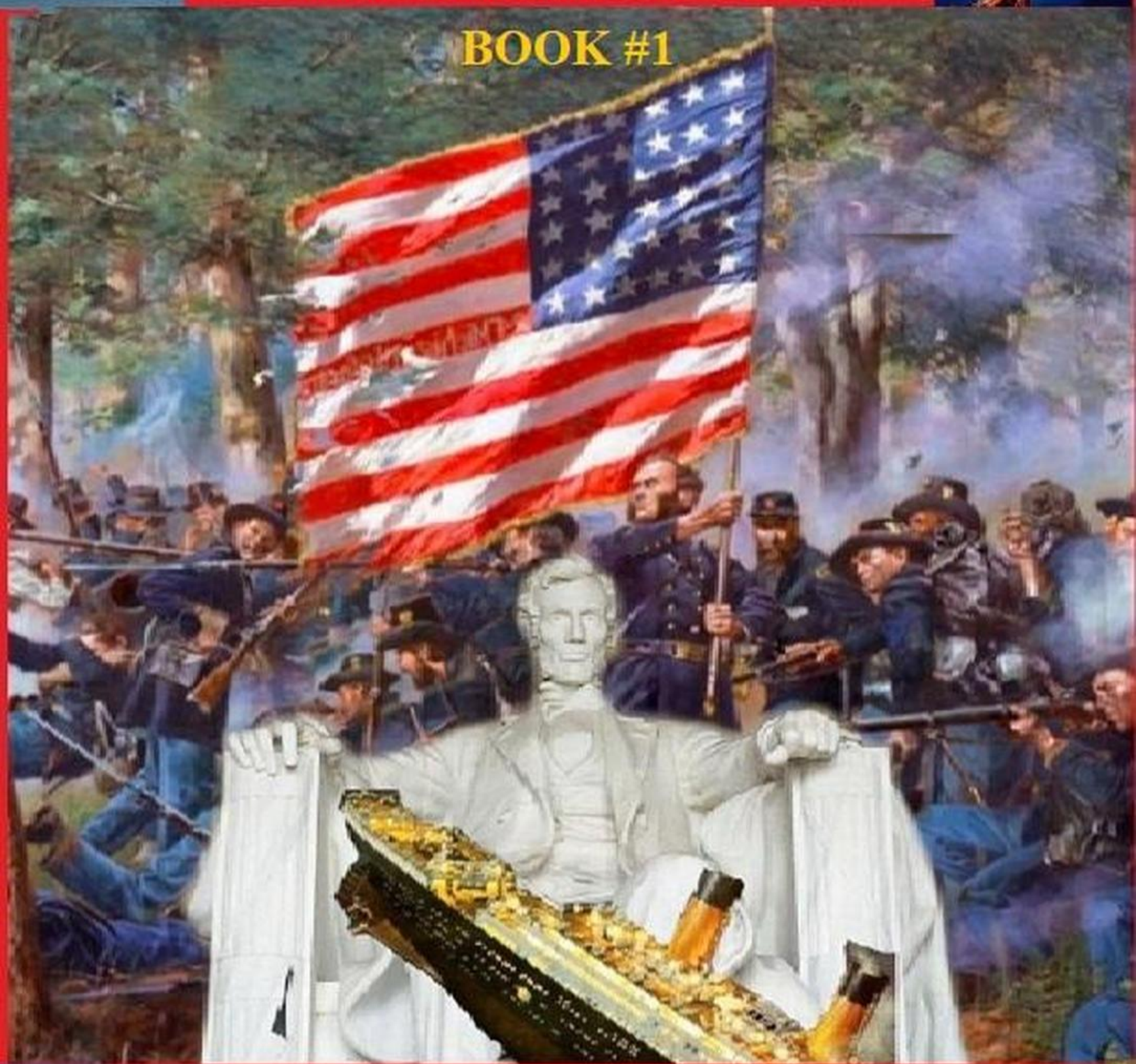


# Free the Nightingale:

From Civil War Gettysburg and Abraham Lincoln  
to the Wild West California, New York and the Titanic:  
A Pandemic Coronavirus Ghost Romance Novel

**BOOK #1**



**Christina J. Easley**



# Free the Nightingale: From Civil War Gettysburg and Abraham Lincoln to the Wild West California, New York and the Titanic

Pandemic Coronavirus Ghost Romance Novel,  
Volume 1

Christina J. Easley

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## **Introduction:**

Gail Nightingale is a ghost. She has lived since the days before the battle of Gettysburg in the American Civil War. Gail was a nurse caring for the wounded soldiers. Gail was just like Florence Nightingale. There is a coughing sickness that is spreading across the land. Gail Nightingale joins a group of healing women to cure the plague. Gail Nightingale was there to hear Abraham Lincoln give the Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves. Gail was like a bird that needed to be set free from the cage of her mortal body.

Gail Nightingale falls in love with a wounded soldier named Williamson Blacksmith. Then, Gail journeys through time. She endures the struggles of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. She is a conductor on the underground railroad. Gail is an abolitionist along with Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. She also meets Frederick Douglass in New York. Gail then hovers through the post-Civil War reconstruction. She find herself in the industrial revolution.

Her brother Robert Nightingale survives the Civil War. He ends up becoming a gold miner in the Wild West state of California. Robert falls in love with Robin. They have a son, called Robbie, or Robert Nightingale II.

Runaway slaves and pioneers travel on covered wagon trails to Oregon and California. The pioneers meet Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid, Jesse James, and a Buffalo Soldier named Cowboy. Later Robert and Robin become successful enough to take a trip on the doomed ship, the Titanic!

The pandemic is spreading after every war. Even Abraham Lincoln had the coughing sickness before he was assassinated. Gail wants to stop the coughing sickness. She meets with women all over the world to find the cure. The cure for the sickness is hidden in ancient herbs and elixirs. This story is the beginning of the search for the cure of what we now call the coronavirus, coughing sickness. There will be a book two that will continue the tale of Gail Nightingale. She goes through history from the first pandemic of 1918 Spanish influenza. Gail Nightingale goes all the way to WWI, WWII and to the present coronavirus pandemic.

# “Opposites Attract: The Hawk & the Dove Poem”

*If happiness is to laughter as sadness is to tears, is fighting akin to courage as running away is to fear? Pain is to the wounded as pleasure is to the healed. Any emotion is real enough to feel. Men died, and women cried over the bloody battlefield. Failure is to losing as success is to winning. Anything worth fighting for is worth defending. Don't kill the messenger because of the message she is sending. The tattered flag is what the nation is mending. Strong men will be shattered, and broken if they are opposed to changing and bending.*

*Gunfire burned across the hot summer land. He's got the whole world in his hand. He lifted up a dying man. Fire is to heat as ice is too cold. A child is too young as grandfather is too old. War is like hell, but no one can un-ring a bell. Getting up takes more effort to mend the mistake when you fell. You can't live without water, and hope is the well.*

*The slaves ran away from the warm South, to go to the cold North to fight. Is the bark of the war worse than its bite? The dogwood tree has deep roots that will not die. Cutting down the tree for the firewood would not be a lie. The war cut deep wounds. Women and children cried. The family tree of slavery spreads its branches toward freedom. Free and dumb, not knowing what to do or how to speak. If the willow tree breaks its branches, does it not ever weep? War is sowing the seeds that we reap. Into the ground blood will seep, flowing like a deadly creek. The trees planted with evil need more than one drop to leak. The black crows cry louder than a peep. Strong tree roots are never weak. The leaves search for the sunlight. They do not cease to seek. When the wind humbles the branches, they bend because they are meek.*

## **“The Sinking of the Titanic Poem”**

*The screams of the frightened frayed the frigid air with fear. As the floating first-class women watched their eyes filled with tears of terror. Their fear did tear through the air. Some could not look. They turned away as the final sinking of the Titanic was too much to bear, not because they didn't care. The atmosphere was filled with despair. All they could do was stare. The Titanic ceased to be lit as a beacon in the night. They watched in horror as the only source of light vanished. The lights went out on the mighty ship. The Titanic disappeared beneath the surface of the water. The Titanic was taking Captain Smith and thousands of others with him to their watery grave on the crest of a wave. There would be no survivors left to save. If sorrow was a master many minions were its slave.*

## Gettysburg Nightingale

This was battle of Gettysburg. On this morning the bold bronze and scarlet sunlight bled through the clouds. The morning sun wept tears of doom down on the battlefield below. Death loomed over the soldiers in mourning. Wives were made into widows. Many men would rise with these morning sun rays. Vast amounts of men would fall. There would be great victory and terrible loss on this day overall.

Her name was Gail Nightingale. She was like a bird in a cage that wanted to be set free. She was named after a bird that would fly through storms of war and peace. The hawks of war soared and the doves of peace were covered in blood. Tomorrow would be a day of sorrow. The sparrows flew to take cover in the trees. Creatures great and small bowed to their knees. The smoke from the cannon fire blew in the breeze. The boom of the cannons broke the silence with warning that no one would heed. This was a day of reckoning and death that no one would need. The reason for all wars was greed, but one side would soon concede. Someone would succeed. War was their creed. Those men who did not believe in peace would bleed! If happiness is to laughter, as sadness is to tears, is fighting akin to courage, as running away is to fear? If love is to pleasure, is hate the same as pain? If there is any truth in love, then the answers should be plain, simple to explain.

There was a legend that said that the hospital and the library were haunted with the ghost of a mysterious woman. The woman would appear to the sick and wounded to heal them. The legend said that the woman would fall in love with her patients and guide them in life and death. Gail was that vision of a nurse that appeared to her patients as a real flesh and blood woman. Gail Nightingale fluttered across the large open room filled with the beds of wounded soldiers. The library and the hospital infirmary were filled to capacity with dying men. The men wept crying out in pain and begging for mercy.

Gail Nightingale needed to be free! She had always been trapped in her body all of her life. Now in her death she could fly away and be free to do anything she had always wanted to do. What Gail wanted to be free from the most was the limits placed on women and on



mortals in the land of the living. Gail wanted to help people for free, giving liberty and life wherever she appeared.

Gail Nightingale flew like a dove of peace as she carried an armful of clean bandages to one of her patients. She smiled as she knelt beside him. She was just like the nightingale bird with wings as she hovered over him. She was going to save him! "Sir, I am here to dress your wounds with some new bandages. The doctor said that they would not have to cut off your leg if the bullet wound heals enough," said Gail. "Ma'am please don't let them take my leg! I would rather die than to be an amputee or a cripple the rest of my life," said the soldier with a tear welling in his eye. "Don't worry there will be no mourning for you on this morning. This will be a dawn of a new and happy day for you sir," said Gail as she began to change his bloodstained bandages. Gail was a woman filled with passion, as stormy as a hurricane. Gail was going to fall in love with him. She could feel the emotions of admiration aching in her, resonating like a love song in her heart. As Gail bandaged his wounds, she knew that she would love him in life and the afterlife.

The battle of Gettysburg was a crucial and important turning point in the Civil War. The battle had been a hard-fought victory for the North. Lincoln had delivered his Gettysburg address, which freed the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. The town of Gettysburg Pennsylvania was always a crossroads where two worlds intersected and collided. Gettysburg had been a meeting place for restless and weary souls. The old bar was where fighting soldiers and hunters used to meet to get drunk. This tavern had captured the spirits of the angry and unruly. The gateway from the realm of the hunted spirits and the world of the fighting souls would open. The world of the dead would collide with the world of the living. The railroad had been the integral and significant reason why Gettysburg was a good military post for soldiers to gather and prepare for battle.

Two mighty men, a Goliath and a Juggernaut would meet at this intersection of war and peace. The Union army, led by General Meade, would meet the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, would collide like two speeding trains on a path of destruction. The men were gathering near the trees of a forested area near the town of Gettysburg. The cots of bleeding men (waiting to die or to be

saved) crowded the library and the hospital. The young soldier named Williamson was now receiving the care from the nurse called Gail Nightingale. The two of them had met while Williamson was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg. Gail longed to be near Williamson. She yearned to feel the warm touch of a flesh and blood man again. Gail wanted to love and be loved.

Gail Nightingale gathered her medicine and began to give her healing touch to the young soldier Williamson. Will had been in their midst. Williamson had been standing in a line of infantry men carrying their rifles. He had been marching with his fellow soldier. The air filled with the deafening sound of gunfire. The cannons blared. Right beside him a young soldier was hit with a cannon ball that blasted his head completely off of his shoulders leaving him decapitated. The headless man wriggled and fell to the blood drenched battlefield. The air filled with smoke and flames as the battle raged. Williamson would not retreat. He followed the orders of his commanding officer, General Meade, who was riding on horseback commanding his soldiers.

Gail's eyes were filled with stormy tears as she feared that she might lose her patient. The wounded soldier Williamson stared up at her with painful tears soaking his cheeks, as he began to speak. "Ma'am may I ask what is your name, said the soldier?" "My name is Gail Nightingale. I am trained as a nurse, and a healing medicine woman of the woods," Gail said as she dressed his wounds with clean bandages." Gail was saturating the clean bandages in a special healing solution made from ancient herbs and barks gathered in the woods as well as red iodine. "You are named after a bird, and you have flown to me with the wings of an angel! My name is Williamson Blacksmith," said the young soldier as he tried to remove his tattered blue Union uniform. Beneath the shining brass buttons of his uniform the soldier had a heart of courage and a mind like steel.

Gail was kneeling beside the blood-soaked young soldier as she cared for him amid the chaos of the crowded hospital. The beds of the soldiers were laid end to end in the massive room with no barriers or walls between them. This was an open field hospital because there were too many wounded soldiers to fit inside the walls

of the small clinic at Gettysburg. Gail was concerned for the wellbeing of the young soldier that called himself Williamson.

She wanted to know his story. "What happened out there on that battlefield today, Williamson?" said Gail Nightingale. She continued to wrap his bullet riddled leg with more bandages. "I was marching with my infantry. We were following the flag and the drum beat telling us which way to go. We were marching and stood our ground to take cover behind a grove of trees. We had loaded our rifles and then began to kneel to take fire at the enemy hidden behind plumes of billowing smoke and flames." said the soldier.

The young soldier continued his eyewitness account of the battle of Gettysburg. "Our commanding officer ordered us to aim at the line of men in the gray and butternut uniforms across the battlefield, and we obeyed without question. Aim, he yelled as we fixed our eyes upon our target in the distance. Then the captain yelled fire! All of us squeezed the trigger on the long rifle releasing a rain of bullets into the smoky morning air. My hand was trembling that time when I fired my rifle because I knew that we would soon be out of bullets and ammunition. The invigorated and foolhardy Confederates would not yield even if they were outnumbered and outgunned. I trembled because I felt something deep inside that said that this war would not end soon." said private Williamson Blacksmith.

Williamson was biting his bottom lip and grimacing in pain as he spoke. "Here we stood in 1863, still fighting a rebellious army of separatist and secessionist that wanted to break away from the Union. I thought to myself, as I was standing in that battlefield, that this war would indeed rage on for many more years. The rivers of blood would flow to the ocean. Then we would all see the sea of the red tides of war rolling to every shore in the world. I hoped that the British and the French do not get too involved with this war. I do not want to see all of Europe taking sides and fighting the American Civil War," said the young private Williamson Blacksmith.

Gail was beginning to feel as if she needed to take care of Williamson's emotional state and his spirit. Gail spoke to Williamson as she could feel their relationship getting more intimate. "I feel a sense of sorrow and regret that you had to watch other men die. Williamson, how many battles have you been in before this one here

at Gettysburg? Too many I think, said Gail.” She tried to sooth the pain of his injured leg, as she looked into his eyes filled with so much agony and strife. “Yes, Gail I have watched men being blown to bits and ripped apart with bullets in four different battles. This is the bloodiest and most pivotal battle I have seen yet. I'll bet when it is all said and done the battle will be won with the Confederate army in retreat from the Union forces. General Lee will run from the General Meade and head further South. I dare say that, more than 45,000 dead soldiers will be the grave loss at the end of this battle of Gettysburg,” said Williamson as he glanced over at Gail and felt the healing touch of her bandages, soothing his anguish.

Gail was feeling herself falling in love with each loving touch of her hands to heal Williamson's injured leg. “I heard some old legend that said that this town is haunted. The tavern, and the ground where this field hospital is made is haunted with the ghosts of hunters and soldiers from a century or more ago”, said Williamson. Gail paused as she adjusted some cushion to elevate Williamson's leg. She spoke with gentle words. “You're right Williamson, this town is haunted with the otherworldly spirits of drunken hunters and soldiers from generations past. Even to this day, the residents of this town of Gettysburg have seen hunters and fur trappers with their slaughtered animals. I have seen the haunting visions of women gathering herbs in the woods near this town ever since I arrived here a few days before the battle of Gettysburg began,” said Gail. She tried to make her patient Williamson comfortable.

She stood up from her position kneeling beside him and glanced around the massive cavernous room filled with ailing soldiers. Gail had decided to take Williamson away to a safe place where he can be healed. She spoke to him in whispers and sighs. “Come now Williamson. I will help you to stand and walk with a crutch. I can take you to a healing garden in the woods where the war and this terrible battle cannot reach you. Don't worry I will return you to your infantry to continue your fate as a valiant soldier in this Civil War,” said Gail as she helped Williamson to stand.

Gail Nightingale had been a ghost apparition for more than a year now. She had studied nursing and taken the oath of Florence Nightingale. Then one night an angry mob attacked her as she was

gathering herbs and bark in the woods. They were burning torches and chanting, “ Kill the witch! Kill the Voodoo priestess! Hang the enchanted witch! “ The angry crowd had decided to label Gail Nightingale, and the ten other young nurses, as witches because of their habit of gathering healing herbs in the forest at night. The beaming light of the moon loomed down on them. The white face of the moon glowered looking down on the angry crowd as a witness to this horrific event.

Gail Nightingale was from the bloodline of runaway slaves. Her ancestors had escaped to freedom only one or two generations before her birth. Her great grandmother was the mistress of the slave master. She bore his healthy male heir to the plantation. The proper wife of the slave master was barren, and could not have children. So, the slave master took comfort in the bed of one of his mixed biracial slave girls (who was half African and half Dutch). The mulatto slave girl gave the slave master many children, which became the wealthy heirs to the cotton plantation. Some of those mixed biracial children of the slave master ran away to freedom. One of the runaway mixed women was Gail Nightingale’s great grandmother. Gail’s great grandmother ran to New Orleans, where she lived with French Arcadian descendant of the creole culture of mixed ethnic backgrounds. Amongst the mixed people there in New Orleans, Gail’s great grandmother married into a wealthy white family, and was treated as a priceless beauty of rare quality. The Voodoo priestesses of Haiti also taught Gail’s great grandmother the dark arts, which she only used for healing.

Later on, the Nightingale family moved to Pennsylvania, to freedom. **Gail wanted to be forever free from the bondage of her ancestor’s past enslavement. She wanted to be free from the bonds that held women like captives in a man’s world.**

When she saw the crowd, Gail was surprised. She fell back on her knees as if she had been praying for mercy. The wicked wind whipped through the trees and shook the branches, as if a storm was brewing in the cold night air. The crowd of strong men grabbed Gail, and they dragged her to the noose and gallows that they had hung from a sturdy oak tree. They placed her on the back of a horse. She could still feel the hard leather saddle of the horse rubbing up

against her skin. Gail's eyes were as stormy as the sea in hurricane season, as waves of tears drenched her cheeks. She gasped and shrieked with misery and anger, while her hands were bound tightly with ropes.

The crowd of men and jeering women coaxed the stallion toward the tree where she would be hanged. The crying whinny of the horse resounded echoing in the night air. Gail had closed her eyes tight and gasped taking her final breath as she felt the horse ride away. When the saddle and horse were no longer between her thighs, Gail felt her legs dangling in the air. The noose tightened around her neck, and she began to choke. Soon the air was suffocated from her body, and her neck was broken! Gail was hanged to death that dark and stormy night in the woods near Gettysburg.

Ever since that night she had haunted the battlefields and woods of war searching for a soldier to capture her heart. Gail was a lonely young woman who had become a ghost far too soon. The young private Williamson had been given some letters from the other soldiers. "The soldiers in my infantry battalion have given me some letters to be delivered to their wives and loved ones. I am curious about what these love letters say. Fore, I have no girlfriend or wife of my own to write to," said Williamson. He touched the bundle of blood-soaked letters in his bag as he limped away from the field hospital with Gail guiding the way toward safety.

The ghostly vision of a young woman dressed in a large hoop skirt and corset hovered across the field hospital with the young wounded soldier at her side. Gail Nightingale was not the sort of ghost that could be seen with normal vision. Gail could be seen when lavender light surrounded her body like a corona or halo. On this evening there was a lavender sunset. Some of the soldiers were stricken with fear and astonishment when they saw their colleague gliding away from the field hospital with Gail helping him along. Meanwhile some of the other soldiers did not even notice anything unusual about Williamson as he levitated across the field as if he was floating.

Williamson was beginning to feel a sort of yearning to be near to Gail. The pain in his bullet torn leg was beginning to fade in comparison to this new feeling of overwhelming love and

gratefulness. Williamson felt his heart soar with an aching feeling of euphoria and hope as Gail guided him to the cabin in the woods where she would begin to heal his wounds. Williamson felt a loving feeling when he spoke to Gail. "I was asked to write love letters to the wives and girlfriends of the Union soldiers who thought that I possessed a certain gift for poignant words and phrases that would impress their families and wives at home. I agreed to write letters for some of the young soldiers because I was always willing to share my paper and ink with those who wanted me to write the love letters for them," said Williamson.

The two of them walked together through the war-torn town of Gettysburg. Their world as they had once known it would be irrevocably changed. When the hazy smoke of cannon fire and death cleared the morbid evidence of the great battle would be the graves of the buried soldiers. The mangled and grotesque bodies of the dead men were stacked on top of each other. The battle at Gettysburg killed more than 40,000 Union and Confederate soldiers. These brave souls were sacrificed at the altar of war.

The couple walked further and further away from the hospital and all of the chaos that had ruptured the once sleepy town of Gettysburg. Now they were in the woods far from the blaring explosions of cannon fire. The battle of Gettysburg had ended now. The Confederate troop led by Robert E. Lee had retreated. The Union army had triumphed and persevered to win the battle of Gettysburg, but had left a trail of dead bodies numbering more than 25,000 dead Union soldiers and 25,000 dead Confederate soldiers.

The fallen Union soldiers would be buried in their brave blue uniforms and the Confederate men would be buried in their gray or butternut homemade uniforms. Both sides had suffered a grave loss that would be commemorated with the dedication of the cemetery for the Union soldiers. Lincoln would come to Gettysburg, triumphant but with a heavy heart to rename the cemetery and acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice that the Union soldiers had made while winning the battle of Gettysburg.

The woods surrounding the town of Gettysburg were silence once more. The tiny log cabin had survived the barrage of bullets and marching brigades. Gail guided Williamson to the door of the

cabin, as if they were both floating. She nudged the door open with some difficulty. The creaking wooden door opened slowly revealing the quaint cabin interior. The scattered patches of sunlight and shadow filtered in to the log cabin through the small window. The sun warmed the frigid room with flickering cascades of midday. The scent of pine needles mingled with the essence of wet birch bark.

The bed was waiting for the weary couple. The tattered quilt was on the bed beckoning the couple to hide under this quilt of love and dreams. The quilt was stitched together over many generations. Each piece of the quilt had been taken from an important and meaningful garment such as a wedding dress or christening gown. Gail helped Williamson to lay down on the old mattress and rest his wounded leg. She draped the heirloom quilt across his weary and haggard body. Gail glided across the room as if she was flying with the wings of a nightingale as she spoke whispering to Williamson. "This is the old log cabin nestled deep in the woods. No one will bother us here. You can rest your leg and recuperate. We will rehabilitate your leg and nurse you back to health here," said Gail.

Williamson winced with pain as he tried to settle himself into the bed. He glanced over at Gail and all of the pain seemed to vanish from his flesh as if she were a healing ointment. His field bag contained a bundle of letters that he had gathered from his colleagues. "These are the parcels from my fellow soldiers. Some of them asked me to write letters to their loved ones. Here is one letter that I wrote for one of my best friends. His name was Morris and he wanted me to write a love letter to his wife Harriet. I wrote this for him.

Dear Harriet,

I love you more than words can express. My heart beats for you yearning in my chest. I long to caress your tender flesh and feel the warmth of you beneath your dress. Your delicate skin is as soft as the feathers on dove's breast. The sun rises every morning and I mourn the loss of our love.

I wish to see your smiling face and hear the gentle echoes of your voice resounding in my ears. You gave me a reason to live. Now I have a reason to die. I stand strong yet trembling at the gates of war. The threshold between hell and earth is before me. I can



remember when you were in my arms my sweet Harriet. Your embrace was as if I was hovering into heaven in the wings of an angel.

I will cross the line between safety and danger. My precarious fate is waiting in front of me. The boundaries between life and death invite me to battle. The vast watery chasm that divides love and hate is a dark and ominous place that I shall cross struggling to keep my head above water.

