Olivia, staring into her angry eyes. She slaps you in the face, harder than you thought she had in her. Lois wants to help, but you hold up your hand, then turn the other cheek, begging Olivia to beat the color and perhaps teeth out from that side. She accommodates your request. You feel vindicated, for now anyway. Until she pulls you into her chest, hugs you as hard as you’ve been embraced by anyone else, then kisses you on the lips. She pulls back before you can return her kindness and courage. She pulls two steps backwards, holding onto your hand as long as she dares, and then takes her coat from the wall. She walks, slowly, out the back door of the cabin, presumably to ask the stars there for an answer to the dilemmas that have revisited her, Albert and yourself.

The illuminating confusion is given definition in sound by Lois’ violin. Somehow she channels into the music the hopes, dreams and aspirations of what can be rather than the black, horrific and shameful memories of what was. You allow the corner of your lips to give in to a smile that wants to take over your face. Your troubled mind observes your mouth chuckling. The dog wolf barks, then paws at the door from which Albert left. It’s his signal that his colon is full of shit, and he needs to evacuate it. “No, the other door,” you tell him, walking towards the back door Olivia took. But he insists on going out the front door. Conceding to his wisdom, or the path of least resistance for you, you open the front door and see Albert staring at the stars. Albert allows you to stand next to him. Neither of you say anything. The stars have too much to reveal to both of you, requiring that you both listen to them, harder than you ever had before.

CHAPTER 12

From the oak desk in your solitary bedroom which you use for sleeping only, alone now, you look at the newspaper, through the tired eyes of Preacher Wilson after having delivered a heartfelt service at the church that he sweated to write, which was barely listened to by the congregation. The story is dated Nov 4, 1886. The calendar where you are says it is already December, making you feel even more isolated from important places like where the story took place. But the four anarchists did deserve to hang on the gallows in Chicago for being ringleaders in the massacre in which four civilians, and as many policemen were brutally killed, along with 70 wounded whose injuries were quite severe and debilitating. True, Spies, Parsons, Engels and Fischer, coincidentally all with foreign roots, didn't throw the bomb at the police who were trying to control the probably armed mob of ungrateful, mostly-immigrant workers who wanted more than they deserved, and could get back in their own country. But they incited it. And the Pinkertons in Chicago will eventually find out the true culprit amongst the 'peaceful' workers who threw a bomb at the policemen. Most particularly at A policeman, Mathias J. Degan. A hard working policeman with an honorable name, upstanding Christian children, and a loving wife. You see his picture in the newspaper, seeing yourself and your own children when they grow up in his eyes. You swear to his memory, and the memory of all other hard working Americans, and non-violent immigrants who are earning the right to be Americans, that this won't happen in your town. And that the Pinkertons here will ferret out the vermin amongst the ranks of the workers who would be bringing home NO wages had it not been for your skills in presentation, coordination and integration with regard to the finances of the mines, oil fields and other businesses that would not have been created but for your GOD given abilities

Sheriff Olsen knocks on the door, requesting entry. He addresses you as Mayor Wilson, a title which you accept for now, anticipating that once statehood comes to this territory of barbarous misfits, it will be 'Governor'. You indulge him cautiously, knowing fully well that though he is the second in command here, he is not the most trustworthy of the people you are responsible for. "Any news about what happened to my horse, and housekeeper?" he asks you, for the fifth time that week.

"If you were the kind of sheriff who thinks with your head and not your balls, you'd know, you motherfucking piece of crap," you feel like saying but don't, as you need his brawn and reputation to keep order here. And because as a man of God, honoring the Sabbath, you refrain from obscenities and direct insults for at least one day a week. "No more clues as to where Lois is, from anyone I asked, or who confided in me as a man of the cloth," you reply faining an apology to Olsen regarding the disappearance of Loony Lois and the horse she cared for a lot better than he ever did. "But maybe if we listen hard enough, we'll hear her playing her violin in the woods," you suggest. "Her mental and perhaps spiritual affliction makes her speak to animals, the stars and the ghosts she sees with that fiddle. I recall that she likes to talk to the ghosts in the mountains most. The taller the mountains, the more interesting the ghost, she has been known to ascultate on many occasions to people and the ethers."

"Hmmm..." Olsen says, contemplating something. "My dog did always like her yankering on that fiddle of hers."

You feel like telling the handsome, bold, barely literate but still elected sheriff that Lois played the violin rather than ‘yankered’ on the fiddle. But you let him go on with the idea that you planted in his head, which does contain a brain of some kind under the full head of hair the ladies love, and which you lost just as you got interested in women.

“I’ll take Blacky up into the hills, see if he can hear her,” Olsen says. “Unless, of course, you need me for something here, Mayor Wilson.”

“Just for you being in Church next Sunday, Sheriff Olsen,” you reply back at the muscle you want to keep as dumb as possible. And as out of the way as you can as a plan to keep the peace, and promote prosperity, in this town incubates in your own head.

CHAPTER 13

You know where you are, sort of. And you know who you are, but still don’t let on that you used to be called Looney Lois. You’re three days hard ride from Professor Jack’s cabin. You left before the breakfast dishes could be washed and the sun is in the middle of the sky now, in the middle of heavily wooded mountains having got there on a trail that only Professor Jack could see, and his dog could smell. ‘Injun Kuntry’ is the best description you have of it, since you saw a few painted skulls along the way and you are surrounded by Indians in their mobile campground that they revere as much as any town. Some have short hair, some have long hair. Some are wearing trousers and boots like everyone in town, some are covered from head to toe with animal hides, like Professor Jack. But they all are carrying guns, the men, the women, and the children. Most of the children are a lot younger than you, but their eyes look old and they have more scars on their body than you do.

Entering your nostrils is the smoke of their campfire, along with odors from wounds and open sores, and herbs being cooked up by an old Medicine Woman who but for the tattered moccasins she is wearing, her partially-scalped long white mane, and the kind look in her tired eyes, resembles your own grandmother, as you remember her anyway. The grandmother who talked to herself a lot in the kitchen, and between arguments with ghost there, taught you how to play the violin before a wagon came and took her away to someplace she said you should never let yourself be taken to.

You think about who you are. You feel like someone other than you were on that night when Sheriff Olsen asked you to prepare a special dinner for himself and his guest. Are you Loony Lois, who has to hide from Sheriff Olsen, who Professor Jack, Lady Olivia and Comrade Dickinson said they think they spotted following you to the Injun village? Are you Louis, the identity you adopted when you left the Olsen ranch along with everyone else in town just a week ago? Or are you Louise, a beautiful woman who, with the right hat and wig, could compete for the affections, or love, of any man in any town, according to Lady Olivia.

You asked Professor Jack three hours and two possible sittings of Sheriff Olsen ago who you should be. He had said you should be ‘yourself’, but he seemed to be lying to both you and himself when he said that. ‘A student who excels her teacher one day,’ he continued more as a teacher than a Comrade Professor. He seems to be someone who so desperately needs to be a teacher, far more than you need to be his student. But you respect and pity him, so you let him think that his answer was the one that worked for you.

When Professor Jack was riding ahead, out of hearing range, you had asked Lady Olivia who you should be, and she told you to be who you WANT to be. Comrade Dickinson, or as you accidentally called him, Uncle Albert, advised you to be who you needed to be, after which he stopped talking to you, particularly when you started asking him about who he needed to be, and why. You recall that Uncle Albert and Aunt Olivia looked at each other for a long time afterwards, talking with their eyes. Whatever they were saying to each other stopped fast when Professor Jack came back, redirecting the route to the Indian Camp.

Waking you out of your daydreams, or new nightmares, is the Old Indian Chief, who only you can see. He walks amongst the gathering and seems to know all of these people here, respecting all of them, liking some of them too. But no one seems to see him, except for the Old Medicine Woman, who he seems to love. She waves toward the ghost of Old Indian Chief smoke from something Professor Jack told you was Sweetgrass. He accepts it with a bow and a wide smile. Then she turns to you, telling you to look at people in the real world, not at what seems to be her husband. Maybe she is jealous of you, or maybe she’s protecting you from something. You don’t know. All you do know is that with her mouth, eyes and hands, she tells you to sit where you are behind the Three Palefaces you came in when, shut up, and resume playing your violin while the important people talk.

“So, why should we Redskins help you Red Palefaces kick the Capitalists out of your town, after all you Palefaces kicked us out of our ancestral lands?” you hear the Young Chief, who has more warpaint, buckskin and weapons on him than any of the other Indians, say to the Old Professor. He speaks English just like the French Trappers, with a tone that’s bitter, angry and distrusting of everyone else who isn’t French or a full time Trapper.

“Because a whole lot of them are working for the Mayor Wilson and his cronies, in the delusion that they will become one of them one day,” Professor Jack replies, stroking his beard, then nodding to you to accompany the rest of his presentation to the collection of tents, shacks and teepees hidden in the hills that the renegade young Chief calls his mobile village.

You play melodies on your violin that you heard Lady Olivia sang when she was in bed with Professor Jack, and Comrade Albert gave voice to outside their window. They were composed by Mozart, Vivaldi and Beethoven, but which melody was composed by which one eludes you. You try to combine them with chants and flute songs you heard

from the Indians when you rode into this village. Which ones to play when are of course not up to you, but the tall man who conducts you with his eyes.

The ghost of the wise Old Indian Chief, who stands behind the angry young one, points you to the three Revolutionary White Comrades and selected Indians with his left hand, telling you whose tune you should put into music. With his right hand he gives you the timing, rhythm and emotion of it all. Meanwhile, you can hear from the ear not holding the violin in place you hear the rest of Professor Jack's plan, or which was actually not all his plan, but he takes credit for it. You can't make sense of the plan, but it seems to involve the young Indian Chief.

At the end of it all, the young Chief looks deeply into Professor Jack's eyes. "You do know that the people you want to liberate are the ones who want to put you in chains," he says.

"Because of what he did, and didn't do," the Old Indian informs you. "When you were just a little girl."

You always considered yourself a little girl, even though you now pass yourself off as a grown up boy for every White man you see now, at the advice of Professor Jack, and against the advice of Lady Olivia. The Old Indian refers you to the conversation again, and to his son, the young Chief who he embraces, but can't touch, as he is a ghost, who knows more about life than those who aren't dead yet. And who appreciates life more, even though he has told you that you shouldn't fear death.

Professor Jack outlines more of his plan, but the young Chief says he'll need more information about the town before he commits himself and any of his braves to join in this Revolution. He also reminds the Professor that he has to see what the town has become from the inside, as he hasn't been in town very much. He informs the Professor that before he begins teaching his students, he better become one again.

The old mountain man who seems to be more of a knower than a doer, at least now, pulls himself back, confused at the question. Olivia whispers something in his ears that he doesn't want to believe. Albert looks at him, telling him with his eyes that he had better believe it, for everyone's sake.

"So, which will it be? A scalping or a shave?" the young Indian Chief asks the Old Professor, whipping out a sharp buffalo knife from.

CHAPTER 14

You recall the axiom that the most effective assessment of what and who's on top is by seeing it all from the bottom. You realize that a well dressed man with clean hands is always on top one with torn clothing and dirty hands. Below that man with blistered and dirty hands is a woman, usually with white skin and hair that has not turned that hue yet.

Below that woman is one with darker complexion. Below all of the above is a dark-skinned woman who is old. She knows more than everyone else, and because she has survived this long, anyone with any brains or heart will listen to her. But, they don't, and perhaps never did. Yet a detritus-shoveling, crap-cleaning old hag knows where and how the shit rises to the top, and who is full of it.

You now see the world from the viewpoint of that old hag, an old woman with artificially-darkened skin who cleans tables and, when she is permitted to do so, serve customers at the Utopian Eatery. It's a raunchy establishment frequented by workers from the mines, oil fields and manufacturing plants when their 12 hour shifts are done with. Some are avoiding going home to their overworked wives and, despite their efforts, underfed children. Some wish they had wives and/or children to go home to. It's the early evening dinner shift now, most of the customers drinking as much of their supper as eating it. Beer is considered a food that feeds the belly as well as lightens the load on the brain. Salted eggs and sandwiches are free. The beer isn't. The bosses who now own the place know this, and made a deal with the current owner, Hans Edelmann, who is more of a worker than a manager.

"Hey, Wench!" he screams out at you from behind the bar. "Table 2 is thirty, table 3 is hungry and there's still vomit on table 6!" he reminds you in a big, bold voice. "And my customers deserve some respectable service after giving too much service to the bosses all day!" he declares.

The crowd cheers at hearing the old German's remark. You want to, but can't, as you have a job to do. It involves not only cleaning tables, pouring beer and serving up sandwiches, but pretending that you are at the bottom of the totem pole. And pretending that you are dark rather than white skinned. And pretending that you were born with a vagina rather than a penis. And pretending that your name is not Professor, Jack or that surname you have tried to forget and are now trying to earn back again. And pretending that it was someone else who established this Eatery, along with its name, two failed Revolutions ago.

With another pitcher of beer and salted boiled eggs, you shuffle over to a table occupied by Welsh coal miners making jokes about Mayor-Pastor Wilson and the other bosses. You can't make out what they are saying, but it is clear that they wish their employers far more harm than good, in this life and the next. As you approach the table, two of the tired and still-moderately drunk White women with soot-stained faces begin to speak in Gaelic, sharing a joke at your expense. A hammered miner, the 'leader' of the group by the way he carries his head high and keeps his back arched, explains to you, in a slow manner he is sure a simpleton like you would understand, "My boys here just said that if God had any sense of humor or justice, he'd send Pastor Wilson back to earth after buying his way up to the Pearly Gates and make him become you, not meanin' any offense to you of course."

"But providing it nonetheless," a smaller framed miner at the table adds as he helps you take the pitcher of beer off your tray and assists you in distributing the free salty food that

he, and perhaps no one else at the table, knows is given to you for free so that you'd keep ordering more beer, which you have to pay for in dollars and drowned brain cells. He motions to a boy at the door of no more than twelve years, whose face looks like he is eager for death, to close that porthole, as well as to draw shades over the windows. He pours beer for his colleagues and a glass for yourself as well. He insists that you take it. You do. "To...the real Utopia!" the brains, and perhaps conscience of these Welsh miners proclaims with one hand raised to the sky. "Where everyone gives according to their ability and takes according to their needs."

The workers at the tables, who have been conversing in languages of their own, hear the toast and join into it. "The Real Utopia, where everyone gives according to their ability and takes according to their needs!" they repeat in unison.

"But this time without Professor Jack instructing us in the fine art of self-sabotage," you hear from an old man at a table in the back of the room. Thank God, and/or Buddha, Fredrick McCoy doesn't recognize you. But you recognise him by the deep scar on his face that should have been on yours, and the mangled left leg that should be dangling from YOUR knee. "And not telling us that we should be drinking Truth and Wisdom instead of beer!"