I have great love for you my dear wife and for my country. I have seething hate for the turmoil and destruction of war. Why should we fight and die for a debate that could be settled among gentlemen over cigars and bourbon? Life is full of mysteries and intrigue as cryptic as Morse code to a layman's ears.

My heart skips a beat every time I envision you my lovely Harriet. I miss the touch of your fingertips upon my shoulders. You soothed my ached muscles and my lonely heart with your presence. I imagine your genteel kisses upon my cheek, and the depth of emotion that streamed from your eyes like sunlight.

Your laugh brought joy to my heart like the sunshine in morning. You bring me exuberance and invigorate me like the first day of spring. This war is like the cold cruel snow in the most fatal winter of this nation. I only hope that I will see your face again rising beside me like the dawn of a new era of peace and tranquility. I want to rest in your arms melting in the warmth and comfort of your love.

Love Always,

## Morris Washington

Williamson folded the letter carefully and placed it back among the other tattered and bloodstained parchments in his bag. Williamson had carried this bag into battle with him. The field bag contained a water canteen to replenish his thirst as he fought in the field. The soldier's bag also contained his bayonet (a sword like knife that he would fix to the front of his rifle) and extra ammunition for his rifle to use in battle.

Williamson spoke about his slain comrades as if they were distance memories suppressing tears and fear in his voice. "I remember Morris Washington as a brave man now. Although he was only a young adolescent of only 19 years when he fell in battle. He marched beside me with pride. He wore valor and courage across his chest like a banner. He was valiant and true to his cause. He fought one nation to remain whole. He fought two reasons, to set men free and to keep his beloved country from being torn apart. His mother named him Morris in remorse for her great grandfather who died in the Revolutionary war," said Williamson.

The two of them were hidden away in the cozy confines of the log cabin in the woods. Meanwhile, the dead bodies of the fallen Union soldiers were still being buried and re-interred in the military cemetery that would be named in remembrance of the soldiers ultimate sacrifice. The graves were being dug in the damp soil drenched with blood. A new plague was ravaging those feeble few who had still been left alive to fight. There was a mysterious cough filling the lungs of all many of the townspeople. This cough rattled through the air like the blare of gunfire on battlefield. This was a new kind of war. Those left behind after the battle would now fight germ warfare. The history books would not speak of this invisible monster that lingered in the lungs of the survivors of Gettysburg. This lurking killer was a germ that traveled through the air. This virus had been sleeping and lying dormant until the close crowded quarters of war awakened this ruthless disease. The doctors and nurses did not know that this hacking cough was caused by a virus. They surmised that the illness was similar to pneumonia or the flu. Little did they know that this lethal germ would spread like wildfire worse than any

plague in history. The rattling cough reigned a deadly refrain, filling endless coffins.

Gail Nightingale perched beside Williamson on the bed as she whispered to him in soft smoky tones. "I going to gather some herbs and bark from the woods surrounding this cabin to heal your leg Williamson. First I need to see that the surgeon removed all of the bullets from your flesh. Then I will clean your wound with a special ointment," said Gail. She looked at him with a storm of love and respect stirring beneath her calm and serious surface. Her face was stoic and without emotion, while her heart seemed to race with vigor and vitality every time she glanced at him. She was falling in love with her patient. When she glanced over at him her heart seemed to skip a beat and there was a funny feeling in her stomach. The feeling was not quite fear or intimidation. Gail was like a stormy sea of emotions when she dare gaze at Williamson. She had much hope for healing his leg. She had no doubt that he would walk again. If he dared even have a slight limp she felt partially responsible for his disability. She wanted to see him walk again. Gail wanted to see him run and skip with glee like the spry schoolboy that he still was. Was the flutter of apprehension in her heart concern for Williamson's complete recovery or was the feeling of growing love overwhelming her senses?

Gail decided to build the fire, for the sun was slipping below the horizon. The last light of day was creeping away leaving the shadows of darkness to play. There was pile of chopped wood beside the fireplace that had been there for quite some time. Gail looked at the old pile of wood and sighed with an aching feeling that she would have to chop wood for the fire. Gail spoke with an exhausted and exasperated voice. "I think I will need to gather branches and chop wood for the fire. That old bundle of branches has been there so long that cobwebs have begun to gather on the bark of the chopped branches of fire wood, said Gail" Williamson looked over at Gail with his eyebrows raised. He pounded his chest with pride. He was chipper and wide-eyed. There was diligence in his voice that would deride (make fun of) an abundance of fear that was hidden inside him. "Chopping wood is no chore for a lady. I can split the logs myself limping on one leg, said Williamson,"

Gail articulated a feminine sigh of exhaustion. She hesitated to speak. "I think I can collect some fallen branches and twigs from the ground while I am looking for my herbs and bark. Perhaps that will be enough to make a fire, said Gail." The true fire was blazing in her heart. Gail carried a torch for Williamson. She really wanted to nurse him back to health. If Gail could cure Williamson than she would honestly feel that she had completed her purpose in life. Gail Nightingale felt that she was placed down on earth for a reason. She simply felt that she was born to heal others and take care of the sick in their time of need. If Gail could heal Williamson, all of the hardship and turmoil that she had experienced would all be worth it.

Williamson positioned himself on the bed. Draped across his feeble and broken body was the old heirloom quilt. He spoke to Gail out of curiosity. "Tell me about this quilt with so many different types of fabric woven into it, said Williamson." Gail knelt beside the fire fighting the urge to get intimate and close with Williamson. Gail was building the fire in the fireplace while a flame of desire burned in her heart for Williamson. She stoked the flames blowing gently on the kindling to make the fire burn hotter and longer. She quickly threw a handful of dust into the fire that made the fire burn bright purple corona of light instead of red. The dash of dust was gathered from the woods. This powder was used to make a fire burn all night long with very little wood used for fuel.

Gail would tell Williamson all she was privy to tell about the quilt and who had sewn it over the generations, as she looked over at Williamson with a longing to be near him. "Oh, that old quilt has been handed down from generation to generation. The old folklore says that the quilt was first sewn together using a piece of cloth from the christening gown for every first-born child in our bloodline. The other pieces of fabric were taken from the wedding dresses and grooms suits for every first-born child that got married. The old legend says that if the fabric is stitched into the quilt that the couple will have a long marriage and have many healthy children, said Gail." Williamson stroked the quilt gently as if he was caressing his lover in the moonlight. He spoke with the twinkles of starlight in his eyes. As he spoke to Gail, he wondered if fabric of his suit and her wedding dress would be stitched into this very same quilt. "Gail, do you think

that the legend is true? So many happy couples have found love just because their wedding attire was sewn into this bed covering, said Williamson.” Gail gazed over at Williamson with an aching sort of feeling growing inside her belly like butterflies in her stomach. She spoke with a gradual smile widening her mouth. “I guess there has to be something to this quilt folklore. I should think it would be good luck. First the christening gown is sewn into the quilt. and then the good luck will follow with the happy marriage, according to local legend,” said Gail.

Williamson leaned forward and stared carefully at the quilt with wonder winsome across his face. He whispered shyly to Gail holding back a sudden emotion of excitement. “Gail was your christening gown sewn into this quilt also?” Gail's eyes crept across the room in embarrassment as she tried to put together an appropriate answer. She spoke with uncertainty in her voice. “No, actually. I was not christened. My parents were protestant and covertly agnostic, meaning that they were not Catholic and barely believed in such superstitions,” said Gail. She stared at the floor. She wondered if she should have just kept her mouth shut about the quilt, knowing that she would not inherit the good luck that was associated with it.

Williamson was beginning to wonder about the gentle woman that he was gradually falling in love with. He wanted to know her passions, her fears, and her aspirations. Now he settled himself the best he could, with the quilt still warming his weary bones. His body throbbed with pain and excitement. A certain sort of eagerness was coming into his battered body. He glanced at Gail with an inquisitive mind wanted to find hidden treasures of her heart. Williamson spoke with hesitation. “How did you become a nurse Gail? What made you want to dedicate your young life to caring for the sick?” Gail was filled with words. Her words were scattered like the wind in a storm. She barely knew what to say when she answered Williamson's question. “I lived close to a medicine woman in these woods. I used to watch the fabled medicine women care for her patients. One day I was walking in the woods alone. I was gathering berries to make a wild berry pie. The medicine woman saw me walking alone and asked me what I was doing. I told her that I was searching for good berries for a pie. The medicine woman asked me how I knew which

berries were good to eat and which ones were poison. I told her that my mother knew an old slave woman who could tell which berries were good to eat. The old slave woman had learned in Haiti. The medicine woman stepped back in astonishment. She asked me if I knew what Voodoo was. I told her that the old Haitian slave woman had been set free and traveled to America under her own free will. The Haitian ex-slave said that all of the Voodoo and witchcraft had been left in Haiti. However, she still knew how to choose good berries to make a sweet juicy pie,” said Gail.

Gail tried to finish the story of how she discovered healing herbs. She was now looking Williamson directly in his clear amber eyes as she spoke. “The medicine woman was also a midwife that helped women have children. She was somewhat of an expert on what healing concoctions to give to women in labor to make their pain go away, or how to make the common ailments disappear. Many people in town feared the medicine woman. Some townspeople refused to go to her for help. Well, I was not one of those naysayers and I did not care for gossip. She asked me if I wanted to become a medicine woman and a nurse. I happily agreed. One of my greatest endeavors was to learn to heal the sick,” said Gail.

Gail had studied long and hard about the scientific practices of healing the sick as much as she could. After her formal education she decided to delve into the field of alternative, unscientific techniques of healing. Gail spoke about her initiation ceremony. “One day after many years of study at nursing school, I was initiated into the Nightingale circle of women. Some of the women were scarlet women known as prostitutes in the towns where they lived. Some of the women were called witches and shunned except for the desperate pleas of the sick and dying. Indeed, this circle of women was composed of both the most wretched and the most esteemed women in society,” said Gail.

Williamson had a sly sort of smirk on his face as he spoke to Gail. “You were among street women? I think you should stay away from such types of women. You might get a bad reputation if you associate with prostitutes even if they can teach you about healing herbs and medicine,” said Williamson. Gail cast another handful of potassium powder into the fire turning the flames ever more purple

(creating a corona of light around her). Then, in a sudden feeling of fervor she sat on the bed to change the bandages on Williamson's leg. Her words would come swiftly and without much thought in her reply. "Those sorts of women sometimes need my help more than others. You know prostitutes are still flesh and blood people who need healing. The houses of ill repute and brothels were the primary places where my healing services were in great need. I was not extremely religious. I was not filled with self-righteous piety or sanctimoniousness, nor was I shy about women's troubles," said Gail.

The midnight sky was alive with a million stars vying for attention as the moonlight streamed down upon the dark shadowy forest below. The cabin was tucked away from the road. Many sturdy oak trees, birch and pine branches sheltered the little place where the log cabin kept the two of them safe. Williamson felt tranquil or at peace just a few miles away from the battlefield at Gettysburg where he had fallen as a soldier, but won honor in the Union army victory. Williamson wanted to tell Gail about his life. He somehow felt comfortable and at ease with Gail Nightingale as she floated across the room, as if she had wings. Williamson spoke with fatigue in his young voice. "Gail were you ever scared to work so close to the front lines of the battle of Gettysburg? A delicate lady such as yourself would seem so fragile and vulnerable," said Williamson."

Gail spoke to Williamson because wanted to sooth his ailments and make his pain drift away like fallen leaves in a babbling brook. "Well, Williamson, I'm tougher than I look. They call us iron butterflies. That is what they say when a lady can survive and still keep her genteel ways about her. I was wondering about you also. How did you become a soldier? Did the draft force you into the service of the Union army or did you volunteer? You seem like the valiant and dutiful variety of young man who wanted to do a service to his country for a noble cause," said Gail.

Williamson tried to moved and winced in agony as he spoke his reply. "Gail, I did want to be gallant and venerable, or honorable as you put it. My uncle is a Confederate. He is a Southern farmer with a massive cotton plantation and hundreds of slaves. My father was the product of a young slave woman and a slave master's son. When he

was born they could not tell him from the slave master's legitimate son. So , they secretly smuggled him out of the South to the Northern factions of his family up in New York. When the baby arrived up North no one knew that his mother had been a mulatto mixed-blood. The Northern part of my family raised the baby as if he were a normal child and never told him about his mother or his mixed-blood origins. When my father grew to become a man, he was the manager at a factory. The conditions in the factory were miserable. The Irish immigrants and poor workers were mistreated as if they were also slaves. One day a letter was written telling the story of how the Southern plantation owner had died. This deceased plantation owner was my grandfather who had died in the battle of Fort Sumter, one of the first battles of this Civil War in 1861. The plantation had no heir. The grandfather had legally willed the plantation to his legitimate son, who also died in the battle of Fort Sumter. The plantation is legally willed to my father because the birth record had been altered to declare him the rightful heir. The plantation owner's wife had been pregnant at the same time as the slave girl. The plantation owner's wife's child had died. However, the record was altered to say that the child had lived and had been sent up North to live with relatives. You see my father had to come back from the dead in order to claim his birth right as a Southern gentleman. However, the Civil War had just caused such a conflict. Even though my father could have convinced the Southerners that he was the rightful heir to the plantation, he morally objected to the concept of slavery. My father had not set foot in the South since the day he was born, and he would never set foot in the South ever again," said Williamson."

Williamson had not noticed Gail's ghostly appearance. Her countenance was that of a pale and hazy hue. Her large eyes were set far apart in her oval head. Her small forehead was adorned with delicately arched dark eyebrows. Her thin eyebrows framed her clear hazel eyes. Her acquaintances called her witch hazel because of how her eyes seemed to change color from green to golden amber. Her curly hair was fixed carefully atop her head with a mother-of-pearl barrette hair pin. Her plump lips were naturally raspberry color bright pink as though she was wearing lipstick. Many would be quick



to judge her as a scarlet woman or a painted woman by her natural coloring. Her hair seemed to have copper highlights when her tussled curls shown in the midday sun. She had long luscious eyelashes as if they had also been painted with the make-up that only women of the evening would wear. Her cheeks were slightly blushed from exposure to the sun that made her look like she was wearing rouge. Her figure was that of a porcelain doll, dainty and formed well with the trained waist of a high society lady. Gail was always well attired in the finest French silks and satin just like a courtesan of king Louis 14<sup>th</sup> himself. It was said that Gail had been a French blood girl from the French colony of Haiti. Her family had also had sugar cane plantations and many relatives who spoke French as their mother tongue. Gail's face had an expression of emotion that shifted like the sea in a storm. She could be tormented inside like a ship tossed in a tempest. Gail could also be as calm as the eye of a hurricane while the turbulent winds whirled around her.

Gail felt a sense of calm as she looked into Williamson's eyes. Meanwhile, in the town of Gettysburg, just a few miles away from this log cabin in the woods, a deadly virus was on the loose choking the life out of the townspeople like a noose. Gail did not feel at all tired although she had labored all day trying to prepare the log cabin for the wounded young soldiers. She could feel herself falling in love with Williamson. Gail glided across the floor with her feet not even touching the wooden floor boards. Williamson did not seem to fully grasp the fact that Gail was a ghost. She had perished when hung from a tree for the crime of witchcraft. Gail had been wrongfully accused and executed. She could only appear to those who needed her healing power the most in their time of need. Williamson would have certainly died if Gail had not swept him away from the battlefield, to the hospital and then to the cabin where he would get extra care.

Williamson still did not seem to realize that he had only been one breath away from death on the battlefield at Gettysburg and that an apparition known as Gail had carried him away to safety. She had saved his life knowing that she could not be with him as a real woman truly could. She could not give him children or be seen walking down the aisle as his bride. Gail could never truly be by his

side. She looked Williamson in the eye with growing admiration knowing that her love for him would be unrequited and forlorn. For Gail could never truly love Williamson in the flesh!

Williamson was a tall slender young man. The ravages of time had not weathered his skin. His sparse beard barely covered his tender face. His hands had not quite been hardened by hard work or many years as a soldier. His physique was that of a Greek marble statue carved by Michelangelo. The fig leaf would cover the well-proportioned loins of a sinewy svelte man in his late teens. His lean muscles were carved into his tan skin revealing ripples of strength across his chest and stomach as if he was chiseled from marble. His large steel gray eyes were set close together. His thick dark eyebrows were decorating his large broad forehead. His dark brown wavy hair glistened with streaks of auburn. His shapely lips were hot pink. His top lip formed the letter M, with a noticeable cupid's bow. His sideburns and mustache had once been well groomed and trimmed but now had gone into temporary neglect. Gail would help Williamson get back on his feet even if he could not ever feel the warmth of her. Gail's ghostly flesh had long since lost its breath of life.

Gail was suddenly curious about the details of the battle of Gettysburg. She had salvaged Williamson from a dark meadow of sorrow where so many men had died. Gail spoke to Williamson as if she was oblivious to the perils of war. "Williamson, tell me about the battle of Gettysburg. What did you see and what did it feel like? The war seems to be at a turning point now. This mysterious germ is furtively killing more men than the battle itself," said Gail as she watched the full moon rise." Williamson Blacksmith replied with sense of woe woven into his voice. His words were drenched in blood and saturated with pride. "Heroic acts were not the actions of a men who call themselves soldiers. A soldier does what needs to be done and what he his ordered to do by the generals. A hero acts in swift sudden response to save the day without much thought to taking orders or obeying commands. Approximately 85,000 men marched in brave blue Union uniforms under the command of General Meade. We far outnumber the weary boy in gray who still

stood as strong contenders with 75,000 soldiers under the command of general Robert E. Lee, said Williamson.”

Williams leaned back on the old antique bed wincing in pain from his wound as he continued to describe the battle of Gettysburg. “There were spies that had been behind enemy lines. They had these men that had been runaway slaves on the underground railroad. The spies had told us that there were more men standing their ground for the Union army. The Confederate (butternut uniform boys) were running low on supplies and men. The runaway slaves and the abolitionists were entrenched behind enemy lines and keeping a vigilant watchful eye on the movements of the Confederate troops. The abolitionist and the former slaves ran to and fro, sneaking back to the encampments of the rebel army to tell us exactly how many cannons they had and where their artillery was stockpiled. The secessionist army of the South was well outnumbered and out manned, with the Union having about 10,000 men more than the Confederates,” said Williamson.

Williamson let out a gasp of relief as recapped the events from his own eyewitness account. He spoke in solemn tones about the morbid details. “I saw men's heads blow off of their soldiers. I felt the blood splatter on my brow (of men being shot who had just been marching beside me). I have seen, with my own eyes, cannon balls ripping through the battlefield removing men's legs instantaneously as they marched, said Williamson Blacksmith.” Williamson Blacksmith still seemed to dwell in the world of the living as his eye caressed the surfaces of Gail skin inch by inch. He glanced at her neck imagining his hands touching the tender smooth skin of her cheeks. Williamson envisioned gliding his fingers down the elegant contours of her limbs. Gail's limbs were as limber and tender as the branches of a young birch tree. His limbs ached from his wounds, but he also ached with a yearning to touch her. Williamson touched the hem of her dress to untangle it from the bedpost, as she changed his bloodstained bandages. She looked at him with a sudden feeling of recognition. It was at the moment, the both of them knew that her dress would be tangled in the folds of that quilt that was thrown across the bed. They both seemed to look at the space on the bed where Gail should have been resting beside Williamson.

His arms should have been wrapped around her frail feminine flesh as tightly as those bandages. Her legs should have been cradled around him like a mother rocking a child to sleep. Her lips should have been parted in the puckers of an innocent kiss upon his cheek. Instead, her mouth was closed and somber, as she expected a sad story of battle.

Williamson continued his portrayal of the events at Gettysburg. Meanwhile, the strange invasive germ swallowed the air in the town below. The air-born killer cough was choking the life out of the war-stricken populace from North to South. Williamson spoke with a slight cough rattling in his chest. "General Lee was marching further and further North. If his army could overtake the Union forces defending Pennsylvania, then the capital would soon be next. It would all have been over if the Confederate army had won Gettysburg and continued North of Pennsylvania! We whipped those rebels and sent them into retreat, and not a second too soon! We just might win this war after all! I saw some of the colored men building barricades and bringing rations to the troops encamped on the front lines. There were those who helped slaves escape through something called the underground railroad. This so-called underground railroad was a system of houses and hiding places where runaway slaves could be stowed away as they make the gradual journey up North. The abolitionist help the slaves find shelter, as they travel from town to town, following the North Star, closer and closer to freedom. There was this one abolitionist man who wanted me to deliver these letters to safe houses near Gettysburg. The three days of fighting was intolerable. It seemed that the interminable battle would be never ending! The Union made a stand at places like the Devil's Den, where the casualties were heavy. General Lee knew that he would have to be a keen strategist to out maneuver General Hook by placing his troops in a hook shaped line across the battlefield (to defend the flank behind him). General Hook was removed from command and General Meade marched his troops to victory. General Lee turned and ran like a dog with his tail between his legs. My best buddy Davis was marching beside me, as he rained a hail of heavy artillery down on the rebel forces at Devil's Den. We bathed the Confederate soldiers in blood,

and christened them with bullets, as we held their forces back and stood our ground,” said Williamson. There was a battlefield conflict at the peach orchard, and even as Williamson thought of how he slayed men in the fields of war, he imagined those same peach orchards where he and Gail may frolic in the grassy meadows sucking the sweet nectar of peaches. He could almost feel the juicy flesh of the peach on his tongue, and feel his fingers gently rubbing the slippery peach inside and out.

Williamson now continued to talk about how men stood their ground and were buried in the cemetery where they would not be defeated. “Cemetery Hill and Cemetery Ridge were the high ground where the bodies of courageous men had already been interred. We would take our stand there. Our Northern factories had manufactured far more rifles and ammunition than the depleted forces of the Southern army. We outshot the rebels although they rode on cavalry horseback with great skill, they were simply outnumbered. The rebels had no choice but to run back across the river and retreat toward the South where they had more troops and reinforcements,” said Williamson. Each moment he spent with Gail made his heart a stormy ocean of emotion. He tried to fortify himself against the idea of falling in love, but the persistent winds of Gail seemed to blow down any defenses he could muster.

Williamson was haggard and growing weary. The two of them felt as if they had become one. They had stayed quarantined in the log cabin in the woods. The mysterious cough germ destroyed and decimated the population from small town to the big city. The rattling cough was not receiving as many headlines as the war. There would come a time when this strange plague, that steals men's breath, would take so many lives, that the throat germ would not be ignored or pushed under the rug. Four months passed from the time that the Union army had conquered Lee at Gettysburg. Those few months were shrouded with a veil of coughing plague that grabbed the survivors of war by the throat. There was at least one man that would not be silenced even if he was feeling slightly under the weather. President Lincoln had been rumored to be suffering from a slight cough and fever. In those days there was no surefire way to diagnose someone with a lung germ that travels through the air.

People of the medical profession used to do bloodletting with leeches to treat ailments. Real physicians adamantly believed that the humors or body fluids needed to be balanced. They were partially right if one is talking about the complex and intricate lymphatic system. Gail leaned forward to be closer to Williamson. She could now feel his warm breath upon her chest. Gail felt as if she was holding him to her bosom like a mother nursing a baby. There was more there than a mothering instinct. There was an irrepressible and irrefutable attraction that could not be denied. Gail tried to embrace her feeling of love instead of trying to repress her womanly urges. Now Gail was touching his leg with a need to feel the warmth and tenderness of his young virile body. She felt that she was becoming like a nubile woman (a woman that men desired for pleasure and for fertility).

She had wanted Williamson to speak as all great men do. Gail tried to explain what a plague was and how to go about curing it. "You see men of medicine used to believe that monsters and demons created illnesses. They thought that humor and body fluids like blood can become imbalanced. This was before the germ theory and the age of scientific discovery. We now believe that germs cause illness. This strange cough that every grave digger is burdened with is not from some devil spirit tormenting men from the world of the dead. The cough is one of the evils of war because of the close confines of the soldier camp. The germ is causing a cough! I have devised several tonics and elixirs that can be swallowed to protect the throat and lungs from this despicable disease," said Gail. In those days in 1863 the cough was not called a coughing germ. Though some scientifically minded people did whisper about a germ that was taking hold of the throats of men and choking the life out of them, few healers spoke about medical science.

The morning came with the sun raining cascades of warmth and comfort upon the war-torn land below. The dawn was in mourning of the previous night. The couple did not want the night to end. With the end of the night would come the blatant reality of a barren battlefield. The widows of Gettysburg were in mourning on this morning. The townspeople of Gettysburg were still burying the Union soldier's bodies in the cemetery.

Lincoln was on his way back to Gettysburg to make his speech. The tall thin man was one known for his immense stature. He got off the train. Several advisors surrounded Lincoln when he stepped off of the train that had brought him from Washington to Gettysburg. He was fraught with both sorrow and victory. What he was about to do weighed heavy on his thoughts. Lincoln's emotions were as twisted and contorted as wrought iron, but his nerve was as strong as steel. When Lincoln spoke the first words of the Gettysburg address, his emotion was real. His words were not meant to be simply ignored. Lincoln's words were something he could feel. The nation needed a creed in which to believe in order to heal. When he spoke about the freedom of a nation and freedom for the slaves, the issue of emancipation of enslaved people could not be concealed. The cemetery would be the new home of the slain Union soldiers instead of the battlefield.