The workers who didn't relate to the self-sabotage dig do connect with the one about your having told them that firewater, even beer, quenches the flames of Vitality in the gut rather than enhances such. "Perhaps I should have suggested it rather than told them," you think to yourself as you join in the toast, pretending to be one of the workers you tried to save from the bosses, and themselves. "Perhaps I should have proved to them somehow that the bosses allow and encourage mischief such as getting drunk, laid and inebriated with medicinal so that you get too tired and discouraged to carry on Revolution," you say to yourself as the entire house shares in a drink.

But who or what are they really toasting to? What do they really value, and how far are they willing to go to prove such? You came here to assess who would be the best, strongest and most effective revolutionaries. And to see who would sell out to the Pinkertons. And to see who is a Pinkerton. They have infiltrated even the most dedicated circles of Freedom and Democracy serving anarchists before. Perhaps one of them is responsible for why used to be the most respected and followed citizen in town here, and now are the brunt of their jokes, and the cause of their disappointment.

You begin to consider what went wrong and how you can make it right. And who you can work with to make it right. But the toast to the Socialist Ideal leads to lots of empty beer glasses, which you have to fill. Hans summons you to the bar again. "Mary!" he barks out, more like a boss than someone who stole back the Utopian Cafe and the Brewery from the bosses.

You turn around, feeling the tightness of the corset Olivia insisted that you wore, and the rest of the confining wardrobe that girls, women and ladies are still required to inhibit, even amongst most Revolutionary men. "Coming!" you say in your best high pitched

voice, shuffling over to the bar, head down, hairless face hidden. But this time not because you want to hide your real biological gender, but your past accomplishments that you now see were perhaps failures.

Hans points you to a table where a single customer sits, then points you to a tray containing a sandwich with extra meat in it, and a small bottle of the best whiskey in the place. According to his coal-dust impregnated striped overalls and hat, the customer is an assistant railroad engineer. According to his eyes under the visor he's someone else. Sheriff Olsen motions for you to come over to his table, motioning with his fingers that he wants to put his Johnson into your snatch.

“Say yes to part of it, and extra money for you and your grandkids, Mary,” Hans explains to you in a fatherly tone. “This building doesn't go up into a bonfire. And the conversations that take place here remain confidential.”

Assistant Engineer Olsen winks at you. He takes off his wedding ring, offering it to you, along with a wink and a smile. He senses your hesitation, then addresses you by another name. “Come hither, Jackie,” he says with an ‘I got you’ smirk.

“Maybe he reminds you of someone else,” Hans offers by way of explanation, and perhaps support. “And by the way you're looking at him, he reminds you of someone else too, Mary?”

You don't answer Hans question of course, but there are two questions you have. First: “Who and how did Sheriff Olsen find out about the secret plan worked out at the Indian camp?” Second: “What do I have to do for or with him to keep my ability to be ‘Mary’ so easily away from people who want, and need, me to be an EFFECTIVE Professor Jack?”

CHAPTER 15

It wasn't your intention to see him like this, even when he pissed you off most. But as he didn't come home, and one of the town deputies rode out to the mountain cabin, it was time to come back to town. Besides, your money hungry and virtue-less boss at the Wildcat, Emerson Nordenstrom, can't keep his business going without you for more than a week without his Lady Olivia. And his business can bring in a lot of money for the Revolution. Of course you would have to cajole it out of him, but you are very good at trickery, and he enjoys being robbed from, as long as it is your hands that are doing the stealing, and they wind up, perhaps, stroking his flesh and fragile ego.

But the first stop into town is the Sheriff's office, to bring home defective goods. “There ‘it’ is,” says Deputy Jones, a Welsh miner who busted his ass to become foreman, than kissed enough ass to become the enforcer rather than the victim of the local laws and ordinances. “She' sure is ugly, but if she can cook, and clean, and laugh at your jokes, she'd make a great wife, or gelded husband.”

“Manhood is between the ears, not the legs,” Professor Jack replies from behind the bars of the jail, still clad as Mary. His face has sprouted a bit of stubble, and is staring into space at the floor. He has no other defense for what he did, and failed to complete, than what he just said. But he still has one ace up his petticoat. “Whatever we started so many social experiments ago, Olivia, the better part of all of them will prevail.”

“And what about our relational experiments?” you want to ask him as you move closer to the bars, but you don’t. Not here anyway. According to the casual chit chat Deputy Jones entertained you with on the porch of the Office, he knows a lot about your history with Professor Jack. You wonder what his boss knows, and who he found it out from. Yet you are baffled and scared at what Deputy Jones is about to do next as he approaches the jail cell with a rifle in one hand, a letter and pen in the other.

“You sign this, and you’re out of here. Through the back door,” Jones says as he presents Professor Jack with a paper for him to sign. He gives it a quick read, spits on it, then throws it down on the floor.

“Then it’ll be this,” the Deputy replies as he pulls two nooses from the wall with a wide smile which emanates an aromatic concoction of whiskey, rotten teeth and pure soul ugly. “A necktie for you, and your most valued friend, or Comrade,” he states.

“I don’t have any friends, or Comrades,” Professor Jack replies. “Except maybe for you, Sheriff Olsen or your real boss, Pastor Wilson,” he muses with his captor.

The Deputy isn’t laughing at the joke, nor thinking about the hierarchy of power that Jack has proposed. “Pastor Wilson is a man of the cloth. And a duly elected Mayor. A servant of God on Sunday, a servant of the people the rest of the week,” Jones angrily asserts. “He got my kids fed, and educated.”

“So they can become like him, not you,” Jack replies. “The man you used to be anyway, Thomas,” he continues, with more warmth and concern than you heard from his lips in a long time, about anybody.

“Maybe becoming Mary made Jack open his heart, instead of being obsessed with expanding his mind,” you think, but dare not say. Not here anyway.

“Sign the confession, Professor!” Deputy Jones insists, this time with some concern for his prisoner. “Pastor Wilson and God will forgive you. So will the law.”

“But not the people who died fighting Capitalistic Greed,” he grunts.

“Under YOUR command,” Jones reminds the Professor. “But I have orders. Get this paper signed and bring it to the newspaper, or hang you and your two closest Comrades, or friends.”

Jack's face has that look of agony on it again. As he turns his head from side to side, the light shines on both sides of it. The solemn right side says 'yes' to signing the confession which says that he now sees the error of his Revolutionary Ways and encourages all the other anarchists to do the same, as it is both the logical thing to do and the way life can be preserved for not only himself but others. The enraged left side of his face is ready to ram the confession up Jones' ass as a traitor to the Cause, no matter what the price.

You intervene, grabbing the paper and pen. You sign it, with Jack's signature. Then crumble it up and place it in your snatch. "You want it, you take it, but remember the penalty the Good Lord extracts for violating the sanctity of a woman's flesh," you say to Jones, recalling that his fear of devil has always been stronger than his love for Jesus. But apparently, he's more scared of Sheriff Olsen than he is of the devil. He sneaks his hand under your skirt and grabs for the paper. Just as his long, dirty fingernails are about to rip out the paper, along with a few layers of your tender flesh, he's wacked across the face.

As he falls to the ground, Professor Jack grabs his rifle. He instructs you to take the keys on his belt. As your shaking hands open the cell door, Jones starts to wake up and reaches for his pistol. Jack kicks him in the belly with Mary's pointed shoes, then again in the head. The pistol drops from the Deputy's hands, mixing in with blood from his head that now has become a thick, rapidly growing carpet on the floor. Jones' lifeless eyes look up at you, or maybe it's because you look at him. It's as if he's warning you about what awaits you on the other side of the life death line if you make the same 'functional compromises' that he did.

"We have to get out of here!" Jack commands you as he takes off Mary's clothes, and puts on Jones'.

"What are we going to do about the..." you ask with blood soaked hands, frightened, as you never had seen a man die before. At least not in your defense. Not like this.

Jack throws you Mary's dress, instructing you to clean up the floor, then wrap it around the deputy. "Late night supper for the coyotes up in the hills," he says as he puts the Deputy into a large sac, throwing the thankfully short, thin Welshman onto his shoulder.

He looks out at the street. It's dark, thankfully. He throws the body that was once used, and abused, by Jones' soul onto the back of a horse and puts you back on yours. He hands you a pistol. "Use it on anyone who follows, and if they catch us, yourself, then...if you can, or want to, me," he instructs you as gets on a third mount, which you recognise as belonging to Sheriff Olsen. Who, as you see through the window of the Wildcat Second floor, is having his way with one of your Showdance Sisters. It's none other than cunt-tease Carlata, who you got to know as Caring Carlata, who you found yourself caring about more than you knew you should because of many favors she did for you saying it was 'nothing', but knowing that it wasn't.. "We save ourselves now, everyone else later," Professor Jack tells you as he wacks your horse in the ass, pushing it forward at an unexpected lope, then follows on his.

You disappear into the night, leaving behind for the final time the town that was making you rich, and was enabling you to buy your real family back East out of the poverty that you caused. For reasons that will never get into Professor Jack's book, unless the mole who seems to be telling all of your secrets to the wrong people decides to continue doing his, or her, handiwork.

CHAPTER 16

Despite what the Dime Novels say, and the people who read them believe, your Red-skinned people can be just as smart as the Palefaces. Just as caring to their loved ones. And just as cleverly deceitful to their enemies. But, alas, you know too much to be effective. Besides, even if you did have a real mouth that could talk, a real hand that could rest itself on someone's troubled shoulder, or a fist that could bash some sense into someone who has lost it, it probably wouldn't do much good now. Not with what's left of the tribe that once revered you as a trusted First Nations Sage and remember you all too often for the things you wanted them to forget.

You look at them sitting around the campfire, sharing small portions of rabbit and coyote meat, with heap big helpings of laughter. The latter sustains them, as it once sustained you, when you were young. But even when you had a body to make fun of, or that you could use to make fun of others, the laughter inside of you died. Yes, you got smart, then witty, then clever, then wise. Then before you could get clever again, you were killed by a marginally-smart Paleface. Or maybe the bullet that found a cosy home at the base of your brain when your back was turned came from a clever Indian who wanted you to go to the happy hunting grounds so he could rule over the hunters and hunted in the world of those with bodies.

But despite the magic spells of the Shaman who stole a White Man's clock and turned back the hands a hundred times, you can't reverse time. So, you listen to what is happening now. Since you have no ability to laugh at the jokes shared around the campfire, you analyse them. You note a pattern. One in three is directed at another Indian, more playful than vicious. Another third are directed at the Indian telling the joke, not intentionally starting as humor. But the butt of the rest of the jokes are palefaces, most particularly this night, Professor Jack.

"A wannabe who never was and is afraid to be when the time comes to it," your son, the new Chief, says, arousing a hearty chuckle from the congregation.

"Who looks younger and more attractive than I ever did without that berry-stained containing beard on his face," your still living 'legal' wife comments regarding the makeover Olivia supervised, eliciting a belly laugh from the women in camp.

“And who didn’t leave any of those berries he shaved off his face in this stew, this time,” the apprentice Shaman comments. The men join in the laughter, each recalling how sick they got after allowing the Professor to cook for them when they visited his cabin.

“A Medicine Man who perfected the art of turning solid food into slimy shit or chunky vomit faster than anyone I know,” a new member of the tribe comments.

“The only chef I know who even the dog refuses to take the leftovers from,” you hear from yet another member of the renegade band, who joined the mountain tribe after the Bluecoats from Laramie and the typhus from places still unidentified killed everyone in it, with a diction that still reeks of his soon to be extinct dialect.

They go on about Professor Jack, honoring his sincerity but noting how ineffective he was in instituting it. By the remarks they are making, they know about the plans he had to infiltrate the taverns in town as someone other than himself, then found out more about his real self than he bargained for. You weren’t there at the tavern, as even a ghost can’t be in two places at once. But you feel a responsibility to figure out who spilt the beans on that part of the plan to gain back the town for the people, and the rest of the schemes that were talked about when Lady Olivia, Comrade Dickinson, Loony Lois and Professor Jack visited your son, the new chief who wants to rule your people a new way.

Maybe it was your son who informed on the well meaning Palefaces whose guilt ridden consciences or whose need to be fashionable amongst the elite intellectuals elsewhere made them want, and need, to bring your tribe into this Revolution of theirs. Perhaps your son has a plan for another Revolution. One spearheaded by Red-skinned hunters who know the land rather than White-skinned vultures who destroy it, for the Indians and, eventually, themselves as well.

Perhaps the mole, as the expression goes, is your wife, who loved Professor Jack more than she could ever love you. After you were gone, he found it impossible to become her husband, lover or even friend. The reasons for such were ‘to be written in his next few books, once I (he) figure it out’. The mountain man who exiled himself from his people wasn’t unkind to your wife intentionally. It would have been disaster for her to move into the cabin with him, or for him to move into your teepee. But your wife didn’t know that, and still doesn’t.

Then there were others who could have engineered it so that Jack was found out, put in jail, then ridiculed as a ‘girly man’ in town, along with his Revolution. You look to see who is laughing loudest at the various Professor Jack jokes, wondering if he, or she, is the culprit. Or maybe it’s the one laughing most quietly inside a closed mouth who is the informer. You don’t know, but are determined to find out. Because you are wise, and you know that unless this Revolution involves everyone, it will turn against itself and, most importantly, your people. Your people who, so far, aren’t making jokes about you. At least not while you’re looking. Just as you are thinking the worst about yourself, and the still beloved people who made your life hell and heaven while you were on earth, the Medicine Woman looks straight into your eyes.

Clearly she sees you, and tells you privately to go away and come back later. If you don't obey her, she will exert all her smarts, wit, cleverness and wisdom to make your afterlife lonelier than it is already. You think that maybe she is the mole, as she can read people's thoughts better than any markings they make on paper. But just as you gather evidence about that hypothesis, she laughs and shakes her head 'no'. You believe her, for now anyway.

CHAPTER 17

With each pouch of dirt out you pull out of the ground, the mountain throws a bucket full of rocks in your way as you try to dig deeper. But dig deeper you must, thinking that it isn't the body of a dead man you are burying, but the better part of yourself. It's a two person job, digging a grave for Deputy Jones that you will put a marker on one day when it is safe to do so. And you have to do it alone, before the sun comes up.

Olivia sits by the fire, shaking like a leaf in a brisk wind no matter how many sticks you put on it. "I didn't know you had it in you, Jack. Thank you," she says for the third time.

What 'that' is inside of you is still a matter of dispute. It was the first time you killed a man. And it was driven by something you felt rather than thought, or postulated. It was necessary that you saved Olivia from being raped by Deputy Jones. But was it necessary for you to enjoy it? For you to feel so 'accomplished'? You always told yourself that if you ever took a human life, be it to save a woman's honor, the life of a horse, or the welfare of a Revolution, it would be a sobering experience. But you feel numb. Actually, liberated somehow. So, you keep digging. The cover of night still allows you to remain hidden from the posse that will be coming up once Sheriff Olsen is done with Carla at the Wildcat and discovers his most trusted, never late for any appointment Deputy is missing.