Gail Nightingale and Williamson seemed to hover down to the gathering where Lincoln was delivering the Emancipation Proclamation. He started his speech with, "Four score and seven years ago," said Lincoln. He was referring to the Revolutionary War when the colonies won independence from the British. Lincoln's top hat towered leaving a shadow upon the crowd gathering below. As he spoke, his words billowed like smoke from a chimney bellow. "All men are created equal," said Lincoln. Williamson understood this phrase to mean that there should be no law that says that a man should be born a slave while others can remain free from bondage. Williamson looked down at the bandage on his leg and wondered why he could not feel the crippling pain that had plagued him the night before. The rattling cough had encumbered him like chained shackles upon his throat. He could scarcely breathe the night before as he had drifted off to sleep wrapped in the loving arms of his beloved Gail.

Williamson looked over at Gail as they waded into the sea of people who had gathered at Lincoln's feet to hear him speak. Williamson spoke to Gail trying to comprehend the message in Lincoln's speech. "He just freed the slaves and declared freedom a mission as well as defeating the secessionists Confederacy of the South. If Lincoln frees the slaves he will invite runaway to fight for

the North and break the South financially by getting rid of the free labor that was making their plantations profitable,” said Williamson Blacksmith. Gail looked over at Williamson as she spoke in low hollow tones. When she spoke all of the other people in the crowd did not exist and her voice was like the perpetual wind of a storm echoing in Williamson's heart. “All men should be free to decide whether they want to live or die. All men should make their own decisions to fight or flee, to be prisoners or to remain free. I hope that the colored soldiers are allowed to volunteer instead of being drafted or forced into service the way some of the Northern Union soldiers were,” said Gail as she listened to Lincoln.

As the speech ended the crowd dispersed scattering like leaves swept up in a tempest wind. Gail grabbed Williamson's hand and led him higher and higher. They drifted further and further away from the dwindling audience. Lincoln was swept away in a cloud of locomotive steam to carry him back to Washington where he would eventually be assassinated. Lincoln's death would come at the end of a gun from John Wilkes Booth during, “Our American Cousins,” a play performed for gentlemen. John Wilkes Booth had not been gentle at all. He shot the president, and great was his fall. The struggle had just begun. Lincoln had been a sacrificial lamb of a revolution. Lincoln was the dawn of a new son. In the end the Civil War was won and the nation stayed united as one. Even when the war would end, death would not be done.

Gail led Williamson to the cemetery until they found the grave marking that was only temporary. The hazy fog of morning slowly lifted the veil that was hiding the words etched on the grave marking. These words would someday be chiseled in stone. The grave said Williamson Blacksmith. He was buried alone for he was one of the few men who carried papers that identified him with his name and rank. His family had made the voyage down to Gettysburg to eventually see the grave where Williamson was entombed.

Williamson staggered backward and then fell down on his knees weeping in disbelief. His eyes were flooded with tears as he stared at the coffin and the name written on the coffin's lid. He spoke with aching whimpers of fear and raw emotion. “Gail, open the coffin! I will look upon the face of this corpse they call Williamson Blacksmith!



Open it and let me see reality,” said Williamson, as he demanded Gail to obey his wishes. Gail opened the pine box slowly; the new rays of the sun would now raise the dead. There resting in the coffin — was the lifeless body of Williamson Blacksmith! His eyes were closed. His lips would not speak another word as a living soul. Gail touched Williamson's arm as he stood beside her. She spoke to him now trying to explain his circumstances. “Williamson, my darling you have crossed over to the other side. You have crossed the great divide between the living and the dead. Your flesh and blood body died here in Gettysburg. It was not only the amount of blood you lost from your battlefield wound, but also the germ that crept into your throat, as you lay beside me trying to recover your strength. Your recuperation was doomed and destroyed when that coughing germ of the lungs took hold of your last breath.” said Gail.

Williamson gasped in disbelief as he realized that he was dead! He had crossed over to the world of the ghost. Williamson Blacksmith had become an apparition. He was now a spirit that floated upon the earth with no physical body to call his own. Many people believe that when a person dies their spirit dies with them. Others believe that a soul lives on without a physical body. Williamson Blacksmith now acknowledged that he was not inside of his own living body. His flesh and blood had been buried in a grave for several days now!

Gail grabbed Williamson's hand and led him away from the graveyard at Gettysburg. He looked over his shoulder at her and seemed to still have feeling in his bones. Although he was a phantom now, his feelings of love and admiration haunted his heart like a love song. He was going to drift off to eternal sleep with a loving lullaby of dreams dizzying his head. Williamson spoke as his ghostly form hovered above the clouds with Gail by his side. “How could I be dead? I feel so alive, Gail! I have wanted to hold you and to tell you how I feel about you. I have yearned to kiss you and make you mine since the first day I saw you changing my bandages,” said Williamson. Gail clasped his hand with desire. She wanted to keep Williamson by her side.

As the couple drifted above the battlefields of Gettysburg, she spoke to the man she loved with determination. “ We will be together

now my darling. Fate had brought our two souls together. Your greatest moment of victory was your ultimate downfall of death. Death does not stop true love from flourishing. We have found each other across war ravaged battlefields of triumph and destruction. Our love will last longer than a lifetime my dear Williamson,” said Gail. Williamson spoke with great fervor and passion in his words. “I'm dead, and I will never love another woman except you Gail. I am no longer living, yet I have never felt so alive! If I am dead, I will never love another woman as long as I lived,” said Williamson Blacksmith.

Gail stared into the face of the man she loved and whispered softly. “I think I love you because there is no other reason for the way I feel. I love you because there is nothing else left for me to do. I had some unfinished business to complete here on this earth,” said Gail. Williamson Blacksmith gazed down at the distant hazy vision of Gettysburg, as they flew through the clouds together, high above the misery below. “So now what? Now that I am dead, I found the woman I want to spend the rest of my life with? If we had been properly married the oath would have been said, until death do us part. Instead, it is death that has brought us together,” said Williamson Blacksmith. The couple drifted through the bright blue sky in the vibrant rays of morning feeling resplendent and joyous.

Williamson was still holding Gail's hand as the storm clouds began to form. Gail guided Williamson's ghostly form away from the tempest clouds. The clouds had been stirring like a witches brew. The sky suddenly turned to a great dark cauldron of uncertainty. Gail guided Williamson safely away from the turbulence in the sky. The couple drifted back down to earth, back to the log cabin in the woods. The log cabin was nestled in an obscure location, concealed from the road, yet hidden in plain sight. This log cabin was a clandestine place covered with lichen and moss. The birch and the weeping willow tree branches draped the log cabin with a mysterious sort of sad darkness. Amid the shadowy darkness there was a peculiar sort of comfort and safety.

The log cabin in the wood was a very integral link in the underground railroad. The underground railroad was a group of people and locations along a route leading North. The group of buildings and people was helping runaway slaves escape from the

cruelty of the Southern slave trade. The people inside the houses would wait to receive traveling slaves inside the building. The allies along the underground railroad were sometimes referred to as conductors. The conductors smuggled the slaves. The abolitionist (anti-slave sympathizers) gave the runaways food and clothing on their journey North. The conductors sometimes led the slaves through the woods to safe houses where the contraband slaves could escape the slave catchers. Sometimes the slave catchers pursued the slaves with bloodhound attack dogs. The slave bounty hunters galloped through the forest hot on the trail of the elusive slaves! The slave catchers fiendishly tracked them with dogged determination.

Gail had been a member of the underground railroad ever since she had been buried in the ground. The day before her lynching she was not only accused of witchcraft but also of quartering escaped slaves. Gail was executed before the Emancipation Proclamation had declared all slaves to be free and no longer stolen property of their masters. Gail was hanged for a crime that would be equated to stealing a horse or a cow. Slaves were seen as chattel, like cattle, mules, or a donkey. Anyone that was caught harboring slaves was seen as a thief in possession of stolen property. She was buried six feet deep underground when she woke up and began her journey to be free from the chains of death and to free others. Gail had been underground in her coffin, now she was leading souls to freedom on the underground railroad.

Gail hovered down from the tops of the trees leveling her long blue velvet and satin dress flowing to the ground. They now stood in front of the log cabin, as the sun set casting long dark shadows down upon them. The air was crisp with the scent of burning firewood. Some birch bark had been lit and used as kindling. Gail could hear the smoky tones of the larger logs crackling in the fire. She inhaled deeply hoping for the best, but prepared for the worst. She pushed the door of the log cabin open and focused her eyes toward the blazing fire that was burning in the hearth. Her heart skipped a beat as she glanced at her brother Robert Nightingale placing the wood in the fireplace with adroit skill. Robert suddenly looked up as if startled at the ghostly image of his sister that loomed

over the room. The fire light danced with a wicked sort of jubilation as the shadows draped the walls with dark towering figures. Robert stood up suddenly, as if he had been asked to stand at attention on a battlefield.

Gail wondered if her brother could see her ghostly image with his natural sight. There was one way that she could coax her brother's eyes into seeing what is normally invisible. She cast the sparkling powder into the fire to allow the purple flame to glow painting the walls in the log cabin a lavender and violet corona of light. As the purple light streams across the room Gail's stormy image appeared to her brother. His eyes widened and he grabbed hold of the rocking chair that he was standing beside him. Then Gail threw another handful of potassium powder into the fire and Williamson Blacksmith appeared in the rocking chair as it rocked methodically in front of the blazing fire! Robert scurried backward into the recesses of the log cabin trying to hide from the bewildering sight before his eyes. He was frustrated and shocked to comprehend what he was seeing! Robert spoke out loud as he crept from the alcoves of the cabin shaking like a leaf in the wind. "Gail is that you? My darling sister, is that you? I thought that you had left us. They carried you away in the night. The townspeople said that they hanged you from a tree for witchcraft and breaking the laws of slavery to make people free. How could this be? You are standing right before me! I have just returned from battle riding with the cavalry," said Robert Nightingale speaking eloquently.

## “Harriet Tubman & Gail Help Slaves Escape on the Underground Railroad and the Freed Slave Fight for the Union”

Gail cast another heaping amount of sparkling powder into the fire to make her violent indigo light shine even brighter creating a corona of light around her. Gail spoke with words as tumultuous as the sea in a storm. “I have come back for true love and to lead lost lovers to freedom. I will make people free from the chains of death and free from slavery. Lost lovers have been separated in slavery when their loved ones were sold up the river. Now I will help couples reunited and escape into the North to freedom! I have joined the underground railroad Robert,” said Gail as she swiftly grabbed the quilt and tossed it aside. She revealed a hidden room under the bed. Gail began to speak again as she moved the bed and lifted the door in the floor. “There will be some slaves arriving to this cabin tonight,” said Gail.

Gail could barely contain her enthusiasm; the words flowed from her mouth like a fountain. “You will gather your wits about you to help them escape. The slaves will run morning, noon, and night toward the North Star in the night sky,” said Gail. She paused to catch her breath seeming to be exhausted with the task she had set for herself. She spoke with conviction and belief in what she was doing. “The escaped slaves will sleep in the day and run under the cover of darkness after sunset to follow the North Star until they reach New York or Canada. Some of them have family in states like Maryland where they will end their journey. Others want to go all the way to Canada or even to their own nation in Africa called Liberia, said Gail”

Just as Gail had flung the hidden door in the floor open, there was a strange knock on the window pane. The pain of years of slavery and degradation was rapping at the door trying to come in, out of the cruel weather outside. Gail suspected that the peculiar knocking on the window in Mores code was an S.O.S. distress signal. Gail spoke in covert whispers. “That is the special knock on

the front window that I told the members of the underground railroad to make as a signal that a group of runaway slaves was ready to shelter in the cabin for the night. They normally travel at night, so this stop is likely to be for food. The ex-slaves will stay in the cabin hidden in the underground room all day, from daybreak to sunset. Then they will prepare to travel by the North Star again at night," said Gail.

Gail hurried to the door with a slight tinge of trepidation. Fear crept up the small of Gail's back making her feel chills of anticipation. Gail glanced out the window. Indeed, it was the familiar face of one of the members of the underground railroad. Williamson eagerly stood beside Gail clinching her hand, as if he did not want to let her go. His love for her was growing more and more like a wild untamed rose sprawling up the walls of his heart. Robert spoke with an uncertainty swelling in his words like a dam about to break. "I'll let them in. It looks like they have a couple. There is a man and a woman holding a baby in her arms," said Robert. Robert reached forward and pried the heavy wooden door open. A gust of wind rustled the flames in the fire. The stirring warm wind brought a hopeful breeze of mercy into the room.

The familiar face was the admirable abolitionist who called herself Harriet Tubman. She was wrapped in wool blankets that covered her from head to toe. Harriet cast off the wool blankets and revealed the tattered old dress that was covered in mud at the hem. She had trudged through a muddy bog in order to escape the suspicion of the townspeople. Some of the townspeople were still Confederate sympathizers. Harriet wanted to be inconspicuous because slave catchers and bounty hunters abounded in the area, even after Lincoln proclaimed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Harriet Beecher Stowe had spearheaded the abolitionist movement in the North with her portrayal of slavery in the antebellum South. Her novel chronicled the lives of slaves on a plantation. Harriet Tubman was a runaway slave that continuously traveled back down South to lead other enslaved people toward freedom. Gail had read the book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and she had heard of the courageous acts of Harriet Tubman. Now that Gail was a ghost, she was able to drift into the lives of anyone that she chose to observe.

Gail could communicate with the living when she wrote letters and left them for the living to read. Gail could also make herself appear to people in a corona haze of purple smoke and flame in front of a fire. Gail looked behind her at her brother Robert as she spoke. "I have made contact with Harriet Tubman and other abolitionists on the underground railroad. I revealed myself to Harriet Tubman at an anti-slavery rally in Washington D.C. I was there trying to reach Lincoln with my eternal message of peace and freedom, said Gail."

## **“Sally Hemmings Thomas Jefferson Descendants Wyoming and Howard”**

The door of the log cabin remained open, only long enough to usher in the married couple. The man and the woman had jumped the broom when they found out that the woman was pregnant. Harriet Tubman had been given the task of leading the married couple to freedom. Harriet Tubman would help the couple escape so that their master would not sell the husband up the river and separate the family. Harriet spoke as she pointed toward the hidden door in the floor of the cabin. “I'm glad ya'll were here to let us inside. There is some kind of storm kicking up at there. The sky is stirring so much we could barely see the North Star, said Harriet”

Harriet guided the married couple toward the hiding place in the floor of the log cabin. Gail had gathered some bread and meat for the ex-slaves to eat. Gail handed the couple some food and drink. They hurried to the hiding place beneath the door in the floor. The couple fiendishly ravaged the food as if they had not eaten in a very long time.

The runaway slave man's name was Howard. He spoke in between gulps of wine and swallows of bread. “My name is Howard. My mother gave me that name because she always wondered how. My mother would always ask the Lord or the trees or the sun in the sky, how. How will my son live? How will my son be happy? How will my son become a man? How can my son be free? My mother was always asking how. How was the one word that she knew how to read and write on paper, although she was forbidden to know such things. My mother died as a slave. My father was sold to another plantation. My mother tried to run away to be with my father again. When she was caught she was whipped to death at the age of 65. I cried for my mother and asked how. How, will I ever be free? The how word was the first and last word my mother ever spoke as her life slipped away,” said Howard.

Harriet gestured toward the open door in the floor as the couple was trying to finish the first meal that they had consumed in many



days. The runaway slave woman was named Wyoming. She was named after a place where she might be free if she could only steal away in the night.

The slaves have an oral tradition of telling stories about running away. The oral tradition story says that Wyoming's great grandmother was a slave that was from Virginia. The former president Thomas Jefferson had owned a slave girl named Sally Hemmings. Thomas Jefferson had fathered several children with Sally Hemmings. The forbidden babies (born from Sally Hemmings) were talked about in the papers that scandalized the circumstances.

The two clandestine children were said to be stillborn. They were said to be dead babies born from Sally Hemmings true love (a field slave). However, these babies were not born dead, they were stowed away as runaway slave babies. One of Sally's baby boys had children with a slave girl in Virginia that looked more like a kitchen servant or field slave. This dark child was sold back into slavery in Virginia. Those slave children had many more slave children on a plantation.

Not all of Sally's children married into free families and passed into society. Some of them were sold back into slavery for many more generations after Sally died in 1835. When the Civil War came in 1865, finally all of Sally's descendants were set free. Thomas Jefferson was rumored to have had children with some of his field slaves that were made to work outside in the hot summers of Virginia. Not much is known about the furtive slave babies that ran away from Thomas Jefferson's plantation to seek freedom.

Howard was also said to be a descendant of the slaves that lived on Thomas Jefferson's plantation. The slave masters used to give the slaves their own surname. Jefferson was the name that was associated with Howard's grandfather. There are no facts to support the idea that Thomas Jefferson fathered slave children with someone in Howard's lineage. However, the slave records said that Howard was a descendant of slaves that Thomas Jefferson owned in Virginia. Howard Jefferson was named after one of Thomas Jefferson's slaves that was found in the slave record books. Howard Jefferson is the name that Howard was given, just like his great grandfather all of those generations ago.

Howard was tall and brutish. His large shoulders and back rippled with well-developed muscles sculpted from hard work on the plantation. His thick dark eye-brows framed his large oval eyes. His square chin hung above his long neck and broad muscular chest. He had big white teeth that beamed in the sun when he smiled. His clean-shaven face glistened like satin in the sunlight. His large strong hands were skilled and dexterous, but rough textured from long days of rigorous manual labor.

Wyoming Hemmings was the name given to Wyoming. The Hemmings last name was also closely tied to Thomas Jefferson's plantation. Now Wyoming, (a runaway slave) says that she is a descendant of those covert slave babies from Thomas Jefferson's plantation in Virginia. Wyoming's great grandmother makes this claim just because the last name Hemmings was found in the slave record book that says who is bought and sold in Virginia.

Wyoming was a tall sturdy woman with tufts of curly hair heaped up atop her head in carefully place ringlets. Her tawny satiny skin was beginning to show some signs of stress. Her large hazel eyes were doe-like and round. Her eye-brows were thin and arched across her small round forehead. Her weather-beaten forehead was fringed with meticulously groomed dark bangs. Her sinewy limber figure was fit and shapely beneath her plain pioneer woman dress made of simple gray fabric. The woman named Wyoming spoke with a timid sort of humble mumble. "I was called Wyoming because my mother had been friends with Howard's mother and had known the word Wyoming sounded like the word why. My mother wondered why she had to be a slave? My mother wondered why she could not love the man of her choice? My mother wondered, why she had to go with the men that the slave master chose to make her bare a child? Why did the master talk about being free from the Northern laws and taxes, but did not think that slaves should be free? I am free to love now. I do not wonder why. I am why, said Wyoming."

The woman Wyoming was holding a baby in her arms and she breastfed. She looked at her baby boy and smiled with a bright white beaming grin. Later her baby boy would die of the coughing sickness and Wyoming would have a daughter named Virginia. She spoke to Robert as if he was her friend. "You see, together we are How and

Why. We are a married couple united as one. Together How and Why will be the answer to this question of love and freedom. I used to ask myself, why, why oh, why is it up to me to be free? Now I know that some spirit somewhere in heaven or earth has helped me on my journey, said Wyoming.”

Howard sat beside Wyoming as she cradled the baby boy in her arms. The baby was still suckling at her breast. Howard gently stroked the baby boy's forehead as he spoke. “I did not want to be separated from my wife. I love my wife and my baby boy. The master of the plantation was going to sell my baby boy and my wife to two different plantations. I told him that ain't no body gonna take my wife from me. We jumped the broom in front of God and everyone. We love each other more than anything in this world. Master wanted me to help them Confederate soldiers when they came to the plantation. He wanted me to give them food and shelter. I waited until a whole lot of them was in the barn and I set the barn on fire. Then me and my wife and baby boy high-tailed it out. We had to run after I set the barn up. There was no how or why or question to that, said Howard.”

Harriet Tubman wrapped her wool blanket around her shoulders as she spoke. “Freedom is living under your own roof and knowing that you can come and go as you please. Freedom is breathing, your first and last breath, of air without having to get permission for every action and every word that you speak. I will live only to be free and to make others free,” said Harriet. Howard put his arms around his wife Wyoming as he spoke. “I will live only to be free. If I have to die for freedom, then I will give my life and shed my blood, said Howard.” Wyoming looked over at Howard and Harriet as she spoke. “I want my baby to live only as a free person. I don't want her to ever know slavery or the sting of the master's whip.

Robert had been in battle at Nashville where he saw the colored regiment of freed slaves fight for their own freedom. Robert was still wearing his uniform, and sipping out of the standard issue military water canteen, when he spoke about his eye-witness account. “The freed slaves were very valiant warriors. They did not cower and run away from battle. They took their orders very well and marched like a well-trained unit. The sky filled with the smoke from the cannonball fire. The sound of rifles being fired resounded in my ears like the

rattle of a rattlesnake about to strike. The freed slaves fought in Nashville as the sound of the crows cried and black birds did fly away to hide. These courageous men did not fly away like black birds they all stood their ground. The sounds of battle were a loud and resonate country song. Some of the men marched forward hearing the sound of their own funeral dirge. Others, heard the victory songs of triumph leading them ever onward. The ex-slaves fought hoping that if they died they would die free from slavery and misery," said Robert.

Harriet looked over at Gail as she stared into the purple light corona of the blazing fireplace. Harriet opened the door to the sturdy old log cabin and guided the couple out the door. Gail spoke as Harriet led the married couple into the crisp night air. "The next safe house in the underground railroad is two miles away. You should be able to make it there before daybreak. You should take the western trail away from the Smith farm and corn fields. The Smiths are dyed-in-the-wool Confederate supporters. They are also bounty hunters that will do anything to get that bounty money for runaway slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation means nothing to bounty hunters and slave catchers until we win the war and liberate the Southern plantations for good," said Gail as she ushered the couple out the door with a few extra bundles of food. Howard spoke as he clasped his wife's hand tighter. "We will be careful. We will follow the good advice of folks who are guiding us to freedom," said Howard as he left the cabin.

Harriet Tubman led the couple with their newborn baby down the precarious path toward liberty. Gail looked up in to the starry night sky. The clouds of foreboding were looming overhead like an executioner. The ominous shadows hovered over the land in the light of the full moon. The moonlight glowered down upon Gail and Williamson as they crept furtively into the chilly night. The scent of the birch logs burning in the fireplace flared in their nostrils. The feeling of impending danger tingled up their spines and made the fine hairs on their arm stand up. Robert glanced over at the loving couple of Gail and Williamson wondering why they would venture into the harrowing night. Robert spoke while he warmed his hands at the fire. "Where are you two going tonight? The sky looks like it

might rain. Gail, don't temp the tempest. For, you know you are the temptress of stormy weather," said Robert.

Gail was holding Williams's hand so tight that she almost felt alive again. "I am going to take you to the meeting in the woods. Tonight, we will meet with the guild of nurses that call themselves the Healing Guild of Nightingales. Some people call us nurses. Some folks call us witches. The women of this guild swear an oath to do no harm. All of the so-called witchcraft and wizardry is for the purpose of curing illness and ridding the world of sickness. This deadly new lung disease is coking the life out of so many men women and children we have to find a cure. Some of the girls of our gild have healed some of the patients that used to have the coughing disease with elixirs and potions," said Gail. The storm was making a witches brew in the sky. The clouds were being stirred like a cauldron.

The group of conductors on the underground rail road trudged further North, helping the freed slave couple reach Washington and then New York City. The next stop on the underground railroad would be an arduous and hard-fought journey. The next safe house to stop at was over fifty miles away. The group had just narrowly escaped attack from the slave catchers and bounty hunters. The stormy clouds hovered overhead as Gail glided up into the horizon as an apparition. Gail spoke to Williamson as the man that she loved. He had just shot and killed three men to save her life, even if she was already dead. "Williamson, I am still in awe of your willingness to fight for me and to protect me from harm in my times of distress. You responded just like a Civil War soldier would in battle. I love you for fighting for me and what you believe in Williamson," said Gail as she grabbed Williamson's ghostly arm with pride.

Soon they reached the underground railroad house on the outskirts of Washington D.C. (the nation's capital). They were in the forest miles from the White House where the president lived. These freed slaves were not truly free. The chilly biting wind of the Virginia air was both a good felling and a rude introduction to cooler weather. The streets of Washington D.C. welcomed the group with open arms. News of the many victories won in battle had reached the Washington newspapers. The Union army was now winning and turning the tide of the war for the federal government. The freed

slaves had been helping the North fight the South valiantly in the battlefields. Harriet Tubman spoke as she guided the married couple into the horse and buggy that was nearby. "This horse and carriage will take you toward New York City where a position as a store clerk is waiting for you and your wife, said Harriet Tubman.

The married couple stepped inside the carriage and entered a world of foreboding mystery. The horse tossed its long shiny mane of hair carelessly as the sunlight cast long black shadows across the ground. The air of the city had a different essence that was crisp, chilling and new. The sound of the horse galloping sounded different on the streets of Washington D.C. Soon the married couple was in the woods outside the city again and headed on the long dirt road toward New York City.

Gail drifted down out of the clouds, as night fell upon the couple. The stars glared down on them offering the freed slaves dim light. The moon showed its bellicose face beaming pale moonlight upon them. The dreary darkness of the night was oppressive. However, the night offered the freed slaves the comfort of anonymity and inconspicuousness. They should be free enough to come and go as they please. When they reached a clearing in the woods a large farmhouse sprawled before them. The horse and buggy pulled up to the abode and the married couple slowly stepped down into the unyielding darkness. The storm clouds had been hiding the face of the moon like a widow's veil. Then suddenly the clouds moved away from the moon. The moon rained cascades of penetrating light down upon their path. More conductors greeted the couple on the underground railroad when they entered the farmhouse.

The front door was opened as a sliver of golden firelight gradually widened into a huge entrance. The rotund Quaker man greeted the married couple with open arms of jubilation as he spoke. "Well, hello there! I am so overjoyed to see that you both made it here in good health. We have some food and apple cider. Come warm your bones by the fire. We have a special guest today. My wife was just talking with a woman who is quite a famous abolitionist. Her name is Sojourner Truth. She has just come from a woman's meeting about freeing the slaves and getting the vote for everyone, said the Quaker man."

Harriet Tubman had once been like the young couple. She had been in love with one of the slaves on her plantation. He had been sold up the river to another plantation and she never saw him again. The Quaker man and his wife were willing to risk being punished by others in the community when they took in the escaped slaves. Howard and his wife Wyoming were very thankful that the conductors on the underground railroad would harbor contraband slaves. Harriet Tubman spoke as she showed the couple the hiding place inside the Quaker couple's house. "I remember when I used to be in a relationship with the man that I loved. He would do anything to keep me safe from war. He would do nothing to harm me. He would sacrifice his own comfort and wellbeing for my benefit. Love is all of those tiny selfless self-sacrifices. Love is also shown when there is the sharing of food and shelter that one has with another to make each other happy and healthy. When we laughed together, we smiled as big as a white picket fence. We grin with grins as big as the morning sunlight. When we realized that we could not be together the sunlight seemed to be hidden with heavy gray storm clouds of oppression, said Harriet Tubman."

Suddenly Sojourner Truth emerged from the shadowy alcoves of the farmhouse. She was wrapping her shoulders with a large wool shawl. Sojourner Truth spoke with a humble and confident voice. "I can recall the night when they took my love away from me. We were both so young and ready to jump the broom. He had tried to go to the neighboring plantation to get a jar of honey for me to make a cake for the celebration. Everyone was so happy about us getting married in the eyes of our friends and family. The night that my true love snuck out he was captured and brought back to the plantation. He was tied to a tree a whipped with a cat-and-nine-tails. He was bleeding and scarred with welts. We thought he would die from his wounds. So instead of baking the cake with the honey we put it on his back to help heal him. The day of my wedding, my true love got a high fever and died. As he slipped away, I held him in my arms and vowed that I will live free or die escaping to liberty," said Sojourner Truth.

## **“The Women of the Nightingale Society Gather with Gail for a Cure”**

Gail and Williamson knew that they were destined to be together. They were bound in death to stay by each other's side. The storm clouds descended upon the stark chilling night air. The thunder rumbled resounding the impending doom to come. Tonight, Gail would meet with the women of the Nightingale Society. They would come together in the woods in clandestine secrecy to come up with a cure for the terrible cough that was suffocating the life out of every breath that they took. The sound of horses galloping ruptured the once calm tranquility of the darkness. Soon there was a roaring bonfire in the middle of a circle of women. Hundreds of them were gathered around the huge flickering fire. The air was laden with the fragrance of herbs and bark. Several women had their cooking pots nestled in at the base of the bonfire. They were medicine women, apothecaries and healers from all across the country.

Then one lone woman ascended the hill overlooking the gathering to speak. She gradually climbed the tiny hill and stood in the center of the crowd waiting below. “Tonight, we have come together to put an end to the deadly cough that has rattled our towns like a lethal rattlesnake. Tonight, we can taste the bittersweet flavor of a new elixir that will put an end to our misery. Tonight, we have felt the hot-tempered flames of war ignite like a wildfire. Tonight, our war is with the disease that has plagued every breath we take. Tonight, we will inhale the healing aroma of the cure instead of breathing in the last gasp of dying breath. This coughing disease has swept through our town like a grim reaper wreaking havoc upon the lives of the weary. Tonight, we have gathered together to make an elixir and a salve to cure this deadly cough, said the leader of the Nightingale Women's Society.”

A representative from twelve different states was present to tell eye-witness accounts of the war against the coughing plague and the war against the secessionist Confederacy (the Confederates that sought to divide the United States). There was a woman from



Florida, Louisiana, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Kentucky, California, Colorado, and Mississippi. The representatives from each state stepped forward one-by-one to present their cures. The healing women would proclaim what progress they made toward a cure for the terrible coughing sickness. The dark clouds of dismay veiled the full moon. The seemingly interminable darkness cast a long shadow upon the women. They were gathered there to find a cure for the sickness, that was choking the life out of the survivors of the battlefield.

The first woman to step forward was in a state of mind to help and heal her patients. They called her a Voodoo woman! She was a woman of mysterious and enigmatic beauty. She came from the state of Florida, which was the state that was closest to the island of Haiti. The island of Haiti was a land of both impenetrable secrecy and brazen Voodoo practices. The religion of Voodoo was shunned at first. The women of the Nightingale Society did not want to be associated with something considered witchcraft. The ceremony and liturgy of Voodoo was frowned upon, except when the potions and elixirs seemed to garner great results.

Voodoo is not a worship of the devil, as many laypeople surmise. The religion is a combination of traditional African religions and Roman Catholicism. The traditional African religions were sometimes considered to be animism or the worship of animals. However, the tribal African religions called upon the power and jurisdiction of spirits that did not have a physical form. The infamous Voodoo doll was an intriguing symbol of evil to many people who do not fully understand Voodoo. Voodoo can be used for good or for evil in the same ways that Wicca can also be practiced for amicable results. The Voodoo doll was said to represent the person who the curse was being placed on. However, the Voodoo priestess could also wish good things to happen to the person. The belief in the Voodoo doll is religious because it is not bound by irrefutable proof in the physical world.

She was known to carry Voodoo dolls, but she looked like a porcelain doll in lace and curls. Her name was something that was whispered about, but never spoken loud enough. The townspeople feared her. The people that heard of this Voodoo woman revered

her. She walked tall but was small in stature. Her elegant frame cast a long shadow over all that stood to watch her promenade through the streets of the village in Florida. Her eyes were a witch hazel hue. They were glowing golden in sunlight and a murky medley of green that shown winking in the moonlight. Her arms were lanky like a tree branch. She could twist her arms around someone like a wild thorn covered vine. Once a man was caught in her clutches, he would grow to become submissive and obsessed with her. Her legs were sturdy and strong, full of stamina and perseverance. She could wrap her legs around a man and make him want her no matter what the cost, even if it cost him his life. Her back was curved in a swayback fashion. Her rearend was called her asset among the men who would take a glance at her in her high style corset and silk dress. She wore the finest attire made in Paris and spoke French like a courtesan of Louis the 14<sup>th</sup>. Her feet were delicate and nimble. She could run from a man chasing her as swift as a fox or as fast as a jackrabbit. Her lips were full and red. Her mouth was always painted with scarlet crimson rouge like an oil portrait. Her hair and her heritage was spoken about like something of a riddle. She wore her hair as burgundy red as the inside of a blood-red ripe plum. She would frequently take succulent juicy bites of very ripe plums and let the red sweet juice spill out over her lips. Tonight, her lips would speak of a cure for the coughing plague!

The bonfire blazed red-hot into the night as the Voodoo woman from Florida spoke. "We have come from far and wide to bring a cure and an end to this coughing sickness. I have been hard at work in my kitchen deep in the everglades of Florida. I have been boiling up barks and plant roots all hours of the night. I finally found a tea blend that makes the perpetual cough cease. This tea kills that cough like a bite from a rattlesnake but, it gives new life. The poison of the rattlesnake can be manipulated and used for goodness's sake! I have cured over a hundred battlefield soldiers from the rattling cough with just ten cups of my tea," said the Voodoo woman from Florida. She had sworn to do no harm just like all of the other members of the covert Nightingale Society.

The Voodoo woman glanced up at the dark night sky as a flock of crows went flying in front of the pale glowering face of the full moon.

The crowd stared transfixed as the enigmatic Voodoo woman spoke. "My beloved one had been caught in the clutches of the coughing sickness. I tried every potion and incantation that I could muster to fight the stifling illness. He gasped and sighed in the night as the life was choked out of my lover. He had been such a strong man. He was a stableboy when we first met. He was shoeing a horse in the barn and making horse shoes, when he suddenly stopped to look over his shoulder. He was shirtless. His bare chest was rippling with muscles and his smooth-shaven skin glistened in the moonlight. Yes, he was a strongman. There was an illness that all of the stableboys were getting. We thought it was a direct result of handling the horses or an allergy to the hay. We surmised that the cough was from not wearing a shirt in the chilly night air. As you know, it was none of these things. My love had fallen victim to the scoundrel we know to be the coughing sickness that is choking the life out of the soldiers in the battlefields," said the Voodoo woman.

The crowd of Nightingale Society women stirred with exhilaration. The gathering of women was exuberant and energized. The Voodoo woman was vivacious and she had some words of hope and encouragement as she spoke. "My lover was cut in half with the coughing like a knife was stabbing him. At first, I thought that some rival adversary Voodoo woman had placed a curse on my beloved with a Voodoo doll. Then I tried the treatment that a formulated with a mixture of barks and herbs and his cough vanished from his throat as if a spirit had come and carried the sickness away," said the Voodoo woman.

The clouds parted revealing the starry sky above. The North Star beamed down upon the gathering, as if giving polite approval of them. The air was textured with anticipation. The taste of triumph was sweet on the tongues of the women. Perhaps the tea could help heal the other sufferers of the lethal coughing sickness that had tightened its grip on the population both young and old.

The woman from Louisiana stepped forward from the dark midnight oblivion. The scent of the bonfire flared roaring in the atmosphere. The taste of Bourbon liquor made on Bourbon Street was still on her palate, making her drunk with courage. She was a fiery woman with a lot of passion and fervor in her voice. The woman

from Louisiana was tall and sturdy. Her legs reached as far as any man over six feet tall. Her shoulders were large for a woman. She accentuated her strong shoulders with great puffy sleeves. The fabric of her dress was opulent and intricate silk satin. She (no doubt) had her fabric imported from Paris or Italy and wore the most elaborate fashion one could imagine. Her mouth was a thin sliver of a red line. Her eyes were large and clear blue as a glacier on a snowy mountain fjord. Her accent was that of a French woman. She had been of Arcadian ancestry. She glided toward the bonfire, slowly raising her fist in the air in defiance. The firelight danced on her stoic face. Her movements were intentional and laconic. She moved with astute skill as adroit as any trained soldier as she marched toward the bonfire with fighting words. The air resounded with a battle cry.

The woman from Louisiana had something to say. "I cook the Cajun spicy flavors of the New Orleans French quarter. We say let the good times roll as we drink our French wine. But now the most common type of wine in our midst is that whining cry of the sick, day in and day out. Then suddenly, the patrons began to choke on the sick and dying. I used to feed so many gentlemen in my restaurant with the healing soups. The patrons began to choke on their baguettes and cry bitter tears in their soup. No one could stop the coughing sickness with any healing herbal soup or lemon water recipes. When Mardi Gras had arrived in New Orleans, I began to flavor the traditional confections with a clandestine mixture of herbs and spices that I believed would cure the population. The crowd gathered and my new fiancé had come to take me in the carriage to the Mardi Gras festivities. He had been my new love for about a month before he fell ill with the coughing sickness. We knew that this illness was not from lust and the union of men and women but just from crowds gathering. After Mardi Gras celebration in the streets, the coughing plague strangled the city," said the Louisiana woman.

The ecclesia of Nightingale Society woman clutched their pearls and tried to warm their flesh as a chill swept across the gathering. The leaves on the trees rustled as the wind stirred the air and stoked the bonfire. The dancing firelight cast long dark shadows across the sinister alcoves of the woods. An owl perched on a long thick branch of an oak tree as witness to the events of the congregation. The

gallop of horsemen was rumbling in the distance as a lynch mob had gathered to investigate the group of women in the woods.

The Louisiana woman had more to proclaim about her experiment with herbs and spices. “The women of the French Quarter are well-known for their salacious behavior, scandalous and sinful. The brothel houses of ill repute were filled with women stricken with the coughing sickness. The women bared their flesh and flashed their bosoms to the crowds during Mardi Gras to get the beads tossed at them. The lasciviousness and the reveling would rival the depths of hell. But this was not the cause of the sickness that reaped havoc on the partiers. The cause was coughing on each other. I started to give away my sweet baked goods as a charitable act and soon the coughing subsided. I gained more and more patrons to my restaurant for the soup, sweets, and lemon water,” said the Louisiana woman.

The sound of the lynch mob jeering was getting closer and closer. The angry men on horseback were riding fast and furious toward the congregation of women. The thunder rolled, as the gloomy grey clouds billows plumes overhead. The sky was like a harbinger of dread to come. The lynch mob was ready to hang the women who were considered witches and ruined women.

The woman from Massachusetts glided forward with hesitation. She held tight to her shawl, as the bonfire painted the night with flickering firelight. She had ridden all day and all night, a fortnight of two weeks, to get to the gathering of the Nightingale Society women. She had sworn to do no harm. Like the revolutionaries that threw the tea into Boston Harbor for the Boston Tea Party around the era of the Revolutionary war, she had some strong tea to talk about. She was misconstrued to be a witch in the town of Salem where she was from. Her ancestors had been burned alive and hanged as confirmed witches during the Salem witch trial that had taken place in the 1500's. It had been a time of puritanical superstition and fear.

The woman from Massachusetts spoke after she cleared her throat. “My ancestors were burned at the stake, hanged, and drown for being proclaimed as witches. Women were racked and pulled apart with horses whipped and boiled in oil during the Spanish Inquisition and now this plague reigns supreme over its subjects like

a cruel queen. We must be careful not to get labeled as witches! However, I have been secretly taught the ways of nature called the natural way of Wicca craft. In hiding, the women of Salem have indeed explored the realms of natural cures and herbs. In the woods we gather covertly. We were covered with dark cloaks to conjure up healing salves to conquer the sickness of our families. In Salem, any woman that was seen walking alone in the woods was whispered about as a witch. I was rumored to be a witch and nearly lynched last spring, even though the witch trial of Salem had ended hundreds of years ago. The idea that any woman could be hanged as a witch, towers over our thinking as a warning not to step out of line and do things independently without men. I have tried many healing concoctions to stave the progress of this fatal cough. Alas, I have had some comforting results. The thick viscous syrup of many maple trees, amber and many other fermented berries have combined to create a healing cure for the cough. My betrothed husband to be was like a felled tree in the wood with no roots upon him. His cough was endless and indomitable before I gave him my mixture of sticky salvation. Then he miraculously recovered and did not catch the cough again,” said the woman from Salem Massachusetts.

In the background there was a distant echo of horses galloping steadily through the woods searching for the gathering of women. The bolts of lightning lit the sky with sudden bursts of color as the thunder rolled across the trees. The silence was shattered and the darkness was illuminated as the ominous storm approached. The men riding through the woods were determined to find the women and hang them from the highest tree branch until they were dead.

Meanwhile, back at the house of the Quaker family, the former slaves Wyoming and Howard were hidden away. Soon, they would be ready to make their escape to freedom to the state of New York. The underground railroad had delivered them from the cruelty and malevolence of slavery. Gail and Williamson were hovering nearby watching the gathering of women. As the mountain of flames crackled embers and sparks of golden light into the darkness of night, the search for a cure went on.

Gail stepped forward gliding on a nimbus of purple light corona. She cast the powder into the fire. Immediately, the roaring fire began

to glow bright lavender purple just like the lilac violet light that had emanated from the fireplace in the log cabin. Gail was as tempestuous as a storm. She stirred with fervor and purple passion like a brewing tempest in the clouds. Gail had a bad temper when it came to fighting a deadly illness. She gathered her will and began to speak before the crowd as Williamson stood beside her as stern as an ancient oak tree. "I have gathered everyone here as one of the women of the Nightingale Society from Pennsylvania. We have been fighting here in the battle of Gettysburg, which has now ended in an unprecedented number of deaths on the battlefield but also in the infirmary. The coughing sickness has rattled down the throats of the soldiers and the townspeople like a rattlesnake injecting its venom. The coughing sickness has taken more lives than this horrific Civil War. I have been trying to give the victims of this plague a type of bark that comes from the trees in the woods. I have been grinding it up and mixing it into their food for many months now. I have seen some good results from my efforts," said Gail Nightingale. She stared upward at the sky as the gloomy clouds of torment were illuminated with slivers of violent lightning. The bitter taste of defeat seemed to linger on her tongue as her skin felt the sudden tinge of an ominous echo in the wind.

She spoke again as her elegant frame cast a narrow shadow down upon the gathering. She glided closer to the flames, as her satin and lace dress shimmered in the undulating firelight. Her large clear eyes seemed to almost fill with tears as her tiny ornately adorned hands grasp Williamson's hand ever so tightly in the darkness. "The Pennsylvania Quakers are a community of puritanical and pious religious people. They do not believe in too much suffering for the innocent. It seems that the Quakers have a covenant with both the heavens and the earth, though many of them are dying as well. A few of the Quakers have devised a plan to treat the coughing sickness with a combination of oats and honey as well as few other spices and herbs that they would not allow me to become privy to," said Gail.

The woman from Tennessee stepped forward as the purple light died down and morphed into the familiar yellow and orange flames. The woman from Tennessee had emerged draped in velvet and

embellished in pearls. The ribbons in her hair blew in the winds, streaming the color crimson through the air like blood. The night seemed to antagonize her as she tried to speak some words of wisdom. "The state of Tennessee is one of the slave states embroiled in the fight to vindicate the Confederate army. They want to justify this war, but all the war has brought is sorrow. This coughing sickness has squeezed the life out of the lungs of the slaves and the master both. In Nashville the songstresses gather to sing Southern love songs in the taverns and to lament over the pain in their lives. The singers try to liven up the atmosphere, but they cannot seem to lift their spirits. In Nashville, I have been playing the fiddle for my customers. In my tavern, folksongs have been sung. Love has poured out of the hearts of my violin as much sadness," said the woman from Tennessee. She lifted her violin to her shoulder and pressed her chin against the smooth hollow pine surface as she played. She pined for the love of her fallen heroes and she played to sooth the ears of those which had suffered. The notes from her strings drifted up into the branches of the tress making a melody with the firelight. Her bow stroked methodically up and down on her instrument as she played. She swayed in the glimmers of hope and joy that seemed to reverberate through the crowd of women. Her silhouette loomed over the gathering of girls, as if she was a cloak of goodwill and comfort. When she played for her guest at the tavern, a certain series of notes, chords, and harmonies seemed to quell the sickness. The feeling was as if the vibrations brightened the mood and made the people less likely to get sick.

The woman from Kentucky lunged forward like a female wolf, evoking the spirit of the hunt. She did not want to give up the search for the cure. She was dressed in red plaid and brass buttons down her bodice. Kentucky was another slave state that was deeply distraught with the burden of war. The Kentucky bluegrass was growing tall and unruly in the state of unrest and turmoil. She spoke of events that had changed her life. "One night, I decided to make a bath for my sick boyfriend by boiling Kentucky bluegrass and several other plants. When he put his head under the water and then arose, he deeply inhaled. Instantly, his cough vanished and the lung sickness did not come upon him again. The next moment I rushed



into the kitchen to pull the fried chicken drumsticks off of the stove. There was an extra ingredient that night to the fried chicken recipe that I usually made. I gave it to my newly renewed boyfriend and he was out chopping logs and splitting wood like a lumberjack the next morning,” said the woman from Kentucky.

In the background there was an invasive and inevitable gallop of horsemen. Like a bunch of prize thoroughbred stallions galloping across a racetrack, the horses charged forward. The men riding them were men of sport and games, but also jockeys of evil and misfortune. They were gambling with the lives of the women, as if the women would be so easy to kill. The odds seemed to be stacked against the gathering of gals in the forest. The men had been keeping track of the women. Now it would be a fiendish race to the finish line of death and destruction, if the women could ever reach the finish line alive.

Another woman walked out into the light. She had come from below the Mason-Dixon line but was not whistling dixie. She was from Georgia, another slave state that was feeling the suffocation of the coughing sickness. She was a short stout woman with a joyful countenance and expression on her face. She looked as if she was going to be the bearer of good news and good tidings. Her regalia was similar to that of a military general with gold braids and gold buttons emblazoned across her chest like medals of honor. She seemed to march forward in her navy-blue dress and shiny gold buttons like a great conqueror. She seemed to relish the attention that she was now getting. She was illuminated in the limelight corona of admiration. She spoke as if she was delivering a speech with her large mouth and plump pink lips. “The Georgia pine trees seem to have a special kind of wood that can be boiled and used as medicine. I have boiled the pine and placed it in a basin. Then I placed a heavy wool blanket over the afflicted person’s head and told them to deeply inhale the pine vapors. I also used the pinecone and the pine needles to affect a cure for the coughing symptoms that was as swift as a beam of lightning,” said the woman from Georgia.

The owls of wisdom seemed to make a strange and simple sound as the woman from Virginia emerged from the shadows. The Virginia Company was some of the first settlers to come to the state of

Virginia where captain Smith met Pocahontas, a Native American princess. Soon John Smith would fall in love with the woman they called an Indian by mistake. The term Indian was used back in those days out of ignorance, because the settlers thought that they had landed in East India. John Smith would take her back to England with him to be introduced into polite society. She remained something of a spectacle and an oddity as a Native American princess in England.

This woman was a member of the Nightingale Women's society, but she too was a Native American woman from the Cherokee nation. She was dressed in colorfully beaded moccasins shoes made out of deerskin. She was wearing a deerskin dress with fringe and beadwork. Her red and blue turquoise beads were made into a detailed pattern on her dress. She pulled the woven colorful shawl around her shoulders as she stepped closer to the light. She spoke with a humble and ingratiated voice. "My chiefs and elders have been smoking the pipe in the smokehouse and gathering at pow wows to talk about the deadly coughing sickness. They believe that a vision quest and smoking some tobacco will cease the cough and rid the tribe of the sickness. We have tried bark and berries gathered in the woods by our women, while the men hunt the buffalo and the deer. However, the sickness was only cured with buffalo milk and deer blood mixed together and boiled for a fortnight of two weeks," said the Native American woman from Virginia. They used to say the state of Virginia was named after the virgin, Queen Elizabeth I of England, because she never married or had children. Perhaps, the battle with smallpox had left Queen Elizabeth infertile and barren from the illness that the queen had endured. Now this Cherokee princess stood before the gathering of women barren from the plague, baring no children, and asking for the cure to the sickness that was leaving women and men sterile. The forest seemed to fill with the savory sweetness of Virginia hanging in the smokehouse, as happy memories of jubilant times seemed to echo through the trees.

Next was the woman from Texas. Like a game of poker, she was playing Texas Holdem with the plague first and then with the gathering of Nightingale women second. Every instant that she spoke she knew that the cure was going to be revealed to her like

the face card (a queen, an ace, or a king) that would win the hand against the deadly illness. She wanted to keep a poker face that hides her emotion. She was revealed from beneath a plume of smoke as if she was making a huge pit of barbeque for the women to feast upon. She was stomping forward like a herd of longhorn cattle being driven on a cattle drive across the country. She spoke about her beloved cowboy. "My dearest love is a cowboy who spent most of his days driving cattle from Texas across the country to be slaughtered for beef. His job had always been dangerous and difficult. He got the coughing sickness one night as the cayote howled against the moon on a winter in Texas. My cowboy used to sweep me up into his arms like a lasso and carry me away into the wilderness. One night he was too weak to even move because of the coughing sickness. I had been told that grinding up the horns of a longhorn steer into a powder would make a soup that could cure the sickness. We tried it and mixed the cattle horn from an old castrated bull into a concoction of zinc and other minerals. Low and behold, the coughing stopped and my lover was back in the saddle again. He was riding high with his big cowboy hat, shiny brass belt buckle, and cowboy boots. The next day we were at the barn raising dancing the two-step and square dancing to the fiddler," said the woman from Texas.

The lady from Colorado had come all the way to the meeting from the Rocky Mountain ridge. The coughing sickness was stifling life even in the highest reached of the mountaintops. She was dressed in clothing woven with gold thread. Her family had come to Colorado for the gold rush, that had happened just before the war broke out. The gold dust could be panned from the silt of the Colorado River and any riverbed or creek in the surrounding lands. She had struck gold and had some advice to give. "My family has been isolated from the outside world fearing the prying eyes of the strangers that would come looking for wealth and gold dust. One day, one of my siblings went to a town meeting about the plague of coughing sickness and fell ill the next day. We quarantined the young teenage girl named Justine. We closed her away in isolation so that she would recuperate from the disease. She was given coffee with gold and silver dust every day for a week, and the cough simply vanished

from her throat as if it had never been. The silver dust had an especially good effect on her throat and overall health,” said the woman from Colorado.