Time passes. The night gets darker, and colder, and you finally are able to pull out enough rocks from the soil to insert Deputy Jones' corpse into it. You hear coyotes in the distance, and consider their part in all of this. "Yeah, I'll leave a small hole for you to get into here, but you have to let the worms have a go at him first," you say to them, hopefully not loud enough for a scared and grateful Olivia to hear. To keep the wolf appeased, you get an idea. You take out a knife, and cut off Jones' manhood, throwing the testicular tissue towards to a lone, brave or perhaps just curious wild canine. "If you're a bitch, enjoy licking his manhood down to nothing. If you're an hombre, tell your fellow buds that you dined on his pickled liver, blackened heart or tiny brain."

You chuckle to yourself, appreciating the joke. Maybe you'll use it in the book you're writing. Or the one you will write after all of this is over, and you've become something different than you are now. It's poetic.

You pull the gelded corpse near the hole, then push it in to the grave, throwing enough dirt on it so it won't be noticed. Your hands are cold, and the blood on them freezes into

the creases on your palms, the largest spot in the middle of them. It looks identical to the marks on Jesus' palms in the paintings Pastor Wilson has on his wall in the Mayor's office.

You think about the various deals you made with the Savior who you were trained to worship, were educated to ignore, then learned to see in ways that kept changing every day. You look up to the sky, thinking that it's as good a place as any to envision, imagine or create his Presence. "So, are you with us this time, or not?" you inquire of Jesus, his Dad, or whatever Truth is behind that fairy tale story so many people need to believe as true in order to get through life.

As usual, you get no answer except Silence. It is loud this time. You don't know if the Almighty just gave His (or as Olivia would say Her) approval and support to the Revolution that is about to happen. Whether He disapproves of such, or was bought by the Capitalists. Or if the Heavenly Father is still having a good roll in the hay with a Heavenly Mother of some sort, leaving the affairs of man and woman kind to themselves. You'll find out, soon enough. But what you do know as you see the first glimmer of light come over the Eastern horizon from which you immigrated, and ran away, is that for the moment, heaven watches, and earth works.

CHAPTER 18

They call it a Range War. It's something that the history books will never record. There are no flags, anthems, parades or farewell hugs from loved ones giving you flowers and a goodbye roll in the hay. No handsome uniforms. No paycheck at the end of it other than survival. But, it's something you have to do. Something you were born to. And something that will change history irreversibly, yet never be written down as to exactly how it was done. And if it is, you'll pay the novelists and story tellers who call themselves journalists to put down exactly what you want them to say. One of them stands in front of you as you sit at your desk, looking over a map of the territory that is not yet a state, and has stopped being a wilderness.

"So, how should it begin, Governor Wilson?" the dime novelist in a black tweed banker's suit asks you with a big, wide smile in an accent that is part English, part Virginian and part snake oil salesman. He opens up his notebook to the first page, then reaches into his pocket for a pencil, sitting cross legged in the manner of a scholar. Perhaps as Plato would have sat in front of Socrates. Or the highly learned Jewish historian Josephus with the Roman Emperors as they were about to destroy the last Hebrew resistance at Masada. Or the twelve Jewish publicists who wordsmithed what Jesus said and did into something common folk could understand as well as believe.

But, as the expression goes, that was then and this is now. You can smell the bullshit in this city slicker's words as intensely as the cologne slacking back his jet black hair, which is grey at the roots. He claims that he's ridden with and wrote authentically about the most famous outlaws and lawmen on the frontier, but the inside of his boots have no scuff marks where they ever would have rubbed against a horse, and he flinched when

walking between the two well broke equines hitched outside your office. But H. Michael Farnsworth, III, whose first initial probably stands for horseshit, called you Governor, so he knows whose ass to kiss. And since he is just marginally smarter than the readers who buy legend as fact, he's the one to write up what you did, and will do, here in the name of bringing civilized American values to the Wild West. He's very popular back East, which is what matters. And he knows that life copies art rather than the other way around. You put your hands on your chin and lean back, contemplating what will go into the book that make you more popular than he is back East, and to the wave of settlers, peddlers and potential horse-thieves who will be coming out to the Territory now that they can hop on a railroad car rather than attempt the crossing in a covered wagon through hostile Indian country where they would be scalped, killed or kidnapped. Of course, the fact of the matter is that lack of supplies, grit or luck is what caused most wagon train pilgrims to turn back. Or to become meat for the buzzards, or each other.

'Sir' H. Michael takes another sip of whiskey, like a gentleman of course, then reclines again. "So, where do you want this story going to end?" he asks.

"We haven't started it yet," you reply, not sure what he is getting at.

"Or maybe we have," he replies, pulling out two pages of notes from his shoulder satchel. You read it, and like what it says. It paints you exactly as you portray yourself. No, even better. You consider yourself a struggling crusader for American Christian values, but his description of you is that of a prophet and savior. Except that... "I'm a lot taller, stronger and endowed with more top hair in this account of yours," you comment. "And despite the fact that some of the foremen get more hair chopped off than they asked the barber to remove, the anarchists here don't scalp their bosses."

"If we let them write their own books, they will, Inmate Wilson," Sir H. Michael replied. "And if they find out about the world through the stories in my new, and unbiased, newspaper, the workers will eagerly scalp, skin and spit on any Anarchist, Socialist or Communist organizer."

"Fighting them with clubs, guns and threats of starvation is faster," you reply.

"Yes, yes, and making them weaker by exposure to toxins they get exposed to while working the highest paying jobs turns them into harmless lap dogs who can be fed to the wolves after they've served their purpose," Sir H. Michael replies with eyebrows that roll like tall wheat blowing in a brisk autumn wind. "And making them comfortable enough to not want to bite the hand that feeds them buys their cooperation when you know you will never get their respect," he continues, after which he gets up out of his chair and looks out the window, like the visionary that you used to be. "Do you know what I see, Citizen Wilson?"

"An insolent DIME novelist and SMALL town newspaper man who is about to be fired for insulting his patron, who can have you hung with the flick of my finger!" you bark at him. "Do you know who you are talking to!?"

“Someone who I can make rich, powerful or famous,” he replies. He turns around slowly, looks at your face, and stares straight into your self-doubting soul, nailing the point home. “Or someone who I can sink into a pit so dark that you’ll never know which end is up.”

He means business, this underling who you brought out here to serve your business. He scares you as he continues to focus on your eyes, not letting them go till you give him a logical ‘yes’ to his proposition you concede to, or a bold ‘no’ that you can carry to an early grave with pride. But there is something about him that looks familiar, at least in your imaginations. He is the son you wish you had, or had back anyway. It’s one of those parts of your history that you certainly won’t reveal to Sir Horseshit Michael Farnsworth. But, hey, for all you know he could very well be one of those children you had and didn’t know about, come home to Father for payback, or affection. But, for the moment, the better and stronger part of you takes out a thick envelope of money and walks it over to this newest weapon in your arsenal against Professor Jack and his Comrades. “Welcome to Norman Falls, Mister Farnsworth,” you say with a slight bow, as one gentleman, horse-thief or demon to another.

“Which contains a waterfall only in print,” Sir Michael says as he opens the envelope and thumbs through the money. He’s impressed with the amount when he looks at it, though when he looks back at you he tries to put on that ‘it’s just pocket change’ aire. You let him think he is important since you sense that he yearns to be important, more than rich. And as you know, keeping your allies and underlings hungry keeps them in your service.

“It’s a deal then?” you ask him.

He delays again, thinking that it will make you sweat. And it does, as he delays longer than you think he would. “It’ll be...fun, but first I am in need of a hot bath, a good meal, a stiff drink, a conversation-less poke, and an inspection of the building where the Independent Norman Falls Herald will be based,” he replies with a smart-assed smile. He pockets the money, retrieves his notebook, coat, thin rimmed Stetson, then suitcase and walks towards the back door of your office leading to an alley. He lingers at the door through which he entered, commenting on the odor emanating into his nostrils. “Your alley smells like garbage.”

“And...”

“I never trust a town, or city, where I can’t smell the garbage,” he says to you with a satisfied grin, seeming to feel more at home here than you ever did. He tips his hat, then and proceeds on his way.

CHAPTER 19

“Anarchist attempt to bomb orphanage on President’s visit foiled,” you read aloud from the newspaper headlines under the light of the only unpacked lantern in Professor Jack’s cabin. You turn to the teacher who frightens you because for the first time you are seeing that he is really scared of something. “What does ‘foil’ mean, Professor Jack?” you ask of him.

“Put an end to things, Lois,” he murmurs as he hurriedly packs the last of his books into a box which is to join the others in a hole he just dug deep into the ground outside, the most prized volumes already loaded onto a wagon and modified two ground-sleds.

By the way he said ‘put an end to things’, and the way he addressed you by the name you came up here with rather than the ones he and the others gave you here, something important is happening. You turn to another edition of the newspaper that one of the lighter skinned Indians brought up to the cabin when they snuck into town to stock up on guns, ammo, and information about the town that is about to stop selling such to anyone not in officially sanctioned uniforms. “Woman’s suffrage movement run by Satanists” you read on another headline. “What does suffrage mean, Lady Olivia?” you ask the Professor’s woman friend as she frantically packs her riding clothes into a backpack, then throws her most frilly dress, the one she went into town with, into the wood burning stove.

“The right to vote, especially if it’s to stop Capitalists with lots of money from printing lies that people with no money and less brains will believe,” she replies with a tone that’s finally more angry than scared. “And it’s Sister Comrade Olivia now,” she reminds you. “The days of me being a Lady amongst gentlemen are over,” she continues, blasting fire with her eyes at Professor Jack.

“Let her make up her own mind,” still-Professor Jack tells Olivia, without looking at her, but staring deep into himself. “She has a right to say, think and even believe what she wants to.”

“Even if it isn’t the truth?” Olivia counters.

“Philosophy later, revolution now,” Jack replies as he puts the last of the books into the box. “From a school that is now mobile,” he asserts, declares and dreads.

Even you, a barely literate simpleton music player who Jack, Olivia and Uncle Comrade Alberta say is a musician, can figure out why. As the grown-ups pack up the rest of the belongings they’ll need to go live in the woods with the Indians, or the other Comrades they say will eventually join them, you read another headline. “Professor Jack a pervert and a fraud.” Next to it is a cartoon of him with a big head, wearing a dress, stealing money from the back pockets of workers who are reading his books. The picture doesn’t make any sense to you so you, but the headline does. Indeed the Norman Falls Herald has more words that you can understand than any other newspaper you’ve read, in the headlines and the articles.

“Maybe I’m getting smarter,” you mutter to yourself as you read the article under the Professor Jack Headline. “I can understand every word here!” you declare with glee.

“By design,” Comrade Uncle Albert says as he comes through the door with a rifle strapped to his shoulders and two gun belts. “Easy language makes for easily believed lies for immigrants who don’t know much English, and Americans who can’t or won’t understand words more than two syllables long,” he continues as he opens his satchel. Inside there are hand written documents. He gives two of them to you. “Here, tell me what these two pamphlets say.”

You are not sure if the only adult in your world who you can trust to act like a responsible and caring adult has just insulted or complimented you. But out of courtesy and the ‘code of humanism’ that you have embraced since you ran away from your life at the bottom of the totem pole in during the day in town, and under Sheriff’s Olsen’s reproductive parts at night, you read the Manifesto written in Professor Jack’s writing, and then the one put to pen by Uncle Albert’s hand.

“So, which declaration of freedom do you understand most?” Albert asks you. “Mine or his. And please, be honest.”

“Because the truth shall set you free, I know,” you reply to that quote you recall from Pastor Wilson’s mouth at the pulpit which you now understand after being read to by Professor Jack. You feel it from a deeper place after you, with his help, have read some of his books.

You strain your eyes, and push your brain, and are about to stumble onto a conclusion. You look up, seeing the authors of both versions are standing in front of you. “Which of these Manifestos makes you THINK harder?” Professor Jack asks. “And please, be honest.”

You ponder the issue, and as the Truth is the only referee in this game of egos between your two new fathers, you answer honesty. “Yours,” you say to Jack, who beams out a smile of pride. “Sorry,” you say Albert, as he pulls his lips into a grimace of ‘unaccomplishment’.

Comrade Sister Olivia comes in behind them. “So, which version of our Manifesto for the Workers in the valley and the Indians who work in other ways in the mountains, and the underappreciated women who do most of the work in both places do you UNDERSTAND most easily, and like reading?” she asks you.

You point to the one written by Albert, causing him to break out into a big wide smile, and Jack to growl at himself with clenched teeth. Once again, the woman who the two men who seem to competing for affections, respect and approval from intervenes before painful gets to ugly. “And which of these Manifestos moves you to action?” she asks.

“Both of them,” you reply. “Because there are different kind of actions. Actions of the hands, and the head, right?” you continue, quoting the words told to you by Jack and Albert that they seem to have forgotten themselves. Then something happens. You feel ‘smart’. Like there is a brain between all of you that is giving you a new thought, and honoring you with the opportunity to speak it. No, it isn’t coming from the ghost of the Old Indian Chief, or any other ghosts you chit chat with, or try to learn from. What and who it is baffles you, but the idea fires you in to voicing it. “If you want a real opinion for which version I understand and feel and am moved to action by most, you should have given it to Sister Comrade Olivia to put on paper, so I don’t know who originally wrote it.”

“Yes, we should have,” Professor Jack notes, stroking the stubble on his chin that has now grown into a beard.

“Indeed, I did bias the data,” Uncle Albert continues as he strokes his moustache.

“In an experiment we have to take to the streets!” Olivia barks out. “After we get this hopefully still functioning printing press of yours loaded onto the wagon, Jack.” She points to the open door of the barn where there is an old printing press. To you it looks more like junk than machine, but then again, everything at Professor Jack’s place does. Or did, as the posse from town, headed by Sheriff Olsen AND Pastor Wilson, is due here by daybreak tomorrow, according to the half-breed Indian who snuck into town as a White Man. And the plan is to leave this place vacant, and in ashes, for anyone who comes up to find it.

CHAPTER 20

Some time passes. The townspeople read what you put out from your printing press in the woods, as well as the entertaining lies from the new Normans Falls Herald. It’s a Sunday morning, and you stand under an unusually warm and bright winter sun, your gaze held hostage by the biggest, and only, school in town. You recall the day when Mrs. Olsen refused to have you even step foot into the classroom to help her teach rather than merely instruct the children, saying to you, “Lady Olivia, you may have read more great books than anyone for a hundred miles, but until you read and absorb into your corrupt, harlot soul, the good book, there is no place for you in my school, or any other in this town, or territory. The only way you will ever step foot into these sacred chambers of learning is over my dead body. Which belongs to no one except my God and my ever-faithful and loving husband.”

“Actually, it’s over your diseased body, Mrs. O,” you think to yourself as you observe her leaning her head against the bars covering the windows of a house with a black flag flying on the porch, and a ‘quaranteed’ sign on the very locked door. “Gotten that way after your loving husband brought typhoid fever into your female body parts after being intimate with two of the three halfbreeds at the Wildcat. Or maybe it was from the authentic pox-infested Indian buffalo robe he bought especially for you for your birthday.

Or maybe the Good Lord is punishing you for the sin of not opening up the mind he gave you, as He, or more likely She, sometimes as no choice but to cull carriers of ignorance and harsh judgement from her still valued species.”

You hear Mrs. Olsen moaning a Church hymn which is supposed to be sung with glee. You look at her with pity, but cannot linger on her fate. You have to concentrate on people who you can do something for, and with. They are young, eager to learn, and unafraid of change, enjoying the day on its own terms on a playground they have created themselves. Those children you rescued who you rescued from Mrs. Olsen’s well meaning but toxic embraces seem to hear you think, and wave to you. These youngsters who have not yet accepted the limitations other have inflicted on them address you as Comrade Sister Olivia. They exchange happy banter with you in French, English and Latin, until their parents come by. The well dressed parents shuffle off their well dressed children to Pastor Wilson’s Church. The mothers of the raggedly clad youngsters ask their most prized offspring what they are talking about, and seem interested in such. Their fathers, wearing the most intact jackets, trousers and hats in their possession, advise their wives that they are late for the Sunday morning ‘meeting’ in the building on the other side of the street.

You look at the parents collecting their children and wonder what it would be like to be one of them. That ‘condition’ you have which disables you to have children on your own was something you were thankful for when you came out here, as it prevented you from giving birth to offspring of clients at the Wildcat. Or suitors who wanted to take you back East after making their fortunes here. Or Revolutionary idealists such a Professor Jack whose fondest wish was, and still is, to die a glorious death in the Cause of Freedom and Enlightenment rather endure than a long, happy life with a family who loves him. But there is one face that you wish whoever or Whatever created you gave you a well developed uterus rather than merely an oversized and addicted to constant movement brain.

He stands in front of the newly established Church on the other side of the street from Pastor Wilson’s house of worship, welcoming in mostly the working class poor, but also a few families from the lucrative side of town. ‘Every Color of man spills the same color blood, and every kind of woman wants to have her man laugh at some of HER jokes.’ It’s written in several different languages, posted on top of the front door. Brother Albert, as Comrade Dickenson is being called, is clad in a plain black jacket with a white collar, much like a Catholic Priest. Yet the crucifix around his neck has an extra bar to it. Though he carries his chin high as a gentleman of learning and high social stature, his beard has grown into something worn by a peasant rather than a prince. His trousers have more rips and repairs in them than any of the Parishioners he greets at the entrance of the old gun shop which has been converted into a Palace for Peace. The soles of his weather-beaten boots display holes big enough to stick a peach pit into.

Albert smiles at you after completing his joyful duty of welcoming economically poor parishioners, and assuring wary rich ones. He keeps the door open, beckoning you to enter as well. You refer him to the loud bell in the tower of Pastor Wilson’s church

calling you to attend the services. He motions ‘no’ to you, insisting with his kind eyes and enthusiastically desperate hand motions that it is your place to come join him. He is filled with glee, but you are filled with practical wisdom. You write something down on a piece of paper, and throw it towards him. It’s in French. He reads it.

“Keep your friends close, your enemies closer,” you say to yourself as he reads the note. He looks up at you, and sees the worth of the rash of sensibility that has allowed your dedicated mind to ride rough-shot over your yearning heart.

Albert looks up at you, smiles, then pulls a rose from his breast pocket. He motions for you to pick it up, then closes the door behind him.

Though the Church bell atop Pastor Wilson’s high steeple chimes the final ‘come hither or suffer the fires of hell’ warning, you walk up to Albert and take the rose from his firm yet gently hand. Its thorny stem pricks the skin on your still un-blistered fingers. But the smell of its pedals reminds you that Albert is the whole package. A man of culture who invites you to share literary investigations with him as an equal rather than being a paternalistic guide. A father who had lost one child to death and another to estrangement, but who still has the courage to start another family. A family man who also knows how to effectively take care of other families in a way that is practical and smart. A smart Crusader in the Cause of World Enlightenment and Truth who knows how to pass himself off as a Priest so he can hear confessions from oppressive Capitalists and turncoat Workers. A neutral party known to no one in town who can somehow, as a man of God, be privy to gossip from all sorts of people. And a man who stands behind you in all ways in your quest to bring women into this Revolution. First, by convincing them that they have just as much of a right to vote at the ballot box as men do. And second, that if such is not granted to them, their husbands will go to sleep at night not only without a freshly cooked supper, but without a romantic nightcap prior to surrendering to sound, snoring slumber.

A circle of women in front of Pastor Wilson’s church seems to be talking about such amongst themselves. They are reading pamphlets that you have composed and Professor Jack printed, without making any additions, subtractions or modifications on the verbage as was his habit, and well-intended passion, last time. Those ladies who are married or otherwise have the hearts of men of power and influence in town beckon you to come join them as they enter Paster Wilson’s church. En route, you think of Professor Jack, still hold up in the woods, awaiting his turn to come into town to be part of this escalating drama you, him, and Albert have scripted. And you pray for Loony Lois, who is with Professor Jack so he can take care of her. But you know fully well that it is now probably the other way around as Jack gets loonier, and Lois becomes...something that maybe you should or could have been to him.

CHAPTER 21

The young Indian Chief somehow finds you in the hideout you've established in the woods. You ask him how he was able to track you, since you used every trick in your book, his and the ones you've read to cover your tracks. He says, with a warm and sincere smile, "I smelled your bullshit, Professor," then sniffs the most recent pamphlet coming out of the printing press.

You want to belt him in the mouth with hands bearing deep crevices in them, all made black by residual printer's ink. But then the young Chief reads the pamphlet, with some help from Lois, especially in regard to the difficult words. He seems to enjoy the reading and the learning. "I didn't know you enjoyed reading bullshit," you say to him.

"I don't," he continues, putting down the three page account of what has happened, what is happening, and what must happen in the valley below. "But I like what this says, and promises. I'm assuming that when you talk about equal rights and equal pay and freedom, that you're including Indians and woman this time."

"Of course," you reply.

"And what about Indian women?" the small-framed, old Medicine woman next to him asks, in her native tongue. "Are we going to get the vote?"

You wonder what to answer. This medicine woman deserves far more than a simple, even sincere, 'yes'. You have to display your knowledge and wisdom in the answer to her, and it is important that she believes it, since you know that liberation of your own Paleskin and Black people may lead to more enslavement of her Redskinned brethren.

"What are the conditions for us to vote in your elections?" the young chief asks. "Your Revolution for freedom a hundred years ago gave the vote to white, land owning men. Half of your founding fathers were old fart slave owners who could recite the heroic tales of Greek heroes who stood up against invading Persian tyrants, but would shit in their togas and run back home to the Parthenon at the first sight of the invader's army," he points out to you. He learned that quip from his father, who learned it from your earliest books. Books that you could never write again, as you were far more effective as a channeller of wisdom, knowledge, humor and vitality way back then relative to now. But, you have to come up with an answer for the young chief and the old medicine woman, and perhaps for the ghost of the Old Indian Chief, who Lois seems to be smiling at and playing her violin to.

"The only qualification for voting will be..." you say, in the best Lakota you know. Then, a flash comes to you. "If you vote for the candidate who champions what you value most. And that you vote for what is best for your family, community and the world, rather than what's in it for you personally."

Yes, you feel like you have untied a knot inside of you. For now anyway. The young chief nods his head in approval. The medicine woman smiles with delight. Lois plays a congratulatory cadenza for you, and you can feel someone humming harmony to it.

Maybe it's the old Indian ghost, or maybe something in your imagination. But even if that imagination is illusion, it is still imagination, which beats the hell out of the dead end reality which almost crashed you into the abyss today. For now, it's enough.

CHAPTER 22

The sermon you deliver from your pulpit isn't about politics, but it is about democracy. But who are you really fooling? You know that rule of the people is never the rule of the collective conscience, but rule of the mob, the puppeteers who orchestrate the mob, or the idiot or asshole the mob thinks actually represents their values and/or interests. Your mouth reads the words from Revelations, intimidating the morally lazy to be righteous, and discouraging the righteous from being rebellious, or worse, independent of the authority on high. You've read these passages before, disbelieving the account to be at the end of days as much as you disbelieve the lies about the Haymarket Massacre you put into the Normans Falls Herald. But, fairy tales are an educational tool, required so that rebellious children don't become destructive adults.

As you listen to your voice, feeling as much hatred for it as ever, and sensing more than ever that it is not yours, that line between religion and politics becomes blurred—which is as it should. After all, America was founded on the motto 'In God We Trust', no matter what self-taught scholars banter about in the working man's tavern about Thomas Jefferson's real beliefs, or the Anarchist essays being printed in places that neither you nor your law enforcement officers can identify say. You know the real facts. God wasn't elected to His position by his creations. He rules them, often required to do so in mysterious ways that seem harmful to those he is trying to help. And as a representative of Him, it is your job to do the same. Yet, you have to give the children some say in what they're going to have for dinner, even though they would starve if not for your smarts, wits and unappreciated wisdom. One of those entrees is letting them vote for their earthly leaders.

The sermon being done, you close your Bible and take out a voting ballot. "This ballot, which allows you all to vote for your earthly leaders in three days, is something granted to all of you, by me. Legally, according to my mandate, not the federal or territorial government's, any man over the age of 18 who lives in Normans Falls or within a hundred miles of such is considered a citizen and is allowed to vote. He is considered such without regard to national origin, skin color, or religion. When men vote, they invest in the futures of themselves and their families."

"And for the right to keep their wives, daughters and sisters as second class citizens?" you hear from the middle of the congregation from someone who has never attended your services, and has been responsible for more breakups between Christian men and women than firewater, cabin fever and syphilis combined. Lady Olivia, dressed like a proper church woman, continues, surrounded by similarly clad women who cheer her remark. "This country may have been founded on the proposition that all men are created equal,

but it will fall apart if that proposition isn't appended to mean that all men and women are created equal."

The women around Olivia cheer again. Those sitting next to their husbands, most of whom you have wed in holy matrimony, clandestinely smile in agreement as their penis bearing protectors roll their eyes. One of the men, an ex-gold prospector from Saint Louis who struck it rich, then lost most of claim at the poker table two days later who was stopped from losing it all by his current wife when she dragged him out of the saloon, counters to Olivia. "A man's home is his castle, which he built with his own two hands, while putting food on the table, and providing for women who feel loved in the bedroom."

"A service which none of us will render, until women get to have an equal say in the welfare of their children, and families," Olivia asserts.

"Women vote with their heart, and not their head," the ex-pro prospector, now feed store owner counters, speaking to Olivia as if she was a petulant child. "We can't trust them with the vote," he explains to the men, and still reasonable women around him.

"Just like we can't trust men with guns, fists and bad habits," Olivia shoots back. "Like taking advantage of the weak, because they are temporarily strong," she continues, shooting the accusation into Sheriff Olsen's eyes. "And who generously provide the gift of their manhood with anyone except the women, and girls, they have made the most important promises to."

The room turns silent, everyone wondering what Olivia is talking about. You know that she is referring to what she let happen to Mrs, Olsen, who is currently quarantined until such time that she will be perhaps sent East for the best medical treatment available for her physical and now mental ailments. This you understand fully well, as you have been at the Olsen house for dinner on many occasions and know that any jury East or West of the Mississippi would say that even putting a bullet through her self-tortured head would be a mercy killing for her, and a needed relief for everyone else. You know about Sheriff Olsen's need for affection from women who listen as well as talk, and consider himself lucky to be able to have friendly female friends upstairs at the Wildcat Saloon, as he has so many male enemies downstairs. You have recently been suspecting that Looney Lois may have had other motives for stealing Olsen's horse and running off to the mountains other than wanting to get lost on a midnight ride. If your worst suspicions about such are true, then you may be able to use that to your advantage, and of course the Lord's, when the time is right.

"What do you want, Olivia, besides forgiveness from the Lord and these God fearing folks for the way YOU earn a living?" Olsen asks Lady Olivia, in a non-gentlemanly way.

Olivia puts her hands on her lips, her eyes revealing intense concern about what is about to come out of her mouth. Finally, just before most of the men, and women, have given

up on her, she replies. “What I want, and need, for the moment, is for every women in this congregation to consider sending her man to bed, alone, without his supper, or desert. Until the men think with their brains, and not their reproductive organs. And settle disputes with their mouths instead of their fists, knives or guns.”

The ex-pro prospector immediately replies...“A strike which will last---”

“---As long as it has to,” his obedient and loving wife of five years interjects, after which she escorts her two children to where the women in black are sitting. Other strong women do the same, eventually shaming weaker ones to join them. The weakest remain with their husbands, fathers or brothers, their heads looking downward as their protectors raise their chins up in manly Christian fashion.

“So,” you say to be sure that no one else interrupts what had been a non-eventful sermon about the rewards in heaven for doing civilized things and the punishment in hell for doing destructive ones. You look out amongst the men, counting heads and assessing eyes. A quarum of the city council is here. “Gentlemen of the Council. Proposition: Women should be allowed to vote in the upcoming elections in Normans Falls. All in favor?”

You raise your hand. Slowly all of the other men on the council do so as well, joined immediately by their thankful as well as loving wives, daughters, sisters and ‘close friends’.

“You see?” you say to Olivia, the only woman in the room with anger in her eyes or a frown on her face, having come prepared for a fight and being denied such. “We White Christian American Capitalists believe in democracy too,” you assure her. “So, now let us pray, and sing to the Lord.” But while the voices rise up from the pews, “It’s not who puts in the votes, but who counts the ballots,” you think to yourself, but dare not voice. Especially to Sheriff Olsen, who is up for election by an electorate of two, yourself and the dime novelist who is still deciding how it will play out in the chapter he is writing, in a town where life will imitated art, for better or worse.

CHAPTER 23

It was an American tradition with all the spectacle attached. Or at least a Normans Falls one. The evening of election day. Three bands are playing, each trying to out-volume the other one. The air still smells of mud on the streets, sucking calves in the stockyards, and vomit from drunk cowboys as they stumble out of the Wildcat. But it’s supplemented by freshly baked pies, cakes and stew, all being offered free of charge to the citizens of town, who by city ordinance, have been given the day off so there would be no excuse for them not casting a ballot. But this time, citizens include not only those in possession of not only penises, but vaginas. Along with now Comrade rather than Lady Olivia, which is who you are now. Such makes you feel proud. Even those with penises who wished they had vaginas, and vice versa, the identities of which of course

you found out through clandestine conversations in your room at the Wildcat, have cast their ballot today. Never had you seen such a display for this yearly event. And never have you seen the platform at which the ballots are being counted being so...balanced.