The lady from California suddenly thrust forward with confidence and self-assurance. She had been draped in gold woven ribbons and gold buttons also, as the products of the gold rush. The ‘49ers had created a boon of wealth in the rustic wild western frontier. The Manifest Destiny would be what they would call it as the feverish lust for free land and fortune would drive the urge to move to California. She spoke of wild interludes with hot cowboys and Spanish men who galloped across the untamed land of plenty. “I have also tried the use of silver to cure the illness, but I have combined the silver with spring water and a bit of cactus water as well. When the Spanish fight us over the land we can take the extra silver bullets and grind them with a mortar and pestle until we have silver dust to cure the cough. They still say that there is too much gold buried in California and the rulers of Spain will not give up complete control of the land,” said the woman from California.

The lady from New York was spurred on by the eloquent speech of the other women of the Nightingale Society. She finally made her appearance and stepped forward. She was dressed in finely woven fabrics that cascaded across her tall lanky frame like a curtain at a leaded glass window in castle. She was led by the will to survive. She was fortified with courage and strength like the walls of a fort. Now she spoke from her tiny mouth that was shaped like a heart as her large oval eyes gleamed with golden light. “In New York the city is teeming with sickness and the factories are burdened with the plague. It is the same characteristic rattling cough that chokes the life out of the victim like a murderous fiend in the night. I have tried a mixture of mercury and New York steak from the finest restaurants. I have tried some other household remedies, such as peppermint and lemon they get rid of the cough, but the sick person must stay in isolation until the symptoms are gone,” said the woman from New York.

The winds of change were still blowing, as the four horsemen of the lynching party were riding through the woods. As it turns out, they were actually looking for the runaway slaves as well as the

women who would be accused of witchcraft. The head horseman spoke with a malicious sound in his malevolent voice. "Ride on gentlemen, until we find those dreaded women of witchcraft and mischief in the darkness of this forest. We will hang every single one of them until they are dead, and send a message to the other witches and soothsayers who want to come to our land and cause trouble," said the leader of the gang.

Then without warning Williamson swooped down and drew his rifle. He aimed with the keen skill of a trained soldier and shot each and every one of the men in the lynch mob; all twelve men were killed! There had been one man following each representative woman from all the twelve states that had sent woman to speak before the crowd. For each woman who made a speech, there was a man tracking her all the way from her state to the meeting to kill her! The lynch mob had decided to kill all the women at the meeting of the Nightingale Society, not just the twelve speakers!

The freed slaves needed to be taken to their final destination in New York before the lynch mob could find them and take them back to captivity. There was nothing worse in their eyes, not even death. The married couple of the woman named Wyoming and the man named Howard would be smuggled under the cover of darkness to New York City.

## “Sojourner Truth Speaks of Freedom and Love”

Williamson Blacksmith and Gail Nightingale traversed back to the Quaker farmhouse together hovering through the storm clouds. The wind howled ushering in a new era of turbulence. The taste of uncertainty was bitter on the tongue. The feeling of tiny prickles on the forearm swept across the flesh like waves of sudden emotion. Darkness obscured the sight. The scent of a bonfire was dwindling in the air, as the sudden smoke from a smokehouse took its place. The Quaker family had slaughtered hogs, and was smoking some bacon. Sojourner Truth was waiting outside the Quaker farmhouse in a covered coach carriage with Harriet Tubman beside her. Sojourner Truth spoke. “I call myself Sojourner because to sojourn means to make a long stay somewhere. I am always on my way somewhere else. I ran from my captivity as a slave. I help others to escape to freedom. I do the work of many men, with many conductors on the underground railroad to help me. I do the work of men and I am still a woman,” said Sojourner. She leaned forward and opened the door of the spacious carriage as she moved over to make room for the married couple.

She spoke again with her older advancing years beginning to show in the withering tone of her stern voice. When I was a slave, I did not know the genteel life of a lady except for watching other women live that sort of life. I did not know frailty or gentle ways like a wealthy woman living in the main house of the plantation would. I was hardened by hard labor and knew only tears of sorrow instead of happiness. I am a woman, as female as any woman can be, even if I do look worn out and tired, whipped by the hands of time. I tell my fellow feminists, ain't I a woman? Don't I bleed, don't I have the weakened flesh of the weaker sex and submit to the man, as all women do in some way,” said Sojourner as she rocked back and forth rolling with the bumpy road in the back of the carriage.

Sojourner spoke about the love that made her life worth living. “I was in love once. He was a valiant and resilient young man. He

belonged to another master, but his heart belonged to me. One night we escaped into the woods to be together. His master had made the slavecatchers track him. I will never forget the sound of those dogs barking and howling in the stark night air. We embraced and looked into each other's eyes. He was the one I loved but he was in captivity just like me. We wanted to be together, but my master forced me to marry another slave and have children with him. I was bred like a horse and studded like a prize bull. I am not the dainty fragile type of female, like the women who were born free. I have known hard work, sorrow, and misery. I will say that no one open carriage doors for me except tonight, when my dear friend Harriet Tubman helped me into the carriage to meet y'all. I have been an abolitionist since I walked away from my Dutch master in New York. I am a supporter of women's right. I spoke to the women at the women's right convention in the years before this war started. Now the slaves in the South want freedom, and the women all around the country want to have more rights," said Sojourner Truth.

Harriet Tubman had long been a proponent of the women's right to vote. Women's suffrage is what she had been an advocate of after she had made many missions South to help fellow slaves escape. Harriet Tubman spoke, as the carriage continued on its way toward New York City. "I was one of the few freed slave women to lead a revolt. I led an armed raid to free over seven hundred slaves from captivity. That night I was a woman with a gun! I was armed just like a man. I was ready to fight like a soldier. I tell you all that happened that night as we make our way to New York City in this carriage. One of the captains in the Union army said that they needed some courageous and bold person to liberate the contraband slaves being held in the area. The moon was not yet full. The North Star was glaring down on me. The North Star had led me toward freedom so many times before. I helped hundreds of my enslaved relatives to escape into freedom. I made many missions down South to get my family and friends to freedom across state lines. That old North Star had never steered me wrong before. On this night I was looking for guidance and audacity," said Harriet Tubman.

Harriet Tubman continued to speak to Sojourner Truth, and the young couple in the back of the shadowy carriage, as it bumped

down the back roads in clandestine secrecy. “The military man handed me the rifle. I can still feel the wooden handle. I can still see the long shiny black barrel of the rifle and its hard black iron metal. I held the rifle and aimed at the target. Soon there was a gunfight going. The place that we were trying to raid was awake with action. The enemy was trying to keep us from freeing the slaves held inside the area. Soon we were deep inside the compound! The sound of gunfire burst through my ears like the overseer cracking his whip. The slaves were held up in their chambers enclosed behind metal bars. The men guarding the building were taken by surprise. I led that raid and freed hundreds of enslaved men, women, and children that night. The danger was real. I could feel the blood rushing through my veins. My heart was pounding hard in my chest. I had prayed that night that I would be taken into Abraham’s bosom and ushered into the pearly gates if I could just set one more slave free. Several armed soldiers and volunteers charged the walls of that building under my command. If I was the courageous woman who would march into the gates of hell, then the men felt ashamed that they could not do the same,’ said Harriet Tubman.

The carriage trudged through the dark and ominous woods on a path toward freedom and opportunity. The word opportunity sounded like it had the word poor in it, because people wanting a chance at something try to opt for a way out of poverty. Sojourner Truth was still awake, as the young married couple held each other in an embrace for warmth and comfort. Gail Nightingale and Williamson Blacksmith were present inside the carriage, for the lantern was lit with purple light. Sojourner Truth had been at the women’s suffrage meetings to get women the right to vote for the president.

Sojourner Truth spoke about her beliefs. “I think the right to vote is as basic as any other action that can be exercised as a citizen of a nation, said Sojourner Truth. Sojourner leaned forward as the carriage bumped down the old dirt road toward New York. The sound of the wind shaking the branches of the trees was deafening, as the carriage foraged forward toward freedom and uncertain fate. Harriet Tubman spoke up as she was peeling an apple with a crude perry knife, that she always kept with her hidden in the folds of her dress. “Some folks think that jobs and fair housing is more important than



voting for some rich white man that doesn't care one way of the other about us folks," said Harriet Tubman. Harriet looked over at Gail Nightingale and Williamson (still with them) inside the carriage illuminated in the purple light.

The carriage was only a few days away from New York City, where the married couple would be given employment and housing. Sojourner Truth cleared her throat to speak. When I was at the women's convention they made their own constitution and women's bill of rights," said Sojourner. Sojourner savored the last few moments of silence before she spoke about the people she met at the women's right convention. "I met some fascinating women there at the convention. Several of the women had attended the anti-slavery convention in London," said Sojourner, as she neatened her dress. "Going to some meeting, and taking real action, are two different things Sojourner," said Harriet Tubman.

"I realize that Harriet, but Susan B. Anthony was a Quaker, and had to act on her beliefs."

"No, she doesn't Sojourner. Free women have a choice!"

"That is true Harriet, but still these women fight for their own rights also."

"All Susan B. Anthony and Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton have to do is what their husbands tell them to do, Sojourner."

"Still, Harriet, I support the idea of women ruminating about self-sufficiency and equal treatment."

"Sojourner, I agree with you if a woman can work as much as a man and eat as much, why not get paid as much?"

"Harriet, getting paid and being able to vote for the rights that men have is what women's suffrage is all about."

"Nonsense Sojourner, the powerful men just wants to find a way to work free women as hard as they did the slave women, to make twice as much money from their wives and daughters."

Harriet Tubman was reminiscing about how she had gone across the state lines and rescued her family from slavery. I remember that night when I made it across that final river. It was the last river I had to cross to set foot on free ground. Freedom called to me like a warrior beating a giant drum. It was not like a battle cry, but more like a victory cheer. My heart was beating out of my chest, as I panted in

the darkness. I hear myself breathe cool night air. My breathing was heavy and labored. I tried to tell myself to stop breathing so loud before the slavecatchers could hear me. It was chilling that night. The dark midnight air nipped at my skin like the bite from a dog. I felt as if a bloodhound was on my trail, breathing down my neck. Somehow, I could still recall the sweet whispers of my lover at my ear. I wanted to feel his embrace again. He was my husband now, though my first true love was a slave boy that was sold away. We would never be together. I had found contentment with my husband, and I tried to forget about my first love. My first love would always be love lost, forlorn and unrequited," said Harriet Tubman, as her eyes began to fill with tiny tears.

Harriet Tubman continued to talk about how she helped hundreds of slaves escape on the underground railroad. "I stepped into the water of the river. I was wading in the water toward the hope of being free. Every step I took was bringing me closer and closer to freedom. The cold chill of the water sent shudders up my spine. My skin had felt the thrill of freedom and the bitter-sweet presence of the cold river water all at once. I winced in shock from the feeling of the water rushing across my skin. I hoped that I did not fall in, and drown from the excitement. Suddenly, I saw one of my relatives waving his hands to signal to the others. There was a flickering candle that was trying to make a sign in the darkness. The flickering candle meant that it was alright to cross the river. Come, now swiftly children, I said when I saw the whole bunch of my kinfolks gathered there by the river's edge. Come now, wade in the water I said, as they crossed the cold shallow riverbed toward their dreams of freedom. That night all of my kinfolks would sleep in a bed hearing freedom's lullaby, upon a pillow of mercy, and a blanket of hope. I recall what my brother had said to me the night I led him across the river.

"I'm going back across that river Harriet. There are friends and family there where they can escape the slave master's whip tonight."

"I know this river well, brother, I have brought all of y'all across in the dark and even in the stormy night."

"Rest tonight sister. I will go and bring our American cousins and uncles across the riverbed."

“Brother, I can’t rest until I know that my family is safe and free at last.”

“Alright, Harriet, you have always been the stubborn girl, as tough and determined as any. We shall both go across the riverbed and bring the rest of our family together.”

“You don’t have to protect me from anything you know, brother. I have crossed the bed of this river so many times I could do it in my sleep, brother.”

Harriet Tubman paused in her portrayal of her story. The sound of wild angry dogs echoed in the background. Were they bloodhounds and greyhounds racing toward the carriage to capture them? The sound of horses galloping fast and ferocious in the distance was getting closer and closer. The ominous and foreboding presence of fear loomed over them. Williamson was ready and waiting to defend. Williamson spoke as he drew his rifle. “I suspect those four horsemen were galloping unrelenting, like a flood of blood and death. I will just open the window to the carriage, and stick my neck out there with my rifle,” said Williamson Blacksmith, with a courageous and valiant tone to his voice. He opened the door to the carriage and stood ready to aim, as the four horsemen approached.

The first horseman approached on a pale horse with death in his wake. Williamson focused his gun at the pale horse, visible against the contrast of the moonlit sky. “I got you! You bastard, just come a little closer. Come to papa! I will make your trip to hell a little bit faster,” said Williamson as he took aim and fired at the rider of the pale white horse. The rider fell from his horse shot in the head as his blood spewed into the night air. The second horseman came charging forward on his dark horse. The horseman yelled a threat. “Come out and show yourselves you scoundrels. You have practiced your witchcraft for the last time. You devils,” said the man screaming his diatribe, riding on the dark horse. Gail Nightingale emerged from the carriage hovering in purple light as if she had wings as she spoke. “We are not witches, nor are we devils. We only hope to cure the horrific plague of coughing sickness. Leave us be, and flee for your lives. We are leaving your town, never to return,” said Gail Nightingale. The man on the dark horse replied in retort. “You are devils and warlocks. You have already killed one of our finest men

on the pale horse. He only hoped to defend his family and town from evil women and wicked men. Damn you all to depths of hell! Dare you ever return to this land; you will be shot, set fire to, and hanged from the highest tree,” said the man on the dark horse.

Gail motioned to Williamson as she spoke. “I would say to them that we would go through any wood or forest that we please. For we live in a free nation that is fighting to be one whole country, even as we fight these small battles about what is right and wrong. Ride on coachman. Ride on horses. Ride on until freedom is won,” said Gail Nightingale as the carriage sped up leaving the horsemen hassling in the distance.

The morning light broke through the clouds dispelling the darkness of the harrowing night. The carriage had finally made it to New York City. The young married couple of Howard and Wyoming had gleaming smiles on their faces. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth seemed to approach the journey as the same as usual. This was yet another successful escape from the clutches of slavery. They had ridden from the depths of the dark woods of captivity, to the bustling urbane metropolis of New York. There had been shanty towns in the outskirts of town that were wrought and overladen with ex-slaves seeking employment. These enclaves were notorious. These dilapidated towns were synonymous with titular cutthroats and thieves. The young couple did not want to jump from the frying pan into the fire. They had sought a better life in New York. Howard spoke to his wife Wyoming. “My darling, I told you that I would get you to the land flowing with milk and honey. Now here we are together,” said Howard as he kissed his wife with a passionate unctuous enthusiasm. Both of them had been wanting so badly to see freedom, and to be together.

The carriage arrived at a grand house, in the center of a busy street in New York. Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Gail Nightingale, and Williamson Blacksmith all accompanied the young married couple to the front door. The butler answered the door. The manservant was dressed in a long coat and silk shirt. He was very polite. He welcomed the group of ex-slaves and abolitionist into the mansion. Soon Frederick Douglass emerged from the drawing room, with a slew of other men and women surrounding him. He spoke as

if he had heard the events of the women's convention. "Ah, you made it to safety. You women are as tough and courageous as the legends say. I am so pleased to meet the real Sojourner Truth, and to shake the strong hands of the actual Harriet Tubman," said Frederick Douglass. Sojourner Truth spoke like an oracle at Delphi as she prognosticated.

"I hope to see women voting after the end of this war, for freedom, Frederick."

"Oh, I agree Ms. Truth. Both husband and wife can make crucial decisions together, including voting. First we want the bill of rights to recognized freed slaves as one whole man and one whole vote."

"Yes, Frederick, the way I understand it is, the freed slave vote will only count as a fraction of a whole instead of one vote."

"Sojourner, you see, the ex-slaves outnumber the slave masters in many of the Southern states."

"Frederick, that is the fault of the greedy slave masters and cotton barons who wanted to get more slaves to pick more cotton and make more money."

"Yes Sojourner, and in these states the former slave masters, who are not sharecroppers, can force the ex-slaves to vote for whoever the master wants, or else lose their food and shelter."

"There was a law that said the ex-slave was only worth a fraction or portion of a vote. This law was to prevent the slave masters and sharecroppers from controlling the vote," said Sojourner."

"I am aware of that reasoning Frederick, but here we have two people just freed from the toils of slavery who will be forced into hard labor here in this urban chaos."

Howard and Wyoming stepped forward and smiled hesitantly. Howard removed his hat and Wyoming seemed to nod respectfully at Frederick Douglass. The woman named Wyoming would begin her work as a domestic servant in the lavish opulent mansion. This time, the house servant chores were completed in a mansion, in the North amid, snow flurries and Northern ascents, instead of the perpetual heat of the sweltering Southern climate. However, the labor was arduous and rigorous with meager pay. Wyoming spoke to Gail, after she had been working in the mansion for several years. Gail appeared in the purple firelight, while Wyoming stoked the

flames with the bellows. The mysterious lavender light illuminated Gail in the shadows of the opulent New York Mansion as Wyoming spoke.

“Gail, this mansion ain’t that much different from the plantation house. It’s fancy in all, but just the same. The scrubbing ain’t no easier. In fact, it take a lot more to get used to scrubbing in the cold air of this North climate. I bring the meal trays to the lady of the house in bed. I take care of the children and fetch the water, breaking my back each day,” said Wyoming as she talked about her new life. Gail asked some questions wondering how things had changed for the better.

“Don’t you get paid Wyoming?”

“Yes Gail, I gets paid some fa my labor, but not so much as they’re Irish maid.”

“Really Wyoming, you should be paid equally for your work.”

“I rightly agree Gail, but the mister and misses that own this here mansion do not reckon to pay me my due.”

“You should be properly compensated for your hard work Wyoming. I will see to it that you are.”

“Thank you kindly Gail, y’all has been so kind for all of these years writing to me about my well-being. I learned to read your letters. Me and Howard been getting along just dandy.”

“You told me that Howard was working in the factory here in New York.”

“Yes ‘sum Gail, he been working and getting his lesser pay just like the other freed slaves. They reckon, some small pay, to someone who ain’t never had none at all, is well enough. So, we just leave well enough be.”

“Yes, Wyoming, the war has been over now, but we are still fighting for equality.”

# “Sojourner Truth Speaks of Freedom and Love”

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The war had ended on the battlefields of America, but the fight against the deadly coughing sickness still raged on! The land was laden with plague, even after the nation had been declared united as both North and South. The sun rose over the horizon of one country called the United States. However, the lethal lung illness divided the land of the living from the land of the dead. The storm clouds were heavy-laden with the raining burden of bloodshed. When it rained, the raindrops were like trickles of blood flowing profusely from the heart of hatred and war. The war had ended! The clouds had parted to reveal the piercing rays of the sun, lighting the path to peace. The air stirred with the embers of hope. The flames of change blazed with fervor. The taste of victory lingered on the tongue as sweet as honey. The touch and feel of freedom was as bitter-sweet as a sting of a honey bee. The freed slaves were thrust into liberty and poverty.

**If happiness is to laughter as sadness is to tears, is fighting akin to courage as running away is to fear? Pain is to the wounded as pleasure is to the healed. Any emotion is real enough to feel. Men died, and women cried over the bloody battlefield. Failure is to losing as success is to winning. Anything worth fighting for is worth defending. Don't kill the messenger because of the message she is sending. The tattered flag is what the nation is mending. Strong men will be shattered, and broken if they are opposed to changing and bending.**

**Gunfire burned across the hot summer land. He's got the whole world in his hand. He lifted up a dying man. Fire is to heat as ice is too cold. A child is too young as grandfather is too old. War is like hell, but no one can un-ring a bell. Getting up takes more effort to mend the mistake when you fell. You can't live without water, and hope is the well.**

**The slaves ran away from the warm South, to go to the cold North to fight. Is the bark of the war worse than its bite? The dogwood tree has deep roots that will not die. Cutting down the tree for the firewood would not be a lie. The war cut deep wounds. Women and children cried. The family tree of slavery spreads its branches toward freedom. Free and dumb, not knowing what to do or how to speak. If the willow tree breaks its branches, does it not ever weep? War is sowing the seeds that we reap. Into the ground blood will seep, flowing like a deadly creek. The trees planted with evil need more than one drop to leak. The black crows cry louder than a peep. Strong tree roots are never weak. The leaves search for the sunlight. They do not cease to seek. When the wind humbles the branches, they bend because they are meek. The spirt is willing but the flesh is weak.**

Wyoming and Howard had been in New York City for many years now, since the war had ended. Howard and Wyoming had confided in each other in their times of despair. As they spoke to each other, they talked about their lives of servitude and inequality. The plague of coughing sickness was ravaging the land and sea taking the world by storm.

“Wyoming, this lung illness is making the lady of the house worry about her children.”

“Yes, Howard I heard the little daughter choking with the cough this morning. If that plague sets in her chest that little lady might not make it through the night.”

“Wyoming, my wife you spend all your time tending to some other woman’s child, so much that you don’t have time to take care of your own children.”

“Now Howard, I don’t be neglecting my own children. I just ain’t got enough time in my day to tend to my children, and do right by the lady of the house, and take care of all of the chores.”

“Wyoming, we work as hard, here in New York City, as we did down South on the plantation. Just because we getting some pay—don’t mean that this is the true way to live a free life.”

“Howard, we have to earn our living and pay our way, just like the other folks living here in New York. They is working as hard as us.



Unless they is rich and got servants, which most of them ain't. So ain't no use complaining."

"My darling Wyoming, I'm complaining with the last breath I have in my weary body. They is breaking my back in the factory every day. I is doing twice the amount of work as them other fellas."

"Working so dang hard can make a man sick and weak. Howard, take time to catch your breath, before you catch that cough. If you get caught taking some Yankee's place at work, the mean spirit of these here Northern bosses will catch up with you! Them factory managers might make you regret we came to New York."

"Wyoming, I do try and keeps myself away from them other factory workers that be coughing so hard, but that factory is so cramped full of folks, I can barely move."

"They be coughing on you Howard. They gonna make you sick!"

"Wyoming, we just gonna have to take that chance, roll them dice. Might get sick... not the same as will get sick."

The husband and wife embraced with hope in their hearts. There was a rattling cough that echoed down the ornately carved wood halls of the mansion. This is the wealthy house where Wyoming and Howard cared for a Northern family. That cough was as deadly as the rattle of a rattlesnake. The sickness was the bane and vinum that seethed in their veins slowly poisoning them to death. The youngest child of the family had taken ill. The woman of the house was worried to no end. She sat beside the bed trying to cure her child of the coughing illness that had choked the necks of the nation. Wyoming was working and paid to care for someone else's child, when she did not have her own children. There was a surreptitious sort of agony that the mother felt. She was aching when her child was ailing. Wyoming spoke, feeling bad for the wealthy woman of the house.

"Ma'am, I see he ain't getting no better. He been coughing and gasping for days."

"Yes, Wyoming, but the medicine man said that he was going to improve."

"Ma'am, but he ain't improve in several days. He only getting weaker."

"No, Wyoming, I think the clouds will part after the storm, and the sky will clear."

“I think there is a light at the end of the tunnel that will lead him to pass on ma’am.”

“Wyoming don’t even whisper that. It will become like a prayer and the spirits will hear.”

“So be it ma’am. I see too many sick children like him. Many don’t pull through.”

“Wyoming, quiet. I think his eyes just shut, and he stopped coughing.”

Wyoming held her hand, not too far from the child’s mouth, and tried to feel the warmth of his hand. The child was not breathing, and starting to turn cold. The warmth of living breath had left the son’s body. The child had indeed passed on. The son had died while Wyoming and the mother had just stood over his death bed. The anguish consumed her like blazing fire of pain and sorrow. The light had slipped away from behind the clouds. The son would not rise again. There would be no more light beaming from her only son. The mother wept filled with hopelessness and sadness. The melancholy was like a giant wave on a stormy sea that was drowning her in tears. The mother would cry for her dead son for months. They buried the young boy. When he died it seemed that hope had died with him. His mother had hope that her son would carry on the family legacy of running the factory and caring for the estate. Now the couple was left without an heir. The factory had made cannons during the war. Now that the war was over the wealthy Northern family would have to change gears and start anew.

The freed slaves were migrating from the plantations that were falling apart as decrepit remains of a fallen empire. The decimated ruins of the South were abandoned to find work and freedom in the North. The freed slaves were seen walking down old Southern dirt roads headed to cities like New York and Chicago. The blustery blizzards of the urban northern cities will be uncharted land for the freed slave accustomed to the warm weather. Freed men would be appointed to high positions in the new post-war reconstruction South, and given representation in congress. The newly freed slaves were now given voting rights. Wyoming and Howard had family members trying to traverse the long trek up North to join them.