To the right of center stands Pastor and, depending on the count in progress, Mayor Wilson. Provisional Governor Wilson now, given the new status of the territory. To the left of center is the other candidate, Brother Albert to his parishioners, Comrade Albert to you, and Uncle Albert to Lois, who braved coming into town but is still hiding from Sheriff Olsen. Behind Wilson stand three armed men, none of them being Olsen, as he is one of the candidates on the ballot for Sheriff. Running against him, yet again, is Hans Engelhart, a German Freethinker immigrant who lost an eye standing up against the oppressive Kings and Capitalists in 1848 in Berlin, and all of his brothers at the hands of the slaver conscription Home Guard in Texas during the infamous massacre in 1863. As usual, behind Wilson are three very armed guards. They are clad as a gentleman as is their boss. Albert is dressed more as a worker who toils 6 days a week rather than a preacher who pontificates for one. Behind him are five Worker-Anarchist activists, all at the ready to use rifles just as new and deadly as their Capitalist opponents.

In between Pastors Wilson and Brother Albert is a neutral party. He's a near-sighted, small framed gentlemen bearing spectacles rather weapons with a very English name, Farnsworth, and an accent which is so sharp that it cuts into you ears when you hear it, pulls ballots out of a large barrel, one by one. He shows the ballot to Wilson, then to Albert, after which he makes a mark on a piece of paper that no one except the two main candidates are allowed to see. Attempts of angry Anarchists and terrified Capitalists to look at the list are halted by advances from the guards representing both ideologies.

The issues at hand are more than which man of the Cloth will double as a Mayor. You know this better than anyone else, given what you have observed in this town as an entertainer at the Wildcat Saloon as well as the secret lover of Professor Jack, who is notably absent now. You look for him amongst the crowds of dancing citizens enjoying the music, inebriated souls partaking of cheap booze, and hungry folk filling their bellies as well as pockets with free food that has been provided for them.

Finally, Mister Farnsworth pulls out the last ballot. As with the others, he shows it to Wilson, then to Albert. Wilson, pulling back from an uneasy smile, motions for the bands to cease their music with his right hand, offering Albert the podium with his left, appended by a slight bow. Albert steps up to the podium, his head now nearly two feet above all the others behind him.

“People, citizens, Comrades!” he announces with more assertiveness in his voice than you have ever heard from him, or for that matter, any other man or woman in the Movement. “The right to decide what kind of government and life we have by the vote, is something so many have died for. This most noble social experiment which we have all participated in today is something which we must honor.”

You look at those with the fattest bellies and the most expensive clothes. They look nervously at those who are less well fed and clad, clutching onto their wallets, jewels and loved ones like you have never seen them do before.

“You, the people, have chosen. The fellow citizen you have chosen to lead, inform and inspire you wishes to speak a few words to you, as a fellow citizen,” he continues.

This time the have’s reach for their pistols, prepared to use them against the have nots.

“That fellow citizen is none other than Horatio Wilson, who has won this election, fair and square, and very legally,” Albert continues.

Hushes overcome the workers, their wives. Their children, who you have educated as well as indoctrinated in Anarchist Democratic Socialism, for their own good, look at you puzzled. So do the leaders of the movement that championed the right for women to vote. You shrug your shoulders, after having calculated that by all logic, and reason, that Albert should have gotten 80 percent of the vote rather losing over 70 percent of it, according to the figures that Mister Farnsworth announces.

“But before I give the podium to our new Mayor and Provisional Governor, Wilson, I wish to make a request of those who voted for me, and Democratic Anarchist Revolution,” Comrade Albert announces to the crowd of have nots who look suspiciously at each other, then angrily at the haves’. “It is time for us to incorporate our ideals into the American Capitalist Reality. To turn our Passions for economic and social revolution into evolutions of our hearts. To move our passions towards taking care of our families. Our husbands. Our children. Our wives,” he continued, then turns his eyes to you, saying “And those who we yearn and deserve to ask to be our wives.”

You feel that for the first time a man valued her more than his Revolution, family reputation, or quest for personal financial or political glory. Your heart beats faster and your body feels lighter every time you treat yourself to a look at Alberta on the speakers platform. As he descends, and walks towards you with open arms, a jolt of something that’s very Alive goes up and down your spine. When he hugs you, and you hug him, it’s as if your bodies are one, centered around that magical on your torso which those of cruder upbringing or proclivity would call ‘gut’. Indeed, you feel at home. A new home which you say ‘yes’ to, but not before saying goodbye to what you thought could have been home.

Fate, or perhaps misfortune, draws your eyes to someone from what has now become your past, trying to make sense of it all in a dark corner that has been illuminated by fireworks set off by Olsen’s replacement deputy. In an alley next to that lost soul is someone calling himself Dunce rather than Professor Jack, along with Lois. Your new husband, and reason for living, is called away to share the podium with his opponent, and now provisional advisor, Provincial Governor Wilson. Albert kisses you a very temporary goodbye, then takes his leave. You feel freed from the burden of a Radical

Revolution that could not have worked in a country such as America. As probably he does as well.

The wayward abandoned idiot savant musician one called Looney Lois caresses Jack like a lover, comforts him like a mother, and elevates his sense of himself like a prodigal daughter. Having seen Sheriff Olsen emerge from the saloon, she leads Jack down to the other side of the street, then tells him she has to go to the privy, suggesting he does the same, saying that the chili she ate for breakfast is now coming out her ass. Jack suggests that she should share the fragrant aroma with the rest of the town, which has now 'gone to shit'. Lois smiles at the joke, and excuses herself.

You make your way to something near Jack then bump into your ex-lover and Comrade, claiming that you didn't see him. "Of course you did," he replies. "Just like I saw you with Albert."

"As I saw you with Lois," you reply, with a bitter sweet aroma on your tongue. "She's good for you, Jack. Better than I ever was, or could be."

"True enough," he replies with a wide, playful smile.

Before you can say 'now it the time that you say to me, Jack, that I can't be as good for you as Albert is', he expresses that sentiment with a kiss on the lips. You are touched, but not moved. "Proposition verified," he says, pulling back from you, extending his open hand to you. "Friends, for life? Phillos without Eros?" he asks, putting the 'comrades but not lovers' into ancient Greek terms you both feel and understand.

"And some Agape thrown in for good measure," you reply. "Agape being love of Spirit, but not ghosts," you answer, feeling the outer margins of your lips going up. And not fighting it this time.

You embrace each other, chest to chest, but not gut to gut. It's sustaining and pleasurable till you smell something foul in the air.

"Lois' chili and my prune, Saskatoon berry pie," he explains regarding the flatulence emanating through the fringed leather trousers bearing the design of the Indians.

CHAPTER 24

You remember writing in your books, in as many places as you can, that every mile of railroad that links the Pacific and Atlantic is a testimony to three laborers whose lives were lost, or squandered. Indeed, when the Old Indian Chief was alive and you rode the hills with him looking for whatever buffalo may be left, he said he could hear the death songs of workers who perished from disease, overwork, bootleg whiskey or mountains collapsing on them when the railroad engineer insisted on blasting through them. You also recall that the Old Buzzard who honored your quest for continuing wisdom by

calling you *Aspiring* Professor Jack said that those not content to live off what Nature gives you on top of the mountain, and who keep insisting on digging into it with a plow, a drill, or sticks of dynamite, will be inflicted with madness, prosperity, disease and ultimately destruction. He was particularly angry when black crude started coming out of the ground, as he said that it is desecrating the burial ground of ancient giant reptilian creatures whose remains were converted into oil and whose spirits are still contained within that holy substance.

You remember a lot from the Old Indian, but maybe not what he tried to teach you most. “There will be a time in your own education when you must help the poor, and stop trying to save them.” It sounded like nonsense a decade ago when you came out here and established a community in which Whites, Blacks and Indians shared the land and most everyone on it equally. And stood up to three Pastor Wilsons who came out here to capitalize on that hard earned, and joyful, prosperity. But gold once found didn’t stay in the ground long, and gold fever knew no color. Even the Old Indian Chief felt like a more worthy man and provider for his people with nuggets in his pocket, until Paleface law and technology had its way.

That technology was on the rise now, particularly when a new motherload of silver, copper and perhaps diamonds were discovered in the hills around Normina Falls barely a month after Horatio Wilson was elected ruler of State. The dream deal of having Albert Dickenson as coordinator and protector of Church/Spirit disappeared when he left on a train going East with his new wife Olivia. You attended the wedding, and bid them both well of course, but wished they stayed, as you had your own reasons for not being able to join them. You said it was because you still have some more horses to ride here, and that the polluted air and social climate of Philadelphia was toxic to Lois’ physical and mental health, but you were lying to them, and yourself. Hell, you’ve been lying to yourself so long that on most days you can’t even recognize the truth.

But there is one truth that is real. More holes are being drilled into the mountains than ever, with unprecedented raw material coming out of it than ever. It translates into jobs for the hungry, as well as for the undertaker, particularly for those who had the most intimate contact with the mountain, and the material extracted from it. Old Doc Henry Steiner, who had robbed the funeral parlors of more business than anyone else in town, took sick a week after Albert took Olivia back East to be reunited with her family, and a sustainable future. The remaining practitioners of medical arts and psychological deception who called themselves ‘Doc’ did their best, but they couldn’t stop the booming business for the undertakers. You stand now in front of the gravestone of life-long bachelor Doc Henry, whose love of medicine could never be matched with a love for any mistress or wife. A warm wind blows through your hair, your nostrils smelling the toxic fumes still on remains of the next two bodies to be buried. You chuckle when you read the inscription on the tombstone for your old friend, and confident, then feel its imprint in the stone. “An undertaker’s worse nightmare” it says. “Rest in Peace, even though you could only find rest in motion itself,” you say to the ghost who you think still may hanging around.

Feeling the dead is something you are better at than relating to the living, even though you can't see or clearly hear those departed souls. You look at the bag on your shoulder, taking out one of them. They are medical books, willed to you by Old Doc Steiner. You don't know why he willed them to you, but another gust of wind from another direction blasts an idea into your chilled ears. You open up a well used leather-bound book stained with blood on the edges to a roadmap of the circulatory system. It brings back memories of places you've been, and roads not taken.

"Maybe I should have been contented to save individual human bodies, and not try to save Collective Souls," you ponder, recalling your education at Harvard, where you were comfortably enrolled as a medical student. Then one day you heard a lecture by Henry David Thoreau regarding his incarceration for speaking up against the Mexican War, and conscription into any war that poor men fight to support the habits and comforts of rich ones, having been most inspired by his essay on Civil Disobedience. You remember that it was a time of optimism with regard to revolutions, and social change. But, like the dinosaurs who once ruled the earth, who have passed on into oil which will be used by the next species who Nature has somehow allowed to rule the planet, your time as a Revolutionary has passed. "Help the poor, and stop trying to save them," you recall from the Old Indian Chief, whose presence is made again through another gust of wind. Or maybe it's your own memory that's being defective. Or maybe you just have finally come down with common sense, leaving to a Higher Wisdom the question of what will happen to or with the books you have written. Such will be decided after you die anyway. But for the moment, so that you can clear your conscience and make amends for the Workers you sent to the picket lines and bullets from crowd-controlling Policemen, you consider your new Calling, and Purpose.

You look down below at the hospital, in need of supplies as well as caring, knowledgeable and honest people to administer them. You then look at the wagon you brought into town containing food you have hunted, herbs Lois and the medicine woman have collected, and the remains of what was in Doc Steiner's medicine cabinets. The horse whinnies, as if to beckon you to proceed down the mountain to be useful there rather than going back up the mountain where you have become useless.

You pull your wagon in front of what had been Albert's Church which welcomed and sustained believers in the Almighty's goodness as well as non-existence. The stench of death is everywhere. A more or less equal measure of rotting flesh, putrid pus and freshly coagulated blood, blended in with the stench of coal, black crude and mold on the clothing still lingering on the patient's skin. Into your ears comes the drum drum drumming of death rattles, providing a harmony to the melody of private and multilingual conversations with those already on the other side of the Great Divide. Some of those final talks are with mothers, some with God, some with ghosts that seem to sustain the spirits of the sick more than the dedicated staff who still dwell in the land of the living.

The conversation of a particularly defiant patient is in broken Gaelic, Welsh to your best estimation when he breaks into English. It is none other than the Miner who you served drinks and salted eggs to at the Utopian Cafe one failed Revolution ago. The one who

got the room laughing at jokes made possible by your follies, failures and miscalculations as his leader three theoretically 'leaderless' revolutions ago. Between patches of black soot, you can see that his skin is whiter than it was the last time you checked in on him, the skin on his face hugging the bones underneath even deeper. He's still shitting more blood than feces, by the smell of his bottom. But perhaps that's because he can't or won't eat the food provided for him. You hope he took at least some of medicine you left for him. Wherever his mind is behind his cloudy eyes, it seems to be a better place than where he was when he was carried into here.

"His soul is deciding if it wants to be done with life, or continue being challenged with it," a young woman with prematurely life-tired eyes and worry wrinkles that get deeper each day comments to you with a Polish accent. "May he make the right decision, and not the one I did," Maria Lubinski continues as she crosses herself and says a Catholic Prayer for the hard-drinking, God-hating still Protestant Welshman who considers the Pope more dangerous than the Anti-Christ, the devil and Pastor Wilson combined.

"So, how is he, medically, Doctor Jack?" you ask Mrs. Lubinski in a soft whisper.

"Ask me wife, Bridgit," the seemingly despondent Welshman interjects while looking at what to your eyes is empty air, but to your inner senses seems very real. "Who took a jump off the mountain two days after that mound of toxic dirt buried both of me boys in the explosion used ta open the North end of it. Boys who were just turned into men and never got the chance to grow more than a peach fuzz mustache. Or get stinkin' drunk with their old man. Or place their votes for King of this 'community for you, Professor Jack, like one in every three souls who went to the ballot booths did. From both sides of the tracks."

You look at Nurse Lubinski, confounded. She looks to you as well. Before either of you can formulate a question, the Welsh miner gives you an answer.

"Comrade Brother Albert got twice as many votes as you did, and four times what Pastor Pope Wilson did. But he didn't say nothin' about it," the Miner continues, turning to what you presume is the ghost of his departed beloved. "And if ya don't believe me, Professor Doc Jack, ask me wife Brigit. Or any other man in this hospital who's got nothin' or no one to lose."

You turn to the patients around you. Four of the ones closest to dying nod 'yes' with whatever strength they have left. You ask a fifth, who has two children in front of his bed, and he gives no answer at all. As does everyone who is surrounded by family.

"Ya probably wanna know the 'why' of it, Professor, bein' a man who gets through life by working his head to death rather than poundin' your fists into what stops or tortures you," the Miner continues. "Why would a man with more smarts, heart and grit than Jesus turn into a Judas? It certainly weren't for 30 pieces of either silver or hotter ass than Lady Comrade Olivia," he muses, allowing a chuckle to come through his parched throat. He wants to come up with another pun, but blood fills his throat before words

can. You pull as much blood out as you can, and pour medicine into his mouth, a concoction that both Doc Steiner and the Medicine Woman swear can work miracles, or at least do no harm to a man at his stage of consumption. He takes a few shallow breaths, then some deep ones. You hear the death rattle go away, and hope it isn't an auditory hallucination.