Howard spoke to Wyoming as they waited for their Howard's sister Mary to arrive. "Mary's coming with all her children. They gonna find a place in the servants' quarters here, said Wyoming." She was speaking with such optimism and hope. The servants' quarters were in the attic of the grand mansion on one of the most prominent and affluent streets in New York. Frederick Douglass would be speaking at the house to welcome a group of over twenty freed slaves, who had come to work in the factory.

The mansion was the home of the factory owner, who was also a prominent abolitionist. He was an advocate and proponent for freeing the slaves. Soon those ex-slaves were ready to work in one of his factories in New York City. There were rows of chairs placed in front of a marble podium that was made of intricately carved wood. The audience would soon take their seat of power like thrones. They would sit before a man who used to be a slave in the American South. The gathering of people was an ecclesia of ant-slave supporters had gathered like a church congregation to hear Frederick Douglass speak. He was known as a great orator. He was renowned for his speeches all across the North. Speakers like Frederick Douglass spearheaded the initiative to abolish slavery. Frederick Douglass began his very informative and formal speech.

"Now a new threat was settling into the rubble of the war-torn South. There are new laws that talked about segregation, said Frederick Douglass." He stood before the audience gathered in the mansion adorned in a simple tailored long coat befitting the gentlemen of his era. His white high collar shirt peaked from beneath his coat. His tie was fastened around his neck, instead of the noose that a brutal southern lynch mob would have fastened to him. However, Frederick Douglass was beyond the reach of such maliciousness. He was now in the company of friends. The people who had gathered there were proponents of equal rights and the progress of the freed slaves. His full head of gray hair had hints of silver, sparsely scattered amongst the wooly dark hair, showing his advanced age.

Frederick Douglass spoke as a wise elder statesman. "All public places would be segregated as part of the Jim Crow laws that were now being enforced and mandated throughout the former

Confederate states. In other words, the Confederacy was still acting as if they could make their own laws independent from the federal government, said Frederick Douglass.” The members of the audience gasped in disapproval of the laws. They were astounded that such laws could be enforced in a united country. “The supreme court has upheld these laws with the court case. The end result was the concept of, ‘separate but equal,’ public facilities for former slaves. I think that this law should be overturned in the concept of freedom, said Frederick Douglass.” He seemed upset when he said, “How can we allow such a law only in Confederate states, or in any state? The war was won, the Confederacy was dismantled. Robert E. Lee signed the treaty at Appomattox courthouse. Therefore, the Confederate states should acquiesce and agree to the same laws as the rest of the country, said Frederick Douglass.” He looked forward into the audience with a piercing stare. His large dark-brown eyes and thick brutish eyebrows glanced across the gathering of people with an intense focus.

The audience applauded politely in agreement with the statement. Frederick Douglass smiled amiably at the audience. Then, his grim expression returned to his face as he continued to speak. “I see that the freedmen are coming to the North as a refuge away from the impoverished and beleaguered South that is still struggling to stand on its own two feet. The South is now in the infancy of a new era of injustice toward the freedman. The freed slaves are being forced to become sharecroppers. Many slaves remain on the same land where they were enslaved because of lack of opportunity. Now the former slaves are still picking cotton in the fields because of lack of employment. There are no other forms of work. The slave has remained in economic slavery, although the law has declared them free, said Frederick.” He shook his head in disappointment, as he spoke about the plight of the freed slaves.

Frederick continued to inform the audience. He spoke with great purpose in his voice. “Many of the sharecroppers do not get any monetary payment for their ceaseless labor. The freed slaves get some form of credit to spend in a general store that is the plantation owners control. Although the former slaves can come and go as they please, they are subjugated to the rules and regulation of the

landowners who control the plantations that they still live on. The proverbial title of freed slave is in name only, for many of these ex-slaves have made their mark as servants to the very slave owners who they fought to be freed from, said Frederick. He took a deep breath and tried to continue his speech with concealed fervor in his voice.

“The freedman should be able to exert economic freedom from his former slave masters! Economic freedom would begin with the end of these reprehensible restrictive laws. The hard-fought Civil War was won to grant the freedom of the enslaved. Now the newly freed have no choice but to go right back to the very masters who had so egregiously mistreated them, said Frederick.” He now was becoming hot under the collar, as he adjusted his tie. Gail and Williamson drifted into the room and stood at the very back of the crowd. There was no purple light glowing from the fireplace in the mansion. Therefore, Gail and Williamson would be seemingly invisible to the people gathered in the drawing room.

Now Frederick would talk about a subject matter that seem to be in tandem with the idea of civil right. The subject of women’s suffrage. “Women have long wanted to be considered equal partners in the politics as well as matters of the home. Women and men are joined in marriage. By law, the wife shares all that her husband possesses. If a man dies, his wife can become the head of the household. In the house of representatives, if a man dies, his wife can retain his seat in congress and become the incumbent in his place. Women has ruled the thrones of Europe all throughout history. Powerful wives guide their husbands’ decisions. For it is always said that behind every powerful man, is a woman, said Frederick.” He was nodding his head as he spoke with certainty. Many of the audience members were in agreement with him. The affluent women in the audience seemed to look upon Frederick kindly. Now these wealthy wives of powerful men would not see Frederick as a threat to polite society. These strong women would now see him as an ally. He continued to speak in favor of women.

“Women’s suffrage is an important symbol of equality in our society. Women should be allowed to vote in the elections. The vote of a woman should be given the same weight and respect as the

vote of a man. How can we call ourselves a free democratic nation if women are silenced? Women are people and should be granted full personhood. Recognition of a woman's political opinion should be acknowledged and counted alongside men as equals. Yes, women are smaller and are called the weaker sex. However, when called upon to give birth to a child, women are the givers of life. Women rear a child and teach him in the way that he should go, as the scriptures say. Women are the first teachers of their sons! Wives are domestic partners of their husbands. If wives are giving advice to their husbands about politics, then why not give their advice officially in the voting booth? Women have voices and ideas that cannot be silenced," said Frederick Douglass. He spoke strongly, though he knew that there would be some male adversary in the audience that would disagree with his stern statement.

"Women have been complaining about their mistreatment at their Women's Rights meetings. They will even have discussions about making their own constitution, just like the founding fathers of this nation have done. Women have come to me to act as their advocate to proclaim the declaration of rights. They come to me saying that the freedmen are getting more respect from the lawmakers than their own wives. The freedmen were considered a fraction of a man for voting purposes, while women were not considered at all," said Frederick. Gail looked over at Williamson standing beside her. She was wondered if he was an ally for Women's Rights, or if he was opposed to Women's Rights. Williamson seemed to have a perplexed expression on his face as he aimlessly listened to Frederick Douglass speak.

"Women want to be considered as political candidates and voters in this new era of freedom. Women's Rights will no longer be an afterthought, when considering Civil Rights, said Frederick Douglass." He stepped down from the podium, and was greeted with polite applause at the end of his speech. Gail looked over at Williamson. She realized that she wanted to spend the rest of her afterlife with him. If they had lived through the events at Gettysburg, would Gail have married Williamson? She looked over at him with her eyes and with her ghostly heart. She wanted to be with him more

than her words could express. She spoke to him wondering if he felt the same way.

“Williamson, do you agree with Frederick Douglass when he spoke about women?”

“What do you mean Gail, about the Women’s Rights?”

“Yes, about the women suffrage and voting rights. Should women have political opinions.”

“I don’t see why not! I reckon women always have, and always will regardless, Gail.”

“Oh good, you are a supporter of Women’s Rights and female empowerment, Williamson!”

“Well Gail, if we fought this Civil War for rights, why not Civil Rights and Women’s Rights too.”

“Good Williamson, because I have an idea to promote Women’s Rights.”

“What would that be, Gail? I’m eager to find out what ideas you have toward progress.”

Gail spoke about some of the covert information she had gathered spying on military men. She had heard conversations about the construction of monuments. A white obelisk would be placed in town in Massachusetts to honor the fallen young soldiers, in 1866.

“Williamson, I have heard that a time capsule was being buried beneath monument in Massachusetts. The monument was to remember two young soldiers who died defending Lincoln during the war. Their names were Whitney and Ladd. Soon the Confederates will want to build their own statues to honor their fallen soldiers also, said Gail.”

Gail had been hiding in shadowy alcoves listening to clandestine information. The plantation masters and Confederate leaders had been planning to place a statue of Robert E. Lee as a monument in Richmond. More than thirty years would go by before the Robert E. Lee Statue would be made a reality in 1890. The plans for such a statue were whispered about after Union memorials started to be constructed in the early years after the Civil War. The South was too penniless and destroyed to make such statues soon after the war. One of the first Confederate memorials was dedicated at Indian Mound Cemetery in West Virginia (although West Virginia was a

Union state that broke away from Virginia). The Native American chiefs had made unlikely bedfellows with the Confederates during the war. Richmond was a stronghold city in Virginia at the forefront of Dixieland. Many years later statues would be built there also.

The commemorative obelisk in honor of the Union soldiers Ladd and Whitney would pay homage to military might and prestige. Likewise, the Confederate states still wanted to honor their leaders, even though they lost the war. Gail spoke about the time capsule that was going to be buried beneath the massive stone statue. "The Confederate leaders are still alive, even after their military defeat. They continue to believe the same ideology that brought the country to war even after the war had officially ended, said Gail." She was now following Frederik Douglas out of the mansion and toward his horse and carriage with Williamson by her side.

"I understand that some of these dogmatic ideas will be perpetuated and encouraged with the completion of this statue of a fallen hero. They will place the statue there as if the Confederacy had won the war, said Williamson." He spoke to Gail as if he truly believed that her thoughts on the subject were just as valid as his. He reached gently to hold her hand. Though he could not feel the warmth of her flesh in death, he knew that they were somehow having feelings for each other. "I think that the statue should not be placed there at all. I somehow, fear that there is nothing we can do to stop the statue erection from being made. Caesar had his statues also, as emblems of a conqueror and emperor. We will have to show the southern leaders that free speech will win in the end. The time capsule will be a good way to make a statement, said Gail." She watched the carriage carrying Frederick Douglass toward another mansion in New York City. The couple followed him.

Gail spoke in defiance of the emblems of the old South. "These symbols and monuments seem to feign the idea that the South won, somehow. The statue was made in France, a land that was considered democratic. The statue was made of bronze and set on a marble base to remain in a place of power. The constitution protects freedom of speech, but this is treachery against the United States and the federal government. If northern politicians see this statue as harmless, then I see no harm in tampering with the books that will go



inside that time capsule. I will place my own letter and account of slaves obtaining freedom in the time capsule when no one is looking. These letters will be a written history (an epistolary account) of what really happened. These letters and journals will show how wrong the Confederacy was to believe such evil things, said Gail.” She had been gathering letters from Union soldiers and escaped slaves to convince others to believe in abolition. Now these letters would be put to good use as weapons against the teachings of the Confederates! Someday the authorities will take that statue down, and my letters against slavery will be a remaining relic to document the past, said Gail.”

She has also prepared several bundles of cures for the coughing sickness that would be placed inside of the time capsules. “If the coughing sickness ever emerges, and starts to kill again, these instructions and bundle of curative herbs will be closed up inside the time capsule box buried beneath the statue, said Gail.” She was confident that her bundle of herbs, and the instructions on how to use them, would eradicate the coughing sickness in the present, and even for future generations that open the time capsule. “I will place the instructions on how to cure the coughing sickness in every time capsule beneath every monument that is constructed hoping that the capsule’s copper or lead box will be unearthed, said Gail.”

Many years later in 1886 the Statue of Liberty would be erected in New York Harbor at Ellis Island. The French artists would give New York City the Statue of Liberty. The Statue of Liberty would symbolize freedom and democracy for all of the immigrants that would enter the country at Ellis Island. The Statue of Liberty would also have a time capsule buried beneath it few people ever knew existed.

# “The Post-Civil War Reconstruction of the South: The Slaves Becomes the Master”

This time was a new era in the nation. The Civil War had ended, but civil unrest was still brewing in the streets of New York City and everywhere. The country was just recovering from the total devastation of war. Regardless of who won, both North and South would have to pick up the pieces. The people had to put together the shattered shards of sickness and continue to rebuild. The nation was like the fragments of a broken mirror or pane of glass. The proud people used to look in the mirror and see a shining silver vestige of prosperity, but now there was a soot laden face of a land in ruin ready to be resurrected. The broken splinters of a war-torn land were like a tree cut down, but with roots still living deep beneath the soil.

The war had ended and now the North was the firmly established seat of the government. The South was a war-ravaged crippled skeleton of what it once was in the antebellum period. The era of reconstruction would now begin. The South was staggering to try and recover from defeat. Now that the nation was declared united as one, the South would have to become an integral part of the United States reluctantly. The South had fought for independence and freedom from the North, but had lost.

The carpetbaggers and the scalawags had come to reclaim the South. The scalawags had jurisdiction and newly acquired authority as political figures. The carpetbaggers had come from the North to make business opportunities and profits from rebuilding the decimated southern states. The northern business men were opportunist that wanted to make money from putting back together the shattered pieces of the destroyed Confederacy. Instead of making allies with the proud Confederate state, they were trying to make strange bedfellows with the men that they had just humiliated in battle.

Williamson Blacksmith had decided to become a carpetbagger. However, he was a son of the South who was returning to his plantation. The former grandeur of the old farm estate had been annihilated by a post-Civil War economy. Williamson Blacksmith had been the rightful heir to a once thriving cotton plantation. His stomach seemed to drop to his knees when he caught sight of his former home that was once so opulent and splendid. The shrubs and trees that used to be around the mansion had been burned to ashes. The intricate topiaries had been toppled. The tea sets had been smashed like rubble and left to scatter to wind. The old South was gone with the wind, and a whirlwind of agony ached burning in the breeze! Williamson seemed to frown and grimace in the face of the rising sun. The sound of his voice was now more clarified like butter that had been melted in the Southern heat.

“Is that you old Ms. Jenny? I thought you had run off with all the other freed slaves?”

“Yes, sir Mr. Blacksmith, the other former slaves were gone down to them freed towns?”

“I have heard that those ex-slave camps were dangerous, treacherous enclaves of death.”

“Oh, yes sir, Mr. Blacksmith I won’t dare go to such a hovel to live.”

“You need not venture to such depravity. This here plantation, is your home until the grave!”

“Only, if I choose to stay sir, only if I wants to!”

“Well of course only if you choose to, old Ms. Jenny!”

“Well, sir, I do choose to, because ain’t no way I is going to live in no hole in the ground town!”

“Don’t you worry Ms. Jenny! You will be compensated for any labor.”

“Yes, sir Mr. Blacksmith. You know your pa and ma passed from the coughing sickness.”

“What? Speak your words slowly Ms. Jenny.”

“Your mother and father succumbed to that coughing sickness last night Williamson.”

“I knew it. I could feel a cringe of dread seething in my bones, writhing in my gut!”

“They in a better place sir. Williamson, your father and mother will suffer no more.”

Williamson dropped to his knees in eviscerating pain. He suddenly was overcome with grief. He sobbed relentlessly. His tears shimmered in the rays of cascading sunlight that wet his bruised cheeks. The plantation was in ruin. The fields of cotton stood tall with not one slave to harvest the crop. The purple light from Williamson’s lamp suddenly blew out, as a gust of wind rustled through the weeping willows. The purple light of the lamp had illuminated Williamson Blacksmith’s presence, so that Ms. Jenny could see him. When the furious wind of the old South extinguished the hurricane lamp, the image of Williamson’s purple violet nimbus evaporated like smoke.

Gail hovered down from the clouds still draped in her flowing lace and satin dress. Williamson was still adorned in his Civil War soldier regalia. He had left the plantation covertly under the cover of darkness. He had foreseen that the war was going to turn in favor of the North. He had been a treacherous turncoat, a traitor to his kinsmen clad in gray. Williams had made the brave decision. He had joined the winning team, but the hidden reason was clandestine, secretive. Williamson had long known that coughing sickness was going to be spread amongst the soldiers in the South. The sickness weakened the military and brought a swift end to the war. The South was now like a specter or ghost of its former self. Gail and Williamson were apparitions hovering above the grave of a fallen Confederate empire.

“Gail, I come to show you the tattered remains of what was once my home.”

“Did your father leave you this plantation?”

“Yes Gail. I was his only living heir.”

“Williamson, you were the son of a slave woman through incest and kept in secrecy.”

“Yes Gail, I already revealed to you that my mother was a quadroon slave.”

“Williamson, you said that you were supposed to be slain at birth, smothered in your crib.”

“Yes Gail, but that was not my fate. I was smuggled away to a safe place up North.”

“Now Williamson, you have returned to claim your birthright.”

“Gail, there is nothing left to claim, but ruin, and misery remains.”

Williamson embraced Gail as the fallen leaves of a mighty oak rustled in a gust of fiery southern wind. Then as swiftly as they had appeared at the plantation, they were gone. The couple was wrapped up in each other’s arms. A puff of enigmatic smoke hovering above the clouds. The two of them were in love together man and woman. Gail had wanted to comfort Williamson in her arms. The South had been afflicted with the coughing sickness worse than the North. Gail and Williamson had left the factory owners house in New York where Wyoming and Howard had stayed to recover from the war.

The overseers were the only inhabitants of the obliterated cotton plantation now. The overseers had been the poor and impoverished people who had been put in charge of the doing the dirty work for the plantation owners. The overseers were in the cotton fields trying to force labor from the cantankerous slaves. Now Williamson would return to a mansion that was the place of his birth. Williamson had not truly known the father who had denied him as a legitimate son. Williamson had not known the mother, who had labored all day, believing her child had died in the night. Now, Williamson stood before the large wooden makeshift crosses that marked his parent’s grave. On one side of the plantation was the meek remains of his mother who had died a slave. At the other end of the plantation was his father’s meager burial plot marked haphazardly with three stones. A tree trunk had been carved to signify the grave of the once mighty plantation master. Gail spoke to Williamson wondering how life would have been different if the South had won the Civil War.

“Williamson, my love, what if the South had won?”

“Then I would have returned with the letters sealed with my father’s signet ring Gail.”

“Oh, and that would have sealed the deal and made you a master instead of a slave?”

“Yes, Gail. Look in my eyes and see me here. I look like a master of this plantation.”

“So now, Williamson, will you resume the lordship and merciless greed of your father?”

“Gail, I will make a profit from these toppled plantation columns even as a specter!”

“You mean to rebuild this plantation even in death Williamson?”

“Men have greedy avarice and are opportunist. When tragedy strikes, men are treacherous.”

The southern sun set slowly sinking down into the horizon. The vibrant colors of the sunset reflected upon the pond on the plantation. Williamson’s biological father had been the master of the plantation and had willed him the estate. His father had bequeathed him the rights and ownership of the southern cotton farm and all of his slaves.

Now the only people left to work the land were the former slaves. The ex-slaves could find no place to welcome them into freedom. The impoverished overseers were also now unemployed. The overseers had stuck around scraping together odd job. They were picking cotton themselves by hand and processing the cotton bundles to ship from the dock. The ex-slaves were being given a hard time when it came time to pay them for their labor. Their job was the only trade that they knew, of course, the cotton industry. The large bundles of cotton were being processed for shipping. Each ex-slave and overseer was weighing the daily cotton harvest for sale at the docks.

Ms. Jenny the former house slave spoke in an ingratiating tone as she unloaded a large bundle of handpicked cotton onto the counter. “I got over 700 pounds of cotton picked today, said Ms. Jenny.” She slid the large cotton bundle off of her weary shoulders and onto the counter to be weighed.” The overseer glared at her and started to smile a sly grin. “Mrs. Dupont, you pick more cotton than most of these big strong men. Most of them are field slaves that been picking all of their lives. You’re a house servant, but you pick more than they did, said the overseer.” Mrs. Dupont grinned in a gradual smile as she replied. “I got a family of ten to feed at home and y’all give me a bit of change per pound of cotton. I need my money,” said Ms. Jenny.

The overseer had been sometimes cruel when he was in the fields with his slaves. He would sit atop a large stallion and glare down on the slaves with a rifle in his lap. If anyone stepped out of line, or was not picking as much cotton as he thought they should, the overseer would fire a rifle shot up into the air. Then the overseer would point the barrel of the gun at the slow-picking slave as a warning. This was the overseer who would whip the runaway slaves with a cat-and-nine-tails if they were captured.

Night fell upon the plantation. A meeting had taken place in the master's former office. The fire was burning bright in the large carved wood and marble fireplace. Above the mantle a massive portrait of the deceased master, Mr. Blacksmith, hung above the roaring purple fire. Gail was standing beside the fireplace stoking the purple flames with a bellows. She cast handfuls of magnesium powder and other minerals into the flames to make the golden fire turn to a passionate purple corona. Now Williamson and Gail could be seen in the world of the living, even though they were both ghosts. Williamson appeared in his proud military uniform. There was only one problem, he was wearing a Union uniform and not a Confederate one. Gail got an idea as she spoke to Williamson before he was going to join the meeting that was assembled in the drawing room of the old plantation.

"Gail, go into the meeting. Here is the letter with my seal on it to be given to their leader."

"Oh, Willy, I have an idea. I will go on your behalf and tell them you are ill with the cough."

"Gail, tell them that I am recovering from the coughing sickness and need rest."

Gail entered the meeting and handed the letter with Williamson's signature, sealed with his signet ring bearing the crest of his family. This was the same ring that his father had worn to prove his authenticity and identity. Gail addressed the room of southern gentlemen with the letters and the purple aura surrounding her like a halo.

"Gentlemen, your leader had just read the letters, said Gail"

"Shall I call you Gail? These documents are official! Where is the man of the household?"

“Sir, this plantation is now a sharecroppers haven for former slaves.”

“Yes, Gail I see that here in the papers written in the owners handwriting.”

“The owner is deceased and this land was willed to his only living heir, Williamson.”

“I also see here that the overseer was mentioned. Gail, will he stay here also?”

“Yes, the will said that the overseer shall have refuge here in nowhere else.”

“Gail, this document will allow the former overseers to stay on this plantation?”

“That is what the will and testament states. The overseers shall not be abandoned.”

The meeting adjourned. The room full of old plantation masters slowly emptied out. Gail was left standing in front of the fireplace. The purple flames glowed an eerie resonance around her silhouette. Then as soon as all of the plantation owners had ridden away in their carriages, Williamson emerged from the back room where the office was. He seemed to have been listening the whole time. Williamson spoke without a grudge for the overseers.

“The overseers would be paid as much as anyone else if they pick as much cotton, Gail.”

“What if they don’t Williamson. They seem to have the same attitude as the antebellum South.”

“Gail, the overseers can’t be run off the plantation. They won’t leave. They are homeless!”

“I see that many of the overseers’ meager homes were destroyed in the war.”

“I will have to allow them to stay on my land. Gail, we will tolerate the former overseers as much as we have to.”

The old masters of the South always feared that the physical prowess and strength of the slave would overpower the smaller weaker masters and overseers with their brute muscle. After all, the slaves were brought to America because of their agility and ability to do work in the hot sun. Capitalism and free market economy exemplified the epidemic of freedom in the United States. Selling a



product and making the most profit was the method and operation of slavery. Free labor meant more profit! Free labor from swiftly harvested cotton, tobacco, and sugar made masters out of men. Men were made wealthy, women were made maids, or they were married to greedy ungrateful men.

The carpetbaggers had come down from the North to rebuild the South. The business men from the North were looking to take advantage of the Southerners after their businesses had been destroyed. The war had left an enormous ruin where wealth had once been. A deluge of Northern opportunists migrated South to make new banks, stores, and industry. A post-war effect happened after the treaty was signed at Appomattox courthouse. Torrents of ex-slaves traveled North flooding northern cities. The ex-slaves were in search of paid labor and freedom. The ex-slaves wanted the opportunity to make their own businesses and thriving communities.

Meanwhile in the South the ex-masters were in fear of the ex-slaves. The former slaves were the majority in many counties in South Carolina and other southern states. The slaves mastered had wanted to have as many slaves as possible to pick as much cotton as they could. This plan of having more slaves than masters, seemed to be to the detriment of the ex-masters. Now, the ex-slaves outnumbered the masters and would soon have voting rights. The slaves would be counted as a fraction of the vote instead of one whole vote. This concept was devised to prevent ex-slaves from voting independently for their own elected officials. Also, the ex-masters were still controlling the vote of the former slaves. Ex-slaves were now sharecroppers, and the landowners had been plantation owners. These landowners could still control the voting preferences of the poor sharecroppers.

This was the new era of reconstruction. Most of the new businesses were now firmly under the control of the northern businessmen. Republicans were authoritative and controlling the politics of the government. Lincoln was still in office at the advent of the reconstruction era. There were many bitter and disillusioned faction of rebels still seething over losing the war. Men like John Wilks Booth were wounded in the war. The ex-Confederates were licking their titular wounds waiting for a moment to bite. Like a

chained mad dog, John Wilks Booth had been waiting to strike his lethal final attack!

The fearful ex-masters wanted to retain their political power as the majority voters. They also wanted to wield their authority as landowners. The beginning of restrictive laws would sweep the South. The Jim Crow laws, including segregation would soon separate the trepidation of ex-masters from their agitated ex-slaves. The moon was rising high just to light the sky. Just to be the twinkle in an angry man's eye. The torches were burning bright into the night. The flickering amber light illuminated the empty cotton fields as the weary head of the ex-slaves rested on cotton pillowcases. This was a meeting of men who wanted to confine the former slaves and restrict the freedom of the recently freed men and women.

An older man dressed in tattered old silk suit stood before a field of landowners. His voice reverberated across the dark cotton fields into the night. "We have to stop these rebel former slaves from taking over, said the gray-haired elder statesman." The other former masters were stirring in the crowd gathered in the darkness. The leader of the crowd stood before them as Williamson emerged from the bright haze of a purple torch. Somehow, Williamson Blacksmith had found a way to drape himself in a plain black cloak to cover up the Union uniform that he was buried in. Williamson spoke as a landowner. "The new laws that you are making will only create chaos and upheaval in the South," said Williamson.

The crowd jeered and stirred. The air ignited with aggravated voices in defiance. "Williamson, you would allow the rebel slaves to rule the South in the majority and make all of the laws? Soon the masters will turn into the slaves. Do you want rich rebel slaves taking our land and making us the poor minority in the South? Williamson, these rebel slaves must be stopped, said the ex-master." Williamson was still mounted on his horse covered in a regal black silk cloak. Williamson donned the regalia of a wealthy landowner who was still firmly in power as he spoke. "The landowners can retain their ownership with cooperation with the federal government. The Northern federal laws can dictate laws to the Southern landowners. They can confiscate the plantations if the taxes are not paid. Plantation owners will have to agree and acquiesce to the rule of the

North. Lincoln will not be merciless. President Lincoln will allow the South to rebuild and flourish once more, said Williamson.

As he held the reins of his steed, the masters filled with greed. Cotton was still king. All the ex-masters wanted the brass ring. They rode away on their stallions. Cotton was like the medallion, a valuable treasure. The purple haze dissipated. Williamson vanished with the purple light corona. The crowd dwindled. The ex-masters returned to their dilapidated plantation mansions. There were peaceful intentions where violent, malicious desires once lingered.

The leader of the crowd was now inside his disheveled and bedraggled plantation as he spoke. "This Lincoln will have to pay for the way he has made the South suffer. He is still sitting up there in Washington like a victorious ruler. I want him to suffer just much as we have here in the South, said the leader of the rebellious faction." He was now sitting in front of a roaring fire. Gail was perched like an eve dropping pigeon beside the mantle. Gail could not be seen because the purple fire was not glowing in the fireplace.

He spoke to his fellow rebel rogue. They were rabblers. The rebel leader took a swig of whiskey from a silver canteen and swallowed hard before he spoke. "I want Lincoln to hurt! I want him to feel the pain of all of the slain Confederate soldiers who have laid down their lives on the field of battle, said the advisor." He tossed his head back and imbibed another gulp of hard liquor as he emoted in slurred speech. "He will grovel at the feet of the Confederacy. Dixie land will see him bow to his knees and lie in his grave. He lied to us! He pretended he was the savior of the country by freeing the heathen slaves, said the rogue leader of a Confederate stronghold."

The rebel leader took another drink. He was now staggering around in front of the fire barely able to stand. He was inebriated, falling down drunk. **His devilish laugh rattled through the air. He was full of malice and despair. He swung his fist at phantom enemies who weren't there. He spoke without compassion, but with passionate care about all the intolerance, regret and spite that he was aware. He was filled with more revenge than a heart could bear. His words were like warriors fighting a war of hate. His voice was a barking mad dog at hell's gate. He wanted to exact his retribution and he could no longer wait. "Lincoln will**

**die for the blood of the men who sacrificed. A life for a life. An eye for an eye. I will see him die. The wives of the fallen Confederated will no longer cry.”**

## “The Stormy Gail & The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln”

Williamson and Gail were wrapped in each other's arms as they drifted up into the clouds. They vanished into the night. Soon the couple arrived in Washington District of Columbia. The full moon loomed overhead implying impending dread. Gail had been trying to get in contact with Mary Todd Lincoln, the first lady and wife of Abraham Lincoln. The nurse that helped tend to Abraham Lincoln had to be warned about the angry men who are planning to make an attempt to assassinate the president. Soon the couple had arrived at the White House and hovered into the window of servant's quarters. A member of the Ladies of Nightingale Society was waiting by the fire for their arrival.

She spoke as she cast powder into the fire. She made a purple light that was a corona around her. “I am one of the nurses that stays at the White House to care for the first family. I had noticed that son of president Lincoln had the symptoms and tell-tale signs of the coughing sickness. Lincoln's son died here at the White House. Now I fear that Lincoln is suffering from the coughing sickness,” said the nursemaid. The fireplace was a blaze with purple haze as Gail appeared to the nursemaid. Gail spoke still adorned in her satin and lace dress as the purple mist illuminated her. “I have just come from a meeting in the South, where many of us Women of the Nightingale Society have found a cure for this coughing sickness. I have some herbs and bark mixtures that will heal the president and his wife, said Gail.” She gave the small bundle of herbs and bark to the nursemaid as they stood beside the hearth. “I have also been privy to some information about mad men who want to harm the president. Some of the southern soldiers are enraged about losing the war. They want Lincoln's blood to spill on the altar of sacrifice, said Gail Nightingale. The nursemaid cringed and cast more magnesium powder into the fire. The room was filled with violent violet light.

The nursemaid took the bundle of curative herbs and clinched it close to her heart. “I will make a tea with these items in the bundle. I

will follow the instructions detailed in this written note that was inside the bundle of herbs, said the nursemaid. Gail clutched the hand of the nursemaid to warn her of a sinister plot. "You have to keep Abraham Lincoln from going to public places unnecessarily. I dread the day that we hear that Lincoln is dead! The coughing sickness will spread in large crowds where audiences meet. Lincoln might meet his end if he dares to venture to crowded places in close quarters with strangers, said Gail." Her voice quivered a bit, like a leaf caught in a restless stormy wind.

The president's wife, Mary Ann Todd Lincoln, was now in her rocking chair trying to knit a scarf. Now, the nursemaid approached. The nursemaid spoke in somber tones. "Mrs. Lincoln, I have heard news and warnings from a trusted source. There are men waiting in our midst to do harm to president Lincoln! Also, I have some tea for you to drink that is a bit different from your usual blend of bedtime tea Mrs. Lincoln. I have some tea that will protect you against the coughing sickness that has killed so many, said the nursemaid." She had prepared the tea according to the instructions. Now the nursemaid was pouring the tea slowly into the delicate ornate teacup for Mrs. Lincoln. Mary Lincoln gradually sipped the tea in curiosity. "Have allies and spies divulged this information to you? Have the same people given you the tea recipe that warned you about Abraham? This tea is very soothing, and I feel better already. Perhaps I will share the tea with the president and tell him of this frightful premonition, said Mary Lincoln. Mrs. Lincoln sipped the tea and had several cups before she went to bed. "I will tell Abraham not to go to that play tomorrow night. I have heard that 'Our American Cousins' was a mediocre play anyhow. I think Abraham would be better off taking some time to rest at home, said Mrs. Lincoln.

The sound of a horses and a large carriage rumbled up the pathway to the White House. President Abraham Lincoln had arrived. Some of Lincoln's close military advisors and political members of the cabinet had accompanied him. One of his advisors spoke to Lincoln as the doors to the White House were opened for them both. "Abraham, I think you should attend that play, 'Our American Cousins.' Making public social appearances will bode well with voters and Washington socialites. The political society here in

Washington will be more hospitable toward you in a relaxed setting that is not so serious, said the advisor.”

Lincoln nodded and took off his big black top hat as he entered the oval office. “I think it would be a good idea for me to be seen socializing and taking in some culture. I have been trying to get Mary to go out to various places with me, but she had been feeling under the weather. She fears that the coughing sickness will get her. She fears she will succumb to it, like our dear dead son, said Lincoln.” The advisor sat down before the large carved wooden desk in the oval office. Mary Lincoln emerged from the cold darkness to stoke the fire for her husband. Mrs. Lincoln spoke as she tightened her night gown around her neck. “Abe, I think you should stay home! Do not attend that play tomorrow. You have been coughing quite a bit recently. That coughing sickness has been spreading like wildfire through Washington. I have been knitting you an extra scarf to wear to bed. I also have some tea that may heal your throat, said Mary Lincoln.” Mrs. Lincoln walked in front of the fireplace and seemed startled and embarrassed that one of Lincoln’s advisors was in the oval office while she was so scantily clad in her night gown and robe. “I felt the urgency and the urge to tell you to stay home tomorrow evening. I, myself, will not be with you to see the play. I feel that some bed rest would help me finally get rid of this coughing sickness that I feel may overtake me and you both, said Mrs. Lincoln.

Lincoln spoke as he furrowed his brow with consternation. “I understand that you are concerned for my well-being. However, Mary, I must attend social functions to maintain the office of president. This is a strategic move to get public exposure, said Lincoln. Abraham was ripping open closed letters with an envelope opener that resembled a knife. Suddenly Mary Lincoln felt an awkward stabbing pain in her stomach. That feeling was ominous and foreboding fear! Lincoln continued his onery explanation for going to the play. Lincoln was disregarding his wife’s warning to stay home as he spoke. “Soon I will be campaigning for re-election. Trust me Mary, this is a political move to gain approval from my potential voters, said Lincoln.”

Mary Lincoln spoke with a stern voice. “If you do decide to attend that crowded theater, with all of those sickly patrons, I will note that

as a very foolhardy decision Abraham. I will not be with you! I feel that I will catch my death of cold if I did not stay warm in bed, said Mary." Mary Lincoln bundled up clinching her robe and nightgown tighter around her neck. She glanced at Abraham Lincoln over her shoulder one last time, as the first lady left the oval office in defiance.

That night Gail had been waiting in the oval office watching and listening to the conversation that Mary Lincoln had with president Abraham Lincoln. The fire had not been stoked with magnesium or potassium powder. Therefore, there was no purple mist in the oval office. Lincoln could not see Gail as she stood in the darkness. Gail would haunt libraries and hospitals that night all across Washington trying to contact the friends and advisors of Abraham Lincoln. If only one of them would warn him not to attend the play at the theater the following night!

The first library that Gail haunted was the Library of Congress. Gail hovered down the street carried with a frenzy of premonition. The leaves stirred in the trees. Gail glided by, as the large oaks and pine trunks stood watch like sentry soldiers. The library would hold many of the books written by the founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson. Fire had endangered the many stacks of antique books several times. Now Gail would enter a grand library in Washington with the corona glow of the purple hurricane lantern that she carried. Gail gusted into the library among the sacks of old books. These books would someday be included in the collections of the library of congress. She was illuminated with a nimbus of lilac light as she appeared to one of Lincoln's advisors. The advisor had been reading some of the works of Thomas Jefferson when Gail appeared to him. Gail spoke to Lincoln's advisor as she hovered in a translucent form beside him. "I have come to tell you, to warn president Lincoln. You have advised him wrong tonight. He has made a grave decision to attend that play tomorrow at the theater, said Gail Nightingale." Gail's voice quivered with emotion as she tried to prevent a terrible event. The purple light from the lantern flickered across the bookshelves in the library.

The advisor looked up from his diligent reading with a wide-eyed astonishment. He spoke in a confused sort of curiosity. "Who are you? I have never seen you around the library before. Are you a staff



member or the wife of one of the congressmen? You seem so vague and strange,” said the advisor. The advisor had removed his tailored overcoat and placed it on the back of the wooden chair. He was starting to have gray hair around his temples. His strong stalwart forehead was creased and furrowed with time as he questioned Gail. He was askance as he questioned Gail, doubting the source of her warning. He spoke, as he removed his reading spectacles. He stroked his beard. “How do you know about the intended actions of president Lincoln? You seem so concerned, said the advisor.” He turned around in his chair and looked over at Gail, glowing in the midst of the indigo light.

Gail stretched out her hand and walked toward the advisor as she spoke. “You mustn’t allow president Lincoln to attend the play tomorrow at the theater! Lincoln is in potential danger. The theater is a very precarious place to be during these times, very dangerous! Tell Abraham not to go, said Gail. Gail was now walking closer and closer toward the advisor with her hand outstretched and her fist clinched in fervor. She was holding the lantern emanating the bright violet light. “I will try to speak to the president myself if I have to. I have heard that some of his associates have already taken ill so much that they are at the hospital. I will go to the hospital and warn them to tell Lincoln not to go to that theater tomorrow evening. The play should be cancelled and everyone should stay inside, said Gail with a raised voice that almost trembled. She was shaking her fist in the air.

The advisor squinted at Gail as his wrinkled eyes revealed the crow’s-feet of a weathered face. There was wisdom in his eyes. The advisor had seen many years in Washington, but he seemed confused and frustrated as he spoke. “How are you privy to such covert information? President Lincoln seemed just fine and in satisfactory health the last time I saw him tonight, said the advisor. He pushed his chair away from the table filled with books and stood up. The sound of the wooden chair was creating friction against the hardwood floor making a characteristic scraping noise. The wood that the chair was made from was strong yet willing to be crafted into something useful. The advisor would feel useless and feeble unless he was being used to craft powerful men into strong stable fixtures in

Washington. The advisor wanted to be just like those old books that had stood the test of time. He wanted to be like the chair that was like a seat of power and knowledge as he spoke. "As advisor to the president, I will use my best judgement to help Lincoln make political decisions. I see no harm in him attending the play at the theater, and that is my final word. I will be attending the play myself to provide conversation and companionship to Abraham as his confidant and political advisor, said the advisor." He closed the book that he was so deeply entrenched in. He dug in his stubborn heels like an ox that would not budge. He would not be moved on his decision, or persuaded not to go to the theater. Gail glided down the hall after him as he stormed out of the room.

The horse and carriage that would carry the advisor back to his lavish abode in Washington arrived to take him to his house. The carriage driver was coughing a bit and cleared his throat as he commanded the dark horses to ride. The black horses that pulled the carriage down the somber streets of Washington seemed like horses of a funeral procession. The dark horses of the apocalypse seemed to ride like the book of Revelations. Gail had decided to jump inside the carriage that was following behind the advisor. The woman was already inside the carriage was one of the Women of the Nightingale Society. Gail had taken the carriage to the library for just such the event that she would have to chase the advisor and speak to him with another person.

The advisor's carriage roared down the dark midnight streets of Washington as if enraged. When the carriage arrived at his stately mansion, the horses seemed exhausted and disheveled. The advisor charged out of the carriage in upheaval, and marched sternly into the doors of his home. His butler shut the doors behind the advisor and deadbolted the lock. Gail could not have followed him any further without arousing suspicion. The midnight oil had been burning, and his wife was waiting for him in the drawing room. He spoke to her in astonishment. "Why have you stayed up so late tonight my dear wife? You usually have your evening tea of thyme and honey and are off to bed early, said the advisor." He flung off his ox blood color tailored coat, as the butler took his hat and coat to the coatroom to hang. Allowing president Lincoln to go to the play was like hanging

him with a noose by the neck until death. However, the advisor had no idea that he was delivering Abraham Lincoln to his executioner.

The wife of the advisor spoke to her husband with a stoic expression on her face. Her countenance seemed expressionless as she spoke. "I just finished speaking with Mary Lincoln tonight. She has been speaking with her relatives about spending the night away from the White House. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln have been quarreling tonight about whether or not to go the play tomorrow night. I have advised her not to go because of some foreboding messages that we have been hearing about around town, said the wife of the advisor."

She was wearing her mobcap befitting a matronly woman of married status and her long nightgown. She grabbed her husband's hand, and looked him dead in the eye. Her eyes were a clear sparkling hue of pale blue, and his were of ashen gray just like his silver-gray beard. She wanted to give her husband good advice as she spoke. "Dear, everyone in town knows that Lincoln will be at that play tomorrow evening, even his enemies. They are like uncaged mad dogs ready to exact a lethal bite. I fear for Lincoln's life, said the advisor's wife."

The advisor had been preparing for bed. His wife had stopped him to talk to him before he got underneath the covers. "My darling husband. We hardly ever argue or disagree about anything. I am not trying to be contrary, but I insist that you not attend the play tomorrow night, said the advisor's wife." She turned toward her husband in bed and held tight his arm. She nestled her head into his shoulder and nudged her head against his. As they held each other cuddling in bed, the advisor was lulled to sleep. Before he drifted off, he uttered some phrases as a lucid dream when he spoke. "Alright, dear wife. I won't attend the play and I will warn president Lincoln to stay home with his disgruntled wife instead, said the advisor." He tossed and turned in bed, as he was now in the spoon position with his wife. He emoted a few more words under his breath before he lost consciousness. "I will stay home and tell Abraham to stay home as well. I just think it's an absurd idea that someone would be so bold and brutal to make an attempt on president Lincoln's life in front of a whole audience of witnesses. It is hiding in plain sight. This

idea is as brazen and suicidal as any assassin would dare. Go to sleep dear wife have no fear. Nothing will take place there, not even that coughing sickness, said the advisor.” He was confident and optimistic that he would finally be validated by giving good advice to president Lincoln.

He spoke in hushed tones as he was drifting off to sleep. “Luck had seemed to follow Abraham Lincoln all of his life. Good tidings had won the war in favor of Lincoln. Why would some rogue madman succeed in destroying a chosen leader by divine right? A guardian angel has looked over Lincoln, and will continue to let good will be done, said the advisor.” He patted the hand of his wife as he closed his eyes to finally fall asleep.

Gail was denied entrance into the home of the president Lincoln’s advisor when the butler shut the door promptly. Now Gail would have to go to the hospital where a recovering general would be wounded in his sick bed. He had gotten the coughing sickness, while he was recovering from battlefield injuries. The Ladd and Whitney monument was going to be dedicated soon. It was a monument to honor two young soldiers who died defending the Union in the Civil War battles in Massachusetts. Gail was going to find a Union general. He was still trying to recover from the war when he caught the coughing sickness. The halls of the Washington D.C. hospitals and libraries would now be haunted with the ghost of Gail Nightingale! As she appeared to the general, she was holding a lantern that burned with a purple flame.

The halls of the Washington hospital were glowing with an eerie purple light as Gail hovered into the room where the general was laying in his sickbed. The curtains suddenly seemed to blow in the wind, as Gail began to come closer to the general. He suddenly opened his eyes. He was startled to see a woman in a satin and lace dress standing beside his bed. Gail spoke with the tormented voice that was like wind in a storm. “You were a friend of president Lincoln. He has been advised to go to a play tonight. General, you have to warn him against this foolhardy action. Going to this play would be the worst military strategy of his career, said Gail.”

Gail Nightingale spoke to the general to encourage him to give advice to the president Abraham Lincoln. The general sat up in bed.

He cringed and groaned as he struggled to move in his hospital bed. He spoke with a vague sort of confusion engrained in his expression. He was an older man with some silver hair intertwined in his mustache. "Who are you. Am I seeing things that aren't there? You are a beautiful delusion of my weary eyes. I am delirious with fever," said the general.

The sickly elder gentlemen forced himself to turn over in bed while he spoke. "I don't see any harm in Abraham going to the theater. There is no military strategy involved," said the general." Gail grabbed his shoulder and tried to convince him. "That's not true. President Lincoln is exposing himself to enemy fire! Not only is he in danger of catching the coughing sickness, but he is also vulnerable for an assassin to take aim at him," said Gail." Gail spoke contrary to popular belief, that the Civil War had ended. "The Confederate rebels want to get revenge on Lincoln, retribution for their defeat. They will not totally concede. They want Lincoln to bleed and fall off his feet. Words are like wood to the fire, they only feed its heat! You have to stop Lincoln from attending the play tonight," said Gail.

The general had a sudden epiphany (an idea that turned on a light in his mind). He suddenly understood what he should do. The general flung the covers from his bed and stood firmly on his own two feet. He spoke, exclaiming his intended actions to the nurse who had just entered the room. "I will go to the White House and intercede. I will attempt to stop Lincoln from going to the theater, if it is the last thing I do while I am alive on this earth! You're right young lady, Abraham is in grave danger," said the general." He pushed the nurse out of the way, and hurried down the hall of the Washington hospital toward his horse and covered carriage. The wind was blustery and cruel as it whipped across his face like a horse whip. He jumped into the carriage, as Gail followed behind him. The general spoke to the carriage driver. His voice ruptured with emotion. He ordered the carriage driver to go as fast as he could to the White House .

The general spoke to Gail as he bundled his coat closer to his neck in the cold night air. "What did you say your name was young lady? You are not the first person to warn me to stop Lincoln from attending the play tonight. His wife Mary Ann also asked me to warn

him. I have been suffering with the coughing sickness, but I am not contagious anymore. I want to stop Lincoln's carriage from leaving the White House . We will block his carriage with mine. I will yell to him, saying that he mustn't attend the play tonight. I had a bad dream about Abraham. His wife also had the same nightmare about seeing Abraham Lincoln in his casket in the White House. Mary Ann Lincoln told me about her dream! Then I dreamed the very same awful premonition. Two or three warning cannot be wrong, said the general." The sky was beginning to get dark. The scarlet and crimson colors of sunset were bleeding across the sky like a wounded soldier.

The general spoke about his memories of protecting Lincoln during the war. "I recall the two lads that marched bravely into battle to prevent Lincoln from being exposed as a target in battle. One teenage boy was named Whitney and the other was named Ladd. They were part of the Massachusetts militia. They were some of the first young soldiers to die in the Civil War. His last name was Whitney. He was a brave marching boy with his rifle ready to die for his state and for his nation. Whitney wanted to protect president Lincoln and prevent the possible invasion of the northern states. Whitney used his body as a shield. He took the bullet and stepped in front of the enemy fire to save the life of Lincoln! Ladd was the last name of the other boy who died in battle, said the general."

He continued his vivid memory of the deadly day in battle. "The sky was filled with the clouds of gunfire. The cannons were blasting, puncturing the silence with a deafening bang! The black soot of smoke hovered across the battlefield. I was there and I still hear the sound of the young boys marching valiantly toward their end, said the general." The carriage was now racing at a fiendish pace toward the White House . The horses were galloping as hard and as fast as they could. The driver of the carriage was whipping the horses like runaway slaves to urge them to run faster. The strong stallions rushed down the streets of Washington toward the White House to shield Lincoln from a threat.

The general continued to speak to Gail as she sat opposite from him. He was holding on to the side of the carriage to prevent his frail wounded body from being tossed around in his seat. "The two boys

marched out into the battlefield to throw their bodies in front of the rifle fire. They were the last defense before the rebel southern soldiers could reach Lincoln. Whitney was a skilled machine shop worker. Both Ladd and Whitney were so young and unseasoned. Whitney and Ladd were green, new soldiers. They were as green and new as the grass that they crushed beneath their combat boots that day. It was one of their first battles. Both Whitney and Ladd had so little combat experience. Little did they know they were saving the life of Abraham Lincoln that day, said the general.”

The carriage had almost arrived at the White House! The White House was visible now. The bright blazing flames from the streetlights illuminated the road leading toward president Abraham Lincoln. The White House was a gleaming white edifice shimmering in the near distance. Whitney and Ladd would be remembered soon with a monument. The officials were planning a dedication for the white marble obelisk the next day. The proceeding would be halted, for a terrible event was about to take place! Finally, the carriage reached the path that led toward the portico carriage entryway. However, they were too late! The carriage carrying the president had already left!

Gail exclaimed with frenzy, shouting at the top of her ghostly lungs. “Follow that carriage. We must stop president Abraham Lincoln from going inside that theater, said Gail!” The glistening indigo color flame from the lantern that she was carrying still lit her face, while she spoke to the general. “Whitney and Ladd did not die in vain! They died to save the life of president Lincoln on that day, and that is our mission tonight! If we can stop Abraham from going anywhere near that theater we may prevent his death, said Gail!” The carriage carrying president Abraham Lincoln had already arrived at the theater. Lincoln had stepped from the carriage nodding and shaking hands with his supporters. The crowd of political allies had gathered at the theater awaiting his scheduled arrival. However, friends and well-wishers were not the only people who had come out to see Lincoln on his predictable visit to the theater that evening. Someone had come to even the score!

John Wilkes Booth had arrived and was awaiting his approach to the theater. He was dressed adequately well for the theater, or for a

funeral. His dark clothes were decorated with pride and malice. He concealed the pistol beneath his dark tailored coat. The metal of the gun pressed firmly against his skin. His hardened body had been weakened with the coughing sickness that lingered within. The pistol was loaded and cocked. He was ready to aim and fire without hesitation or regret.