The Miner pulls you closer to him, whispering something in your ear, as the price of renewed breathing is the inability to use the boisterous voice that is his trademark and Passion. "Whatever it was, it had somethin' to do with the Haymarket Massacre. Me wife Marie can give you the details, if ya want. She invited him to supper at our place. Well, the company's place which we was overpayin' rent on anyway. He started gettin' real secretive about what he was doin' here when she asked him questions about his being a hero that day, savin' 50 striking workers from bein' clubbed to death by the Coppers, or hung by the judges afterwards. Me boys keeps pressin' him for more tall tales about heroic Socialists, Anarchists and Revolutionary Madmen. Then me wife changes the subject, don't ya know. We send to boys to bed, take out the bottle and started drinkin. Then, he told us what really happened at the Haymarket."

"Albert only saved 40 workers, not nearly a hundred?" you say, having heard such, or close to such, from other Comrades there. Students you taught back East and adult learners you mentored here in the West. "And talked the Cops into putting away their Nightsticks by telling vulgar jokes to them about Anarachist whores? Or bribed them into pretending they were beating in the heads of the strikers with money and free passes to bordellos that even they didn't know about?" you say to him with a chuckle you both need.

"Something a lot less colorful than that," the Miner replies, as the death rattle comes back into his voice. "Something that...if I said anything to anyone, me wife would be killed. And if she did, I'd be...Something that..."

The rest of what he says is in Gaelic, directed to his dead wife Bridget, any clear diction of it drowned by blood pouring out of his mouth. Two breaths later, he gasps. His eyes look upward. They remain fixed in position, pupils dilated. You turn to Bridget, desperately thinking that maybe she can provide you with an answer.

Yes, you have gone mad, or clearvoyant, as your eyes can finally see ghosts. But the strange light in front of you that suddenly takes on form isn't the dead Miner's wife, or his two sons. It's the Old Indian Chief who expired in the same way, 'falling off' the mountain when he found out too much about Wilson, and his plans to bring out fresh blood for his new Empire. The ghost of your old friend shakes his head 'no'. He shrugs his shoulders, then vanishes.

As he does, two more patients are brought into the hospital in need of help from the 'real' world. You and Nurse Lubinski tend to them with your hands, and brains, but your mind must concern with other matters. Matters that can't be resolved by simple questions to

what Wilson, and perhaps your good friend Albert, consider simple and expendable people.

CHAPTER 25

The room is dark, the attempts of the sun outside the narrow width window a foot down from the ceiling to illuminate the room as futile as your nudging and pushing on the door to try to get out. The lingering stench of urine and caked blood on the cot which is now your bed from the last resident in this hotel permeates into your nostrils. The wind outside blows into your direction the aromas of freshly baked pastries from the Philadelphia bakeries you've enjoyed since you got your first set of adult teeth, as just plain Olivia, contrasting to the bland, tasteless and sugarless 'cakes' that supplant every one of your 'gourmet meals' here. But, it could be worse.

From the other side of the walls you hear cracking of whips on flesh by day. In the evening, women scream out for help while male visitors moan in carnal delight. During the wee hours of the night you hear crying, bashing of heads on the wall, then dead silence. You pull your non-violated and unbeaten body up from the cot, stroll around your rodentless, un-invaded wall-enclosed 'yard', and pick up the book left for you to read to keep you occupied, and perhaps sane. You've glanced over the Bible but never really absorbed it. Or course, you've criticized the Hebrew fairy tales and Christian legends which you tried to make the basis for the Utopian Revolutionary Ideals you promoted out West. Now it seems like the characters in this tale of begots, slains and ressurecteds are considering you the butt of their jokes, starting with 'no good deed goes unpunished'. But, it could be worse.

You lay your still not whipped by life tired body on the cot again, and read the newspaper article that started the process of landing you here. "Mysterious Bomber at Haymarket Massacre Finally Found." The newspaper article is extremely well written, its literary finesse executed with simple vocabulary that everyone who reads it can understand, and believe. The four eye witnesses who were visiting relatives in Philadelphia saw you on the stage of the Opera House, performing a ballet adaptation of Beethoven's Creatures of Prometheus, 'dancing your heart out' for the audience, your family and your new husband, Albert Dickinson, a rising force in Philadelphia politics who was directly responsible for the boorish City Fathers to build an Opera House dedicated to the arts instead of another five arenas for boxing matches. The witnesses, all former Anarchists who turned their lives around, identified you as 'a hard Core Radical who threw a bomb at the police, revealing the real nature of the strike which promoted itself as a peaceful demonstration for real American values'. 'A cowardly seductress who refused to turn herself in, even when 'freethinkers' Spies, Parsons, Engels and Fischer, the speakers at the workers demonstration, went to the gallows as the instigators of the riot.' 'A disgrace to her own Cause, who will pay a hefty price on earth for being part of a destructive movement, and an even higher one after her death for betraying her 'Comrades'. But, it could be worse.

Your lawyer, the best defense attorney in town, says that proving you were not even in Chicago at the time of the riot is futile. For every witness you can provide saying that you were entertaining horny and desperate men out West, the prosecution already has three readily available workers or cops who can attest to you being in the Windy City. There is no shortage of testimonies saying that it was you who made up lies about the Cops to the workers, and vice versa, spreading them amongst the crowd at the Haymarket Demonstration, one on one, so that when you threw the bomb at the policemen, they would think it was one of the workers, and would be forced to retaliate. One of the witnesses says that you had ‘the devil’s own plan in your eyes, being possessed by evil which, with God’s help, the right doctors, the right hospital and with anti-melancholia medications, can be purged from your soul.’ But, it could be worse.

Your husband Albert agrees with the lawyer, informing you that confessing to the accusations would result in a kinder outcome, for both of you. When you ask him about bringing Jack here to help out, on the witness stand and otherwise, he averts both his eyes and changes the topic of conversation. You want and need to converse with him on the matter, but he’s been away on business, for yet another two days. But it could be worse. Or could it be?

You hear the guard coming to the cell door again. “Dinner, Lady Olivia,” he says to you from behind the slits in the door, more like a subservient butler than a sadistic captor. “We snuck in some extra fruit. Freshly baked bread with raisins instead of roaches mascerading as such. And an extra portion of pork that’s more meat than fat. We hope you’ll enjoy it.”

“‘We’ or ‘I’, Officer Johnson?” you say to him, having seen his nametag on two occasions when he escorted you to these lodgings, as a Lady, allowing you the special privelidge of wearing your own clothes, and keeping all of your hair. You look at the tray of food pushed under the door, and indeed Officer Johnson outdid himself today. The vegetables are green rather than brown. The apple has not a single worm hole in it, and the pear is ripe rather than rotten. And the meat is actually warm rather than ice cold and rancid. Whoever this guard is who you’ve had various conversations with across the door slits, he likes and respects you. “This is too much for me,” you say, thinking that he may love you, in ways workable for the current situation as well as in manners deeper. “Would you like to share some of it with me?”

“It would be against the rules, Mrs. Dickinson,” he replies. “And I’ve eaten already.”

“Dining alone is a sacraledge. Didn’t the Lord say in Psalms that ‘to share your bounty amongst friends is to imbibe of the heavenly presence and serve the Heavenly Father’s Purpose?’”

“I don’t seem to recall that quote, Mrs. Dickinson. But it is lovely and profound,” he replies, believing your bullshit, or perhaps enjoying it.

“My husband is out of town, your wife is still visiting her sister, or so she says, and, well...I want to somehow express my gratitude to you for your kindness, Tom,” you say, recalling the name you hear his boss refer to him as two weeks ago, as measured by the notches you made on the wall of the cell.

From the other side of the locked door, you hear Silence. It's as loud as it is terrifying. You wonder what you have set in motion as the door opens, slowly. With each creep of the door, you plan what to do next. How you'll give up a generous portion of the opium the visiting doctors gave you to alleviate your mania to Officer Tom in his portion of pork, or through the mouth in a kiss delivered to the loving and love-starved family man. How you'll sneak out the hall in his uniform, and out the door, and to somewhere else, perhaps a train out West where no one cares who you are and where you came from. How you'll lament fucking over the career of the only guard in this 'assessing unit' who gave a fuck about you. But such is for later, for the 'now', you retreat to your cot, set up the small table provided to you, preparing a place for yourself at the 'dining table' for Officer Johnson, or Tom, whoever he wants to present himself as.

He presents himself with his hands in the air. “I didn't do anything to harm her.” he says to a man behind him pointing at gun at his back. “My hand, and hands to God on it!” he asserts, and means.

“Perhaps or perhaps not,” you hear in a grunted voice from Johnson's captor, as he grabs him by the throat, and stuffs a handful of pills into his mouth. The gloved and caped intruder whose identity is hidden by a wide brimmed Copper hat puts his hands over Johnson's mouth, waiting for the medication to take effect. The six foot two Prison Guard falls onto your cot with the impact of an ancient oak tree fallen by a modern steel chainsaw, falling on top of you. After recovering your senses, and perspective, you prepare to address the man you've been waiting to see for so long.

“Albert!” you say as you turn around. “Finally you've come to.---”

“---Strip down and put this on,” the intruder says in a voice that's not Albert's, but sounds familiar somehow. He tosses you a large white sac with a tag on it bearing your name that thumps on your weakened chest.

“But, I'm not dead yet, Henry” you say to the intruder, not knowing why or how wit and humor have found their way into your broken spirit. “And wwwwere's you stttutter?” you ask of the most trusted and abused assistant Emerson Nordenstrom, scum bucket mogul owner of the Wildcat, ever had. “And where's Albert?” you inquire.

“The question is, still COMRADE Olivia, 'WHO' is Albert?” Old Henry replies with his new voice lacking stutter, subservience and moral corruption.

“My husband, your friend, and---“

“---the best turncoat the Pinkerton’s could buy,” Old Henry barks at you in a forced whisper. “Professor Jack will explain,” he pledges as you crawl into the body bag and he closes it over your head. Thinking all along that perhaps it is Emerson Nordenstrom who wants you back as an entertainer. Then there’s the possibility that Jack will get you back as a lover and Comrade. Still, it’s a gamble you have to take, both affiliations being equally dangerous.

CHAPTER 26

You feel a shift in your universe, and the world. Either you’re getting really smart, or everyone else is getting stupid, particularly the people who you used to think were very smart. You are on a train heading West, wearing a fake mustache, a bad wig and a black hat under which you are instructed to bear a mean ‘mind your own business or I’ll use this pistol strapped to my waist on you’ attitude to anyone who smiles or looks at you. “You can pull it off if you try, Lois,” Jack told you when you when got on the train. “And maybe you’ll find out that you like it,” Olivia added once you got settled in the seats in the first class section of the train with tickets Old Henry bought under an assumed name.

Old Henry is decked out in a dark brown tweed three piece suit, the most expensive suit he ever wore, or perhaps even saw. The ‘go to’ grunt at the Wildcat, who always wiped everyone else’s ass, seems to be enjoying letting the upper crust servants on the train with clean fingernails and un-blistered hands to wipe his. He relishes in requesting that they bring him the kind of food and drink that he requested, demanding that it be to his satisfaction or he will report them to not only to their bosses on this continent, but his fellow dukes and barons on the other side of the Atlantic, who can both find and make life miserable for anyone relatives still lingering in the old country. When he is served to his royal satisfaction, he compliments the nervous servants, then flips a dime their way for their trouble, often intentionally letting it fall to the floor so he can see who most desperately reaches down to pick it up. He says that it is part of his cover, saying all the while that he’s doing it for the sake of democratic Socialism.

Professor, now more Brother, Jack is sporting long sideburns bordering a hairless upper lip and chin, a banker’s bolon atop his head instead of his usual racoon hat with a tail, complimented by knee high riding boots instead of moccasins. But he makes no attempt to hide his real identity regarding the way he sits, talks and ‘discourses’ with Sister Olivia.

As for Sister Olivia, she is clad as a nun, as uncomfortable in her ‘do gooder’ attire as you are in your ‘mean hombre’ one. Without the make up that she normally wears, she looks somehow younger than she really is. More naive anyway. Something like you used to be before all of this started. She reads an obituary regarding her death that Professor Jack had put in the paper. “Olivia Fornell. Amateur dancer and musician. Died of self-inflicted wounds while suffering from consumption and melancholia. Survived by her husband of only 2 months, Albert Dickinson,” she reads. “Who’s still

away on business,” she comments regarding her once-dream lover and your most favorite uncle. “Who’s still away on business,” she comments. “And who didn’t come to the closed casket funeral.”

“Thankfully,” he says.

“And after he figures out that the only thing in that coffin was a sac of dirt?” she barks back. “He’s a Pinkerton detective now. Trained to see or have others see through these ‘disguises’ that make us all the more noticeable. ”

“Which, after a calculated time, will make Albert follow us out to Normana Falls, which is OUR turf,” Jack replies.

“You mean Provisional Governor Wilson’s,” she barks back.

“Shhh...” Old Henry says to them both, while sipping a glass of wine. “All of this bantering is jarring the sensibilities, and the necessary deceptionaries we are indulgent in,” he continues in a very convincing upper class English accent. Much like that of H. Micheal Farnsworth, Pastor-Governor Wilson’s newest spokesman, journalist and no doubt biographer. “The passivic nature of our demeantor must be preserved.”

“You mean the pacific nature or our demander,” he think but dare not say. But, though his words are wrong, his intentions are right, and spot on. Still, once a horse gets into too much rich afalpha and after a bull has seen the sight of a red flag, there’s no stopping the ‘heated discourse’ they have to finish out before finding themselves again.

That discourse between Jack and Olivia centers around Albert this time. Each claims that they suspected his true nature as a turncoat to the Revolutionary Movement before the other one did. Then they get to the ‘why’ of it. All manner of possible hypotheses get voiced as hard fact, and natural law. From defective upper-crust genetics to disorders of the liver that affected his mentation. Finally, when the theories go over to being possessed by ghosts of departed Capitalist Emperors, you have to stop the stampede before it takes all of the herd off a cliff.

“The ‘why’ of Albert’s turning on us has to do with his son,” you say. “The one who died on the barricades. Following too closely in the footsteps of his father.” Olivia and Jack look at each other, recognizing the words, that came out of Albert’s own mouth back in the Mountain Cabin when he first arrived. “Just because my hands are busy, that doesn’t mean my head isn’t working, and my ears aren’t listening ,” you tell your two new ‘parents’. Extending your role as a parent to the quarrelling, and troubled, middle aged youngsters, you inform them about what should be done next. “What we should concentrate on is what Albert is going to do next to destroy the Revolutionary Movement.”

“And what new bosses he’s going to bring out to Normina Falls to do it with,” Lord Henry adds, after which he finishes the remainder of the wine in his glass with a very

non-aristocratic gulp. “It’s gonna be business as ussuall....wheenmmm we get back there,” he continues with a his hillbilly diction and servile stutter.

You look at Old Henry, not sure of who he really is. Or was. But know that you and everyone else with you have to become something more effective than who they were. Especially if such involves being who you really aren’t, or want to be.

CHAPTER 27

According to the clock atop the new, luxury hotel you, as Provisional Governor Wilson, have built for the kind of guests who will make this town a model of individual prosperity rather than community survival, it’s 1 AM. Two hours past pissed to the gills drunk at the Wildcat, an hour after the last fight that ends in Sheriff Olsen coming in to arrest those who survive it. It’s an unusually cool night for early summer, the stars shining brightly above outshined in their magnificence only by a full moon that no doubt made the Wildcat louder than it normally was, and crazier. It also illuminates the night more than you are comfortable with. The big, white beacon up in the sky seems to make the street lamps you have donated to the town so that descent people could walk the streets at night with a feeling of safety redundant. As you’ve spent all night in brightly lit rooms talking with more business people about how to keep the commoners happy, unburdened with the ultimately destructive daydream of Social Revolution and the even more corrupt fellow commoners they will elect to power, you seek a darker, more private kind of night. You decide to take a walk home by way of the alley whose shadow hides the moon rather than the street that seems to welcome it.

The tunnel created by the two growing main streets that converged on each other from behind comforts you. But it’s colder than normal, as it somehow converts a gentle breeze into a brisk wind. Having left your gloves at home, you put your hands into the pockets of your coat. You discover a small two shot pistol inside of it, then feel somehow that the coat is larger than it normally was, or that your arms have shrunk. Then, when you reach inside the other pocket, you find a card from the Wildcat with a time, room and entertainer’s name on it. “I didn’t know all responsible citizens burdened with administrating power all dressed that much alike,” you say to yourself as you think about what Provisional Attorney General Harry, now ‘Harrold’, MacMillian will say to himself when he discovers that he’s wearing your coat home. “But, if I dress like a king, the princes clad themselves as princes, and the dukes adorn themselves according to their econo-political station, it will be perceived that we are a hierarchy,” you contemplate as you see, recalling that the commoners all dress according to their wants, one way or another, even appending or changing any aspect of the uniforms you donate to them for work. The Indians and half-breeds, particularly those still eating hand to hungry mouth in the bush, never dress or look alike. You envy their ability to appear on the outside as they are in the inside, but acknowledge that not being able to do so is the price of doing both business and Social Righteousness.

But there is the matter of that gun in your right pocket. As Pastor Wilson, you have no need to carry a gun, since the Lord takes care of those who have dedicated themselves to His service and you have to set an example for the flock. As Provisional Governor of the territory soon to be a state, and still Mayor of the town that will be its capital that you have claimed is the safest metropolis in the West for law abiding citizens, you cannot be seen wearing a sidearm. But, as you preach and sometimes believe, “there’s a reason for everything that happens.” What was the reason for you grabbing the wrong coat after the City Council meeting, or for Harry MacMillian to get yours?

As you progressively take more steps to your home, you think about what you may have left in your coat that Harry didn’t or shouldn’t know about. Maybe you did, or maybe you didn’t. In any case, you paid a heck of a lot more money for your frock than he did for his, so you turn around to head towards his place rather than yours. As you do, you see someone behind you, a miner in weather-beaten overalls, and blood on his hands. His white face is blackened in the manner of an Indian on the warpath, his tribe being the Anarchist movement as his hole-ridden coat is covered with buttons, tags and insignia of the Anarchist Movement. He waves a hello to you from the shadows. Or maybe it’s a goodbye, as he takes a wide stance with his feet, in the manner of a gunfighter. He withdraws his revolver from a holster and aims it at you. He hesitates, then says “stand still an’ it will be quick an’ painless,” in a Welsh accent.

“What will be quick and painless, Sheriff Olsen?” you ask the large framed bear, having recognised his voice beneath the most horribly faked accent you have ever heard. “Have you come to arrest me?” you inquire as you observe his shooting arm tremble. “And if you did come to arrest me, where’s your badge?” you say as you walk towards him, smelling liquor on his breath as the wind keeps blowing it into your nostrils. “The one I got for you and did a lot to let you keep,” you remind him. “And what’s with that outfit you have on? Whatever they promised you, I can deliver twice as much.”

“Maybe, or maybe not,” the puppet sheriff says with a voice that seems to be coming from a marionette whose strings have been cut. He seems both scared and empowered by his new freedom as his hand regains firmness on his Colt, and he takes aim, then fires. The shot misses. He grunts out an expletive, then he takes aim again. But before he sends out the next bullet your way, you self-observe yourself grabbing hold of the pistol in your pocket. Aiming with your gut rather than eye you the first round. It hits him in the chest. His torso rocks back and forth, but he somehow remains standing, and is renewed in his determination to shoot you dead. Such is a fate you have no particular fear of somehow, and your instinct to survive, for reasons too obscure to figure out, erupts up your spine, into your hand and out the barrel of the pistol.

That second shot ends up between Sheriff Olsen’s eyes. He falls dead to the ground, spilling out a pool of blood on the ground, as well as a proof of tomorrow’s newspaper front page. You inspect it, just like you did every other version of the paper before it goes to press, and read “Provincial Governor Wilson shot dead by Anarchist Radical. Radical seen fleeing site of the Crime, whereabouts unknown.”

You don't know why, but you think 'what political activist is my murder going to be pinned on?' instead of what you should be concerned with. Starting with the posse of witnesses awakened from darkened stores and houses who emerge with pre-rehearsed stories and badly acted claims that your death will be avenged. The Deputy Sheriff comes out of his office, claiming that he and his posse will 'ride into the dead of night till hell freezes over' to find the murderer.

So far, no one has seen you. Except for one by-standard who doesn't seem to have any political agenda, nor any empty pockets which would be filled with pay off money. "Easy there," you say to the horse that Olsen, posing as the Anarchist Activist, was going to use to take off into the night.

That night had been illuminated by a full moon, no doubt so that witnesses could claim to have seen you being shot. Mother Nature, whose existence you denied in your sermons and whose interests you have violated at every turn with your mines, factories and drilling, lends a hand by providing a cloud between the lunar light and you. You get on top of the horse, and ride out of town as quickly as you can. Bullets whiz past you, and as you turn to the left, the posse heads to the right. All as planned of course, in a drama which, for the first time in your life, is being written by somebody else.

CHAPTER 28

There is no natural reason for Normina Falls to be the capital of a territory that's about to be boxed into being a state. Then again, Mother Nature has given up the fight to keep it in her domain. The mines are all extracting more gold, silver and other kinds of rocks which only have value in places where there are more bricks than brooks. Oil comes out of the ground as often and eagerly as sperm juice from a young buck who is favored by every young and old woman in your tribe. As for your tribe, it suffers now the same diseases as the White Man. An invitation has been extended for all Indians who want to 'become civilized' to join civilisation. The many who have decided that it is better to eat chipped beef than to dine on imaginary buffalo are paid in money instead of wampum. They pose for pictures in their suits, church dresses and work clothes. Your former wife is amongst them, having joined after the medicine woman's herbs were unsuccessful in saving her sister, brother and most of her children from the latest plague that somehow found its way onto the Reservation. Still, some would rather live on their ragged and tired ever-running feet than live comfortably on their knees. Big Wolf, the name your son asked for as a youth and earned as an adult still keeps his hair long, and his lances sharp. As for his tongue, that is another matter. Though he can track any white tailed rabbit in a snow storm, he can't talk his way out of a political argument or a strategic debate. He also can't see nor talk to you, and according to the rules of being a ghost who chooses to linger with those who are still living rather than moving on to an easier lifetime and more sane dimension, you aren't allowed to talk to him. But the rulebook you discovered after your death does allow you to enter people's dreams.

While sitting on a rock which is hard on your ass, but which you make no impact on, you hear him describe it to four Paleface travelers who ‘accidentally’ crossed paths with his renegade band of barely eleven warriors, represented equally by both genders. He is about to lose one of them, begging one of the Palefaces to bring her back to life. “I had a dream that you’d come back here and try to make things right, Professor,” he says to Jack. “You did say that Nature never gives you a problem without a solution.”

“But sometimes death is the best solution,” Olivia offers.

“And NNaatture weren’t tthheee varmint that got her sicckkk,” Old Henry adds.

“And sometimes music is the best kind of medicine,” Looney Lois says, looking and sounding far saner than anyone within hearing range, Red or White. She demonstrates her point by picking up her violin and playing a tune that sounds like it came from the Great Spirit Itself.

“Beethoven,” Olivia says as she leans down to give the seventh concoction to the medicine woman, slipping it under her tongue. “Opus 131. His late string quartets. The last quartets he ever wrote. Good medicine for...whatever...” Olivia breaks down in tear. She’s experienced too much death and hasn’t processed it all yet. Old Henry takes over as nurse while Professor Jack scratches the newly grown whiskers on his chin contemplating his next step as a doctor.

The medicine woman looks to you, her eyes saying, “Talk some sense into your son. Tell him that I’m tired of living and am ready to die. So I can talk with my mouth to you, and maybe make you feel like a young man, while I feel like a young woman again.”

“Not yet,” you say to the medicine woman. “Let yourself live a little longer so that the deals these idiots who still have bodies can have a chance of working,” you tell her.

“I save her, you help me save the Revolution,” she barks out with a language only the dead or dying can understand. “It was Jack’s idea. Him thinking that he still can do anything.”

“My son gave him no other choice,” you say to the old woman.

“You mean OUR son,” she replies back to you, having kept the secret of her real father from the living for her entire life. “I have to take some responsibility for some of his arrogance and stupidity also.”

“So,” you say to the old woman, who seems to see you as a young man who she once courted very discretely. “Are you up to enduring life with the living for a little longer?”

“I suppose I will,” she replies. “For one most important reason.”

“This revolution thanks you,” you say with a most appreciative bow.

“I want YOU to thank me when I come over to the other side. This time with ME on top, both inside the teepee, and between the ears,” she says with her eyes while her mouth breaks into a laugh, which breaks through her death rattle, which then brings color to her skin and movement to her limbs. She wakes up from the uneasy slumber that the Palefaces call a coma, and looks up at Big Wolf. “Jack, Olivia, Henry and Lois are good people,” she tells him in your Native tongue. “Trying be effective ones. Time for you to be effective down in the valley, together.” She turns to Jack, staring him straight into his proud face. “And you, remember that the ability to heal people or fix their government systems is granted by the Great Spirit, not owned by any Redman or White one,” she continues in broken English.

You bid the old woman a fond farewell, seeing her in a flash as a young one. That vision remains with you as you are called away to places elsewhere, having exhausted nearly all your favors with the rulers of your current realm. But it’s for a good cause, which those rulers will come around to seeing the value of, someday.

CHAPTER 29

Some time passes. Two months by the calendar. Four Manifestos according to your measure of such. They state the fact that the re-election of Horatio Wilson to Governor in a landslide decision was a hoax, set up with and allowed by Brother-Comrade Albert, who split the popular vote with you, ex-Professor now eagerly learning student Jack. The fact sheets you’ve distributed to the workers, managers and the massive wave of newcomers to Normina Falls who seek to find out which category they will fall into display, speculate that amongst Albert’s other activities, he is the still-sought mystery bomber who turned the peaceful Haymarket Demonstration into a deadly riot that cost the lives of eight striking workers and four policemen who were forced to do their assigned job.

From your observation post above the town, hidden and nurtured by the trees that are still not chopped down or smothered into becoming petrified wood by the fumes from the industrialized valley, you observe the fifth Manifesto being distributed around. This time it’s not only the Indians who Big Wolf sent down as pretend sell outs to their culture who are doing it, but the Workers themselves. And some managers. Of course, they have to be careful about who they hand the papers to and who they talk to about what is in print as the security force to protect the citizenry from bandits, renegade Injuns and transient cowboys gone stupid has grown into an Army. Some of that Army are blue coats, some secret police with plain coats. But as for the former category, there are less of them than there were last week.

You look over your shoulder, taking note of the dust they have made chasing Big Wolf’s renegade band into the depths of hell. Actually, they took to the chase of the feared, deadly renegade, who in truth never killed a man in his life, because of the rumor that the band of Redskin holdouts were heading up to a sacred mountain where there is so much

gold that the travellers from beyond the stars are using it as fuel for their flying chariots. Though the story about the visitors to earth from other planets is probably more false than true, the belief that there is gold for the taking is ingrained into every brave lad in blue, and some ladies trying to pass as lads, who volunteered to root out the heathenous, blood thirsty Redskins. You chuckle, anticipating that all they'll find at the end of their ride is a box canyon covered with dried buffalo dung, which can be set ablaze by ignorant, wild savages from above at any time.

As to who is in charge of Normina Falls and its destiny, it is clearly not the former foreman at the mine and self-taught engineer, Fredrico Bandaras, a Spaniard who is damn sure that everyone knows he is not Mexican, whose new designs for extracting mineral from rock are making money for everyone in town, even himself now. Though he wears the Mayor-Governor's hat and suit more authoritatively and with more class than Horatio Wilson ever did, the aristocratic born failure on Madrid is informed about the day's events and mandates by H. Michael Farnsworth, the humble writer who writes rather than lives tall tales of the Old West.

The English accented imposter from who knows, or cares, where, clearing has Governor Bandaras' ear as he shows hands him sheet after sheet of paper while sitting on the porch of the heavily guarded Mayor's Mansion. Farnsworth does the talking, while Bandaras does the nodding, answering 'yes' to every 'question', which no doubt is a mandate. At the end of every 'explanation', Bandaras signs his name on the bottom of the page, thinking himself to be in charge. Farnsworth chuckles each time he does so, as do you. The final mandate comes in the form of a document that Bandaras decides to read for himself, twice, then three times, declining to sign the document. But when a train whistle announces the arrival of another Iron Horse from the East, he looks towards it. Upon seeing a passenger in a brown tweed suit, an oversized but neatly trimmed mustache and beard, wearing wide rimmed black hat, and a shiny badge, Bandaras resigns himself to his fate, taking pen in hand. Upon seeing more men following him, with matching suits, less facial hair and smaller badges, he the Spaniard signs the documents, gets up and puts on a fake smile to greet the visitor.

"I thought that big beards and overgrown mustaches weren't Comrade Albert's thing," Olivia comments to you, after taking a closer look at the man who has come out here to take back to jail, the loony bin, or his bed, the latter being of course the one she fears most.

"He's Chief Pinkerton Inspector Dickinson now," you remind her, placing your still steady hand on her shaking shoulder. "Who WE will bring to justice this time," you assure her. "My hand to God on that."

"A God you postulated and wrote is 'a well meaning observer of human struggles, on a good day'," she reminds you.

You know she's right. You want to tell her 'Heaven watches, earth works', but that's the kind of talk you reserve for the Old Indian Chief, who dwells in the realm of the

untouchable ethereal. A realm where he's having a hard enough time fighting the rules to be effective for his realm of existence and yours. You look around to seek an answer from him, which you can translate to Olivia. But he isn't there. Yet, someone else lingers behind you. Someone very much from this realm, as you can hear his footsteps, see the tree branches moving as he lurks towards you, and smell oil on what is probably his coat.

Olivia no doubt will scream if she realizes that there is someone behind you lurking in the bushes, giving away your position. She rambles on about what she'll do to Albert IF she you can get him on any witness stand in ANY courtroom other than the Big Open, thankfully talking more than listening. You silence her rants and divert her line of vision by grabbing hold of her, rolling her over, and laying a big fat kiss on her lip, using that conduit to express the kind of affection you never have. The kind of affection that she only received from Albert, who despite his political betrayals, did celebrate the difference between love and friendship. While Olivia is absorbed in her new dream, which you have become, you extend out your left hand to your sidearm, aiming it at the intruder. Somehow with your other hand, you grab him by the collar, and force his head into the dirt, rolling Olivia into a ditch in which she is safe from any ensuing gunfire.

"State your business!" you yell at the man whose head is shaved, and covered with black soot to make him appear to be Negroid.

"To make things right," you hear from a voice you recognise but not believe. Rolling him around onto his back you see his face. In his eyes there is something you've never seen. Humility. "Your plan to have the people take back their town, and territory, has one flaw in it. That I can fix," Horatio Wilson says, looking straight into your eyes.

"And I should believe you because?" you inquire of the man who has been behind most every betrayal, and humiliation, you have experienced.

He pulls out a newspaper clipping, showing it to you. "They say I was killed by an Anarchist. They say I died as a martyr, standing up for Christian values and the American Way. They say that they avenged my death, but are continuing the fight against blood thirsty destructive Socialists in my memory."

"And 'they' is?" Olivia asks, after kicking you on the side, in the same spot you pushed her on to roll her to safety.

Wilson speaks with his fingers, once finely manicured appendages which are now blistered, arthritic and scared with burns. He points to Farnsworth, Albert, Bandaras, then various collections of White and Negro Workers, as well as Indians who you thought were loyal to the Cause. "Everyone else is with us," he says. "Including you, if you'll let me."

You want to say 'yes', but can't, the words from your heart held hostage in your throat by your still every racing mind. Olivia says it for you, welcoming the Prodigal Capitalist

Imperialist into your Revolutionary Socialist Family with a warm hug. Wilson extends his hand to you. Olivia clears her throat, in that ‘come on, grab hold of your senses instead of thinking with your penis again’ way that has always angered and endeared you, both at the same time. You shake his hand, then find yourself trusting it, but out of moral and practical necessity.

CHAPTER 30

“Heaven watches, earth works,” you say to yourself in that voice which only you and select people in the realm of the living can hear. But even as an Old Indian Chief who was more powerful than any King while alive, and who kept his wits and skills of diplomacy alive when you became a ghost, there are rules you have to follow. From a small mountain outlook you once called Sacred, and yearn to again, you look down below at the once-lush valley filled with buffalo which is now overpopulated with palefaces people wearing buffalo hides who are doing their damnest to steal what they can from the Earth to feed their families, friends and, ultimately, themselves.

Still, you have elected to champion the side that represents the less evil, and aspires to the most good. It was a gamble siding with Professor Jack when he came out here twenty years ago to establish a Utopian society after having gone through a Civil War back East that freed slaves in name but, according to what is happening in the post-Reconstruction South now, not deed. But it was a gamble you had to take, and still stand by. Yes, the scholar who was adored by students from all over the world from his lectern back East, or so he said anyway, is an idiot who is slow to recognise the love of a good woman, and who still studies Nature rather than reveres it. Still, he’s the best protector of your people now, the most likely candidate to resurrect the glory that was before his kind stumbled onto your Continent.

You glance down at Jack as he moves around the workers, carrying two buckets of water atop his shoulders, a hood covering his head. Olivia and Old Henry dispense rolls and assorted pastries to the laborers and their bosses, each masquerading as clowns, similarly carting two large bags each. The trustable Comrades, get sustenance from the right bag, the others get such from the left. On an impromptu stage which also doubles as well-used platform from which to hang or display dissidents and criminals, Nordenstom, still very prosperous owner of the Wildcat, presents new dancers fresh from Paris who ‘will give anyone who can afford them very private French lessons’. Providing music for them is not-so-Looney-anymore Lois, her legs and arms painted green, her face covered with wreaths as she plays away on her violin.

“It doesn’t sound like Lois,” you hear from a woman’s voice behind you, in the language of your realm. “Though the music is making people bob their heads and the dancers move their feet, her playing feels so...lifeless.”

“Like you are?” you say with a profound smile to the old medicine woman, whose ghost body still bears the wounds inflicted on her by the Blue Coats when she volunteered to divert them, finally ending the suffering the chemicals and small microbes had been

causing. She finds it odd that she can walk better than she did in real life, even though her ghost body has one leg with a bone shattered into three pieces, and another that has been slashed in two by a sabre. “Part of the benefits of this job,” you explain. “No pain.”

“And no gain?” she shoots back, in the manner of a green fillie who teaches her rider more than he trains her. “But that’s not why I called you here, or you called me here, or whatever caused us to be here, together, finally, without complications,” she continues, after which her old body morphs into the one that you remembered back in the good old days. “Now your turn,” she smiles with a bow.

You try your damnest to transform into the young man you used to be when she was a maiden rather than a Sage, but you can’t. None of the tricks, spells or clenching of teeth work. “The older the violin, the more interesting the music?” you propose, recalling that your sole wish when you were a brash young man was to be a wise old one.

“We’ll see,” she smiles back. “But first, it’s our job to watch what’s happening below,” she continues, looking at the pocket-watch that she really did integrate into Native life rather than using that way to measure time to destroy such.

The young ghost woman with the old soul is right. It is your job to watch, and learn. And listen. To the dancers kicking their feet up higher with each beat of the music. As some of the spectators start to nod off into a ‘standing sleep’. And as most of the others become more aroused from the self-induced spell of functional slumber that all workers use to be able to endure labor. They nod to select others, then gaze at the clock atop the town square. Five seconds later, most of them grab hold of their knives, clubs and small devices still covered by their half-eaten bread and pastries. Others merely clench their fists, as they sneer at the comrades and bosses who are two drools away from a sound slumber.

“So, Jack did learn how to dispense medicine to the appropriate patients,” she comments. “We taught him well.”

“But did he teach his patients how to---“ you utter, interrupted by a loud screech from Lois’ fiddle that doesn’t in any way match the music. Two measures later, the dancers duck for cover, and Lois’ simple, country tune turns into a concerto for solo violin and an orchestra of Workers. Workers who have stopped becoming Laborers, who are holding their nearly slumbering bosses and sell out comrades hostage with whatever weaponry they have. Olivia breaks out into a song that you don’t recognize, but it’s easy to sing to. The self-liberated Workers and sympathetic managers join in, followed by ‘neutral’ workers who had no idea that the free noon hour concert offered to all workers in Normina Falls was going to be about doing something in the afternoon they neither expect, nor are prepared for. . Most of them sing along with the new Army of fully awake and self-realized souls.

Provisional Governor Bandaras, the new Sheriff, and the Colonel in charge of the Blue Coats are so drowsy that they when they reach for their pistols or rifles, they grab their

testicals, or someone else's instead. Those able to grab hold of their firearms put rounds up into the air, or into their feet. "To the arms and munition supply!" Professor Jack commands.

"To destroy them!" Olivia adds as an appendum, leading a contingent of liberated workers holding their former bosses and turncoats hostage.

"Or nnnnottt," Old Henry says, pointing his two Comrades on the ground and his musical muse on the stage to a distant hut, from which a herd of well armed soldiers emerge along with a dozen Pinkertons. They set up a gattling gun in front of the munition and arms storage unit, where all weapons in town not in active use are legally supposed to be under lock and key. Sitting in front of the gattling gun is none other than Albert.

Half of the assembly of Revolutionaries and their recent converts stop dead in their tracks. The others move forward, inspired by Jack making one of his speeches about the reward of dying for a principle, and the penalty for living without one.

"The same one that you gave your braves three uprisings ago," the now young medicine woman comments to you, wrapping her small arms around your waist and snuggling into your chest.

"And the same one that he gave his rebel workers three revolutions back," you note. "But with a humbled voice, and new meaning,"

"And higher stakes," she says, pointing to Lois. She picks up her violin and resumes playing the Liberation song. It puts new Purpose into the voice of Jack, and the feet of his new.. Congregation. Which as it advances becomes a larger crowd, then a mob that scares the assistant from the Gattling gun, leaving Albert alone to man it. He fires a few more rounds, at the feet of the oncoming protestors, but they keep coming. Until he calls for a rifle from one of the remaining troops. Within a second of getting it in hand, he aims it at Lois, then lets go with hot lead. The shot shatters her violin, leaving her hands miraculously intact, yet shaking with fear.

Professor Jack puts his hand up to halt his citizens, now troops. Most stop dead in their tracks. Others don't. "I said stop! All of you!" he commands. For reasons beyond your comprehension, they obey.

"So, you do have some common sense, Jack," Albert says. "Or the common decency to value the lives of your loved ones over the Revolution."

"Like you did, Albert?" Olivia challenges him. "Like when your son died after he joined the Cause."

"That was my fault!" Albert barks back, on the defensive. "Along with the deaths of other boys, men and women who I recruited."

“Annnnd you atttttoned for it by affiliattting your looyyallties with the Ppppinkertons,” Old Henry said with a stammer.

“And throwing that bomb at a Policeman in Haymarket Square in Chicago, letting the authorities think that it was the striking workers who did it,” Jack adds.

“A lie! A fabricated lie invented by idealists who don’t know when they’re beaten! And actually believe that ANYone would give according to their ability and take only according to their needs!” Albert blasts out with his voice, ranting more and more about that necessity of not giving workers what they ask for so he can to save them from the Revolution, which would rob them of what they think they need. But his eyes display more guilt, greed and shame. Everyone can see it. The Comrade Workers. The turncoat workers. The managers and foremen. The blue coats and the plain clothes soldiers wearing sheriff and Pinkerton badges. Albert’s rant turns away from the Workers, Olivia, Jack and ‘simple minded’ Lois, and onto those armed and in one way or another uniformed protectors of his Capitalist American Cause. They don’t take kindly to his insults regarding their character and accusations with respect to their efficiency, though most of them are based in fact. Finally, they elect new leaders with their eyes and take Albert by the shoulders, escorting him to the gallows. The rest of his civilian cronies, including Bandaras (who had sung the liberation tune louder than anyone else) are herded into the pen vacated by the pigs, tossed into the mud, then herded into wagon for transport out on the next train. It’s a joint effort, Soldiers, Coppers and Workers all extracting equal pleasure out of pushing around those who had kept them under thumb for so long, and in different ways.

The congregation turns into a mob. Some storm the bank, stealing whatever money they can get. Others claw their way up the gallows, demanding a chunk of Albert’s flesh in exchange for an ‘industrial accident’ involving loss of a wife, son or body part. They are stopped by Olivia, jumping onto the platform and saying ‘my turn first!’. By the look in Albert’s terrified eyes, he prefers to get justice from the mob.

Professor Jack does his best to maintain order, and is able to convince many of the Workers to put their rightfully retrieved booty into a cart which he says will be delivered to ‘those who need it most, on the basis of need, not want’. The cart fills up, each contributor to it explaining to Jack the reason why it should go to them, their family, or a Cause they would like to support back in the old Country. After an acceptable and permissible amount of looting from the rich by the poor, Michael Farnsworth approaches Professor Jack with a rough draft of a news paper article.

“I can embellish it more if you like, Comrade Governor Jack,” he says.

“No,” Jack replies, after reading it over. “This legend is hard enough to live up to in fact. Print it.”

“Which is the answer I was afraid he’d give,” you say to your newly departed female companion atop the mountain. “The mountain will make you pay for that, Jack,” he says to his old friend. “Not my rule, his,” you continue, hearing something disturbing in the Silence as you look across the Valley at the mountain overlooking it. Escaping bosses and loyal workers run into the mine entrance. They are pursued by Comrade Workers, armed to the teeth. Gunfire ensues, followed by a blast.

“Gas from a new vein, or dynamite left behind by the last crew that went in there?” the young medicine woman notes, having sniffed the smoke coming out of the hole drilled into the mountain.

Before you can answer, the mountain does the talking. The holes in it become too big for the rocks around them to hold up. Caves collapse, then the top of the mountain collapses upon the rubble and human remains spit out of the caves. You feel an unsteadiness under your feet, a rumbling that you’ve felt before. Being a ghost has been agony for you, but now it presents a very good advantage since had you still had a body, it would collapse into crevices under your feet as the second hill implodes.

“Time for us to leave,” your companion says, taking you by the hand, eager and ready to whisk you above the clouds of dust, toxic fumes and gravel that fill the air. “And for the mountain to extract its own justice.”

You delay.

“Last chance,” she says, revealing to you the reality that you have known ever since you elected to become an earthbound ghost rather than merge with dimensions well beyond the planet.

You take her hand with a smile, delivering up the the blue sky above one final statement regarding what is happening below. “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Yes, you could have come up with something more original, and in your own language, but....

CHAPTER 31

You don’t know how you escaped the crumbling mountain as it buried the valley below it. But you consider the why of it as you ride your horse up the hill to the top of the mountain. “Maybe it’s because I was smarter than everyone else,” you consider, and would like to believe. “Or ‘gooder’ than everyone else,” you allow yourself to think. “Or maybe because I’m...younger than everyone else who was responsible for whatever happened, less Loonie, and less Lois than I ever was,” you conclude.

The pack horse behind you whinneys, yearning to be with the herd of horses that made it out of the avalanche and are running their way up to a meadow on the neighboring mountain. “It’s alright. I’ll get your friends back. She’s carrying books. Written by a man who had more good ideas than bad ones. Ideas that now, I suppose I have to carry on, somehow.”

You say a silent prayer for the departed, and think about what you can do for the rest of the survivors, none of whom you know by name, or current whereabouts. Finally, you reach the plateau where life started for you. The burnt logs which had been Professor Jacks’ cabin, workshop and library are now homes for mushrooms, rodents and nesting birds. But somehow survivors of the avalanche that buried everything that Normina Falls was or ever will be have made it up here ahead of you. They are a mixed lot of former poor and former rich who are now actively human, building shelters where they can live together to survive the upcoming winter. It’s an under-funded, bodily injured and thus far ideology-less Utopia, but it will do. The holes where you buried his books are still undisturbed. You wonder if you should dig them up. Or if you should follow Professor Jacks last instructions to you, after he said he loved you. “Save my books, keep them available, read them if you have to, but above all else, write your own.”

END