**John Wilkes booth walked with a stoic face toward his fate. He was facing the final gate that led to the theater. The lead in his pistol was ready to be fired. He would lay waste to a man who he both despised and admired. The moon would have glowered down on him giving him power! The man in the moon was unflinching, not a coward. Beneath the moon as it towered, John Wilkes Booth was empowered! The moon would have been providing a dim grim light. The full moon would encourage a lone wolf to howl, to fight, and to bite on this fatal night. John Wilkes Booth and president Lincoln would have a deadly plight! The pistol pressed against his flesh would explode and ignite!**

**John Wilkes Booth was certain he would kill tonight, while president Lincoln was in plain sight. In his determined mind, there was no maybe and there was no might. As he raced forward toward the theater the choice to kill was decided either black or white. There was no gray or in between. The lines would be blurred with blood and sweat. He hurried toward the theater like a locomotive blowing off steam. There was only one thing to do to finally end the war, or so it seemed. John proudly beamed grinning an evil crooked smile.**

He could feel the sweat pouring from his brow now. He approached the theater with his heart pounding in his chest. The adrenaline would thrust him forward closer and closer to his clandestine destiny. In secret, under the cover of the shadowy dark of the night John emerged from the streets. He entered the theater, seemingly unnoticed. He did not look out of place or militant in his behavior. He mounted the stairs. He marched like a reluctant soldier, walking up one step at a time. Soon he would approach the booth that would forever wear his name. The booth is where president Abraham Lincoln was seating watching the play, 'Our American



Cousins.' Lincoln was not in John's family bloodline. His blood was running cold as he thought about shooting Lincoln.

Lincoln had settled into his comfortable lavish chair covered in blood-red velvet in Ford's Theater. Lincoln could not afford the risk of being reclusive or standoffish. He wanted to be seen out and about amongst potential voters. He was somewhat cloistered away in his secluded booth. The audience would momentarily glance up toward Lincoln as he nodded or laughed about the events in the play. The audience seemed grateful that Lincoln had attended. The crowd directed admiring attention toward president Abraham Lincoln as he sat pensively paying attention to the play. He was vulnerable and meek. Lincoln was unguarded and jovial as he set whispering to his companions on either side of him.

John Wilkes Booth was no stranger to the Ford's Theater, for he had acted in a play for the president in the theater before. The so-called colleagues of the president had been dissatisfied with his policies and post-war gentle treatment of the Confederacy. The republicans and been surreptitiously planning a coup to oust Lincoln if he did not change his leniency toward the fallen Confederate empire. John Wilkes Booth had been allowed to roam around the theater on this night because he was familiar with many of the stage crew. He had been an actor in a play at the theater, which is how he got the idea to get close to president Lincoln at Ford's Theater. There was a plot to assassinate the other integral members of the Lincolns cabinet as well as the vice president and secretary of state on the same night. This was supposed to be called Good Friday, April 14th, but no good would come to anyone on this night!

John Wilkes Booth climbed the stairs and walked down the hall leading toward Abraham Lincoln's booth. The plush surrounding of Ford's theater was in contrast to the savage and brutal act that he was about to commit. The opulent red curtains hung at the entrance of Abraham Lincoln's booth. There was no one standing guard to stop John Wilkes Booth from entering the booth. He reached down under his coat to feel the pistol cocked in his trebling yet determined hand. The small pistol would have to be fired at close range to exact a lethal shot to president Abraham Lincoln. John Wilkes Booth would

have to be calm and sedate. He would have to focus his aim and steady his hand to be a good marksman tonight.

The moment of truth had come! John pounced from behind the red curtains and drew his pistol. He got as close as he could to Lincoln's head as he aimed. John Wilkes Booth pulled the trigger of his pistol. The long sound of the gunfire exploded in the air of the theater. The audience turned around to look up to the booth where president Lincoln had been sitting. The blood flowed from Abraham Lincoln's skull and stained the scarlet red chair that he was sitting in. Lincoln slumped over struck with the lone lethal shot. One lead ball was all it took to make a leader fall. Lincoln had led the country into battle, but peace would not come until one last blood sacrifice had been made!

The wife of the cabinet member that was in the booth with Lincoln screamed. Her blood-curdling scream resonated throughout the theater almost as resoundingly loud as the sound of the gunshot. She was frozen in shock and fright as John Wilkes Booth turned to make his exit in flight. He flew like an angel of death down the flight of stairs. The crowd was filled with frenzy. The other people in the booth with Lincoln reached for him, as puddles of blood soaked the blood-stained crimson chair. Lincoln's trademark black top hat rested on the floor instead of the head of president Lincoln. Lincoln was taking his last breath. President Abraham Lincoln's eyes shut slow as the life began to leave his body.

"The president Abraham Lincoln has been shot, said a woman." She exclaimed in an exhilarated gasp of frantic phrases. Several screams from both men and women burst through the theater as mass hysteria began to set in. The patrons of the play had left their seats. Some theater goers were now on their knees covering their heads, as if waiting for another dangerous rain of gunfire. Others were standing on their feet looking around in every direction to see where the gunfire was coming from. Some military men had drawn their pistols, ready to defend themselves and their wives. Women were weeping with grief and fear. Mary Ann Todd Lincoln placed her arms around her dying husband. He was barely able to utter a word to speak. Lincoln would be dead soon. Everyone was attending to the wounded president as they carried his shattered body to a bed

across the street from the theater in a boarding house. The Surgeon General and other physicians were at Abraham Lincoln's death bed soon. Todd Lincoln would be at his father's side as he drifted way into the realm of death.

John Wilkes Booth jumped down onto the stage below like a wicked angel in flight. He injured his leg when he landed. His heart pumped filled with adrenaline so much that he could not feel the pain. His leg had broken, almost protruding through the skin, as he ran from Ford's Theater! As John fled, Lincoln bled. The nation now had an empty chair to fill. How would the country be led? The moment of dread had come and gone. Now John Wilkes Booth would make his final swan song in the play "Our American Cousins." He exited the theater forcing his way outside into the cold night air. The crowded theater shrieked with despair. How could John have killed president Lincoln? How did he dare?!

**Lincoln had been carried to a bed in the boarding house across the street from Ford's Theater. The cold chilling night air had stirred the hair on his blood-soaked brow. The head of the state was dying now! The actor John Wilkes Booth who had killed him would take a final bow. He would be pursued and killed at a farm not too far out of town. The other conspirators would be found. Those who help John would be hanged. The executioner was around. Like Judas they died with heavy heart when silver was bought by the pound. Their bodies would hang to death with the noose and hit the ground. The death of Lincoln was an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth when wrath was unbound. Lincoln's last words were seeing the holy city of Jerusalem. He died beside his wife Mary and his son, with his final presidential speech to be done. The Civil War's last battle had just been fought. History will ask, who won.**

The war of mourning and sorrow had just begun. Gail and the general had arrived to the theater too late. President Abraham Lincoln had already been killed. If only Williamson had been by her side. He could have drawn his rifle and killed John Wilkes Booth! Suddenly Williamson appeared hovering through the dark clouds of April 15<sup>th</sup>. It was too late! Lincoln had been pronounced dead and placed in his casket. Lincoln lay in state at the White House. Mary

Todd Lincoln was a widow now mourning her husband's death. Lincoln's body toured the country as a very well-preserved corpse. embalming fluid was used to keep Abraham Lincoln looking as if he was just asleep in his coffin. Hundreds-of-thousands of mourners came to see the body. Abraham Lincoln's dead body made the macabre and morbid trip touring the country for all to see. Finally, Lincoln was entombed in his crypt for all eternity. He will live on through the Lincoln monument in memory!

## “Gail Nightingale Lives After Lincoln has Gone”

Several years came and went since the death of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president. The Post-Civil War of the 1880's had arrived with the industrial revolution and the gilded age of prosperity. Cities like New York and Chicago were growing rapidly. Technology had brought magnificent inventions during the industrial revolution. There were inventions such as electricity including: light bulbs, elevators, skyscrapers, steam engines, locomotives, steamboats, cameras, and the telegraph.

Gail Nightingale had continued to haunt hospitals and libraries all across the country searching for Williamson Blacksmith who had vanished the night that Lincoln was assassinated. The coughing sickness had reappeared mysteriously as heavily populated cities had begun to expand. The crowded slums of New York were breeding grounds and incubators for diseases such as the deadly coughing sickness. Gail's purple flame still glowed everywhere she went when she wanted to be seen. Gail Nightingale's healing knowledge was needed once more.

On one particular night Gail was hovering around New York City near a courthouse when she caught sight of her brother entering the courthouse. The streets of New York City were crowded with people scurrying everywhere. The trolley carried eager blue-collar workers to busy factories. Carriages brought white-collar gentlemen, like Robert Nightingale, to their regal offices and formidable businesses in the heart of urban life. The new buildings were being constructed. Each building was vying to be taller and larger than the previous structure. The competitive new modern age of iron frameworks and electricity brought innovation and urbanization. The nation was swiftly being thrust into an era of invention. The electric lightbulb illuminated the night sky above as the subway rumbled deep beneath concrete streets. Post-Civil War technology was breaking new ground. Alternating current from General Electric would soon

reach the uncharted land, and Robert Nightingale would be in the epicenter of it all!

She was pleasantly surprised to see her brother again. She had been trying to contact him through letters and other associates living in his area. Soon Gail was informed that her brother Robert Nightingale would be moving up to New York City permanently. He had made acquaintances with some of his relatives in the Nightingale family who resided in New York City. These relatives had already built extravagant mansions in Manhattan and in the woods surrounding the metropolis. Some of the Nightingale family members had fled the South during the war. They wanted to live where their backyard would not be a battlefield in a rich man's war for power. Some of the Nightingale family inhabited soaring skyscraper towers made from steel frames.

Many of the Nightingale businessmen had to flee the burning buildings of Chicago during the great fire. Some did not survive. The flaming blaze that consumed Chicago was a conflagration that destroyed much of the city. Now brick buildings and electricity took the place of lanterns, torches, and candles as a primary source of light in the overcrowded cities.

Robert Nightingale had become a businessman with valuable military connections. The new innovation of ironclad ships had been used during the war. In fact, John Wilkes Booth had been given an autopsy after he was shot, onboard an ironclad ship stationed in the harbor of Washington. The ironclad ships would give way to the next generation of ship, the steamship. Steam ships would carry Robert Nightingale across the Atlantic to Europe. Locomotives on the newly constructed Transcontinental Railroad and their rival's Transpacific Railroad would connect the East Coast of New York and the West Coast of California together for commerce and trade. The Wild West was calling Robert Nightingale to explore new options, and new opportunities to make money!

At first glance, Gail was concerned about Robert's well-being, when she saw him enter the courthouse. She followed him down the hall frantically, hoping that she could aid him in his apparent dilemma. What was the reason for the courthouse visit, she wondered? She had waited so many years to catch up with her

brother. Perhaps he had been in prison for a federal crime, or held as a Confederate prisoner of war. Gail had spent so much time searching for Williamson, that she almost forgot about her own flesh and blood brother. For all she knew, Robert could have spilled his blood on some Civil War battlefield and gone on to the afterlife without her knowledge! But, no, here was her dear brother Robert, all safe and sound, or so she had hoped!

What could possibly be the reason why Robert is at the courthouse. The reason must be a serious cause or else, the powers-that-be would not have led her to Robert. Maybe he needed her help to get out of trouble. Rob had always been a mischievous boy. As a child, Rob would steal almost anything he could get his hands on. The neighborhood playmates used to call Robert, Rob the Robber. He claimed he would steal from the rich and give to the poor. Soon steel frame skyscrapers would be the towers of industrial power in an urban metropolis.

The Chicago fire had destroyed most of the business buildings in Chicago and killed several members of the Nightingale family. Gail had tried to go and rescue as many unfortunate souls as she could. That night in 1871 was still emblazoned in her memory. First the fire started out in the crowded alcoves. The city of Chicago was growing by leaps and bounds. So many people were coming to Chicago to bridge the East and the West territories of the country. Many cowboys came from the Wild West. The cowboys drove their cattle from Texas cattle ranches all the way to Kansas City or Chicago where the slaughter houses would make beef from the longhorn. The cowboys were gritty, outdoorsmen who relished being in the Wild West. Rob Nightingale had ventured out west to become a cattle handler. He had gone on a cattle drive. While stopping along in many small towns on his way toward Chicago, Rob had robbed and stolen his way through the west. He would steal horses and other cowboys' cattle. Rob would steal anything to make a profit!

One night Rob was starting a cattle drive beneath the sparkling blanket of stars. He was driving the cattle through Colorado. Rob and a group of his fellow cowboys had stopped to water the horse and cattle at the Colorado River. He was dressed in leather chaps and cowboy boots. Rob mounted his horse with a sense of

command. His spurs dug into the side of his stallion nudging his lethargic horse forward after a long hard night. The horse began to gallop across the ruddy dry terrain of the desert. The topography sprawled before him. There were high soaring rock formations and cactus plants casting their silhouette across the rocky red ground. Coyotes howled at the full moon in the dark desert night.

Rob saw the opportunity to steal some horses and cattle, and he could not resist. He dismounted his horse slowly and carefully. He was careful that he would not make any loud noises. The rival cowboys were resting beside the blazing campfire unsuspectingly. Rob crept in between the shadows of the cold desert night and gently untied the two horses from the cactus that they were fastened to. Rob led the horses away slowly to his camp about two miles away. The moon glistened in his eyes. He robbed the cowboys of their horses. He was stealthy and sly. Rob was just that kind of a guy!

Once the horses were stolen, Rob decided to go back and steal as many cattle as he could. He would find the fattest ones. Then Rob would brand them with his own cattle iron to cover over the symbol of the other cowboys. Once the cattle and horses were stolen away from the other rival cowboys, Rob decided to move the herd of cattle at night. He wanted to put a few miles between himself and the cowboys that he had just robbed.

Suddenly, the stolen horse whinnied. The horse was whining loudly and standing on his hind legs. The rival cowboys were aroused. They jumped up in an uproar. The cowboys reached for their six shooters. They unholstered their guns. The entire gang of cowboys was looking around in every direction to see where the winning horse had gone. It seems that the cowboy that had been given the responsibility of staying up to watch the cattle and horses had fallen asleep. He woke up suddenly, tossing his hat off of his head and yelling in fits of anger. "Wake up, the horses are gone! Get the torches and the lanterns lit. The horses can't have wondered off that far, said the groggy cowboy." Some of the other rival cowboys yawned and stretched their arms toward the midnight sky as they stood up slowly. "What's going on now? If the horses have wondered off, we are as good as dead out here. The new guy was supposed to



be watching the herd and the horses overnight! He screwed up the one job we trusted him with, said the other cowboy with a condescending tone.” That group of rival cowboys never did find out who stole their horses or their cattle. They did not even notice that they were missing a few heads of cattle until they counted the longhorns when they arrived in Kansas City.

Luckily, Rob was going to Chicago instead of Kansas City. This was Rob’s last cattle drive. He feared that his misdeeds would catch up with him if he stayed a cowboy. Rob can recall sitting in a saloon near Chicago. The bright red wallpaper covered the room with a lavish sort of luxury. The liquor flowed from his glass like a fountain. Each bottle he emptied reminded him of the shape of a beautiful girl that he would someday marry. He wanted to procreate because he counted himself to be a fortunate survivor of the Civil War. Every night Rob would search for a woman to love, while he drank blood-red wine from fluted goblets. The glamour girls of the saloon would throw themselves at him. Rob was fond of robbing harlots and showgirls of their money. He would pretend to be interested in them, and wooed by their womanly ways, then he would pick their pockets for any valuables that they possessed.

One night Rob was telling the story of how he stole the horses. This was not wise because such stories would eventually give him a notorious reputation among the other cowboys in town. Rob was sitting at the bar, tossing back a few beers, as he sneered in slurred speech. “Yep, it was so simple! I was out under the stars on a cattle drive. I tossed my lasso up in the air and aimed at the neck of this strong looking black stallion. The horse whined slightly, so I thought I would have to skedaddle. But the buck was tame enough for me to lead him away from the other horses. The stallion was saddled handsomely, and looked well rested. I had to sneak right up to the other white stallion and lead him away from the camp of cowboys. They did not even wake up! What a bunch of sad sack fools, said Rob.” Then before he could continue his story, the rival cowboy emerged from a back room. The rival cowboy had only been partially distracted with the saloon girls in the brothel as he spoke. “We knew it was you! You yellow-belly coward! You gutless snake! We know your name and reputation now, Rob the Robber. They say you would

steal the bible from a preacher and the coffin from a dead man. Well, Rob we are prepared to put you in your place, six feet under. I will put you in the ground in good or fair weather and in any town, said the rival cowboy!”

The rival cowboy swung at Rob and missed. The rival cowboy’s fist was aimed at a jab to the jaw. Rob had studied combat in the military during the war. Rob skillfully fought the cowboy with agility and strength. Rob hit the combatant with a left hook that made him stagger backward. His heart pounded in his chest. Rob was filled with the exhilarating triumph of victory as he charged toward his opponent. Rob head-butted the other cowboy and flung him to the ground forcefully.

The other patrons in the bar were taking bets on who would win the bar room brawl. The saloon was in a frenzy of excitement. Rob stomped the cowboy while he was on the floor and kicked him strongly in the stomach, as he yelled at him. “Get up you scallywag. I ain’t got your horses. I got your watch and your six-shooter instead, said Rob.” He scurried away from the scuffle. Rob haphazardly pushed the swinging doors of the saloon open and stumbled out into the street alone. Rob staggered down the street toward his horse. Rob rode away half falling off of the saddle of the horse in a disoriented drunken haze.

While Rob escaped the saloon, a showgirl followed behind him watching his exit. Her name was Robin Nightingale. Rob and Robin had been spending a lot of time together as lovers. She was a tall sturdy girl draped in red velvet and satin. Her sparkling amber eyes burned like flickering flames in the dim candlelight. She was slender and sinewy. Her Victorian style corset was fastened about her curvaceous figure in a fashionable way. Her cheeks were painted with scarlet rouge. Her plump lips were shaped like a crimson heart upon her pale powdered face. Her hair was fixed in large ringlets and ribbons. Her fingers were already covered in glass diamond rings. Even still, she held her hand to her heart, as she sighed, thinking, that she would marry that cowboy Rob someday!

The rival cowboy rushed outside the tavern chasing Rob. The battered cowboy was yelling obscenities at Rob. Suddenly Rob fell off of his horse! He groped hurriedly for his gun. The angry battered

cowboy stood tall. His silhouette towered over the dark street casting a long lanky shadow. The battered cowboy screamed as blood dripped from his shattered teeth. "Turn around and fight, you thief! First you took my pistol, then you took my girl! I saw you talking to my sweetheart Robin. You stole my horse and some of my fattest cows. Now, you gonna die you crook! Turn around and gunfight me, Rob the Robber! I got my other six shooter ready to for you. Rob, meet Smith and Wesson, said the belligerent cowboy!"

The saloon showgirl ran out into the middle of street between the two men screaming. Rob was just about to unholster his gun with the split-second reflexes of a trained soldier. That cowboy would be no match for him! "Wait, don't shoot on account me! I ain't never loved you, you silly rascal. I only rustled up some grub for you twice and smiled at you once, said Robin." Now, she held up her hand halting the gunfight. "You're mine, you shameless harlot! I paid for you in hard liquor and lust! I come to this brothel every night looking for you. It's marriage or bust. You're gonna be my girl, ain't no if and or buts about it, Robin, said the disgruntled cowboy." The rabblouser cowboy continued his tirade. "You gonna get it. You gonna get it, right in that yellow belly gut. I'm gonna gut you like a fish out of water. You gonna get it Rob, and I'm gonna give it to you! I'm gonna kill you! You gonna die like the scoundrel that you are. I'm gonna bury you Rob, deep in hell, said the malicious cowboy." He shook his fist in the air as a fire blazed behind him.

Meanwhile, back in the saloon Rob had knocked over an oil lantern. The flames had quickly spread through the tavern. The liquor ignited the blaze, fueling the fire. Soon the patrons of the bar were running outside to escape the fire. The flames roared through the walls of the saloon. The showgirls and harlots scattered like fallen leaves through the dark streets of Chicago. The fire brigade was called. The plumes of smoke billowed from the saloon in great dark clouds of soot in the cold night.

The tavern was constructed of wood, so the walls burned like logs in a fireplace spreading to the buildings next door. Suddenly, a burning beam fell into the street, catching Robin's long red velvet dress on fire. Rob turned chivalrous and valiant! He swiftly hurried to extinguish Robin's burning dress. However, he could not put out the

fire that was now burning in her heart! Rob held Robin in his arms. She embraced him. Robin kissed Rob with a passionate kiss of gratitude.

She was practically breathless as she uttered her passionate poem (an epiphany in an emergency). "You saved, my life and I want to be your wife. They call you Rob the Robber. You have stolen my heart. I am forever in your gratitude. I am in debt to you, ain't I? I owe you something for sticking your neck out for me and almost getting yourself killed. I think I could love you until the day I die, since you're the reason that I'm still alive, said Robin." The young blushing saloon girl held back tears. Her heart skipped a beat as she clung to Rob.

The City of Chicago was ablaze. Fire tornadoes swirled through the air. The wind whirled across the cityscape making twisting cyclones of flame. The wildfire was made worse when the wind blew. The embers of flickering wood sparked flames to the next wooden structure one right after the other like a row of dominoes falling. Each flimsy house crumbled and collapsed in flames like a house of cards. Rob took Robin up into the saddle of his horse. She settled her voluptuous body in the saddle in front of him. Rob held Robin tight, as they rode perilously through the flames. Rob was intrepid as he rode toward the edge of town. Chicago was in flames. This was a great conflagration. The fire brigade was thirsty for water, for it had not rained for a long time now. The Chicago River could stop the fire, but many businesses would be sacrificed if the fire reached the river banks.

Rob and Robin rode away from the wild fire of Chicago until they reached the railroad. The steam locomotive blew into the station carrying hope and freedom in its wake. A new day had dawned as the couple fell deeper and deeper in love. They had watched Chicago burning from a distance. The city burned for many days until the flames finally subsided. They boarded the train wearing the same bedraggled burned clothes that they had escaped in.

Soot marred her soft delicate cheeks now. Robin tried to rub the ashes out of her eyes as she glanced at Rob. "We certainly got out of that one, didn't we? I thought both of us would have perished in

the flames that time. Now, that the fire has burned up everything I had in the world, we only have each other to cherish, said Robin.”

Rob was still feeling a throbbing headache. He was having a hangover, while he was still in a drunken haze. The previous few days were a whirlwind. Rob spoke to Robin still in a dazed state of mind. “Robin, fate has brought us together. Why not get married in New York? I have some kinfolks there. They have grand mansions and plenty of room for us, said Rob.” Robin looked over at him with tears of joy in her eyes. She kissed Rob with her cherry red lips. “Yes, I’ll marry you, Rob! I don’t see why not, you saved my life twice already, said Robin.”

Meanwhile, Gail had somehow been summoned. Someone had cast some powder into the blazing flames of the Great Chicago Fire to make the flames glow a purple corona. Gail hovered down into the purple light as she became visible. Gail had been searching for Williamson, now she was searching for her brother Robert. Gail was floating through the fire tornadoes of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 hoping to save her brother. Gail went to the bar that was owned by a Nightingale relative. She had been hoping to find Rob there, but instead found a building full of screaming people begging to be rescued.

Her uncle had been the tavern owner. He was huddled behind the bar with his hands over his head. Certainly, the fire would devour the tavern with all of those bottles of alcohol stacked to the ceiling like bombs ready to explode. “Help, help. I’m trapped. Call the fire brigade, said uncle Al Nightingale.” The tavern was the same saloon that her brother Robert had been inside of the night of the Great Chicago fire. After the flames were extinguished, there was a report that said no one made it out of that saloon alive.

Now, Gail was back at the courthouse in New York. She was following her brother Rob down the long corridor that led to the courtroom. Rob was gliding down the hall and Robin was right beside him. Rob had followed Robin to the judge’s office. There was one chair seated before the judge’s desk. Robin sat in the chair dabbing tears from her eyes as she spoke. “I was supposed to be getting married here in New York to my dearly departed Robert, said Robin.” She was going down inside her small purse searching for

something. She pulled out two pieces of paper as she spoke to the judge. "Instead, we wed in Chicago the night before the great fire. The marriage license is burned a bit, but I think it can still be read.

I am Mrs. Nightingale, a widow. I found a letter among Rob's things. It says that he is the owner of a company here in New York. Rob sold cattle, horses, and tanned leather at a factory in Chicago. He made leather goods here in New York in a factory that he was the sole owner of. I am Robert's widow and rightful owner of the company. I am also with child. Before Rob perished in the Great Fire of Chicago, we spent our honeymoon together, said Robin." She was holding her stomach beneath her large dress to show her round belly.

The judge would have to determine who would be the new owner of the leather factories in New York. The factory in Chicago had burned to the ground the night of the fire. The judge made his decision based on the partially burned marriage license. "This marriage license seems to be authentic. Since any other record of your legal marriage was apparently destroyed in the conflagration in Chicago, then this marriage license is the valid document that makes you the rightful heir to the factory here in New York, said the judge."

Rob was standing right beside Robin. Rob was now hearing the news of his own death in the Great Chicago Fire for the first time. Gail was watching the scene unfold from the far corner of the judge's office. Rob looked over at Robin and then down at her large round belly. Robin would be giving birth soon. The child would bear the Nightingale name and continue the Nightingale legacy for future generations. Rob followed Robin down the long hallway of the courthouse and down the great stone steps of the edifice.

The sun was beginning to set across the cityscape as Robin got inside of her carriage. The stagecoach would carry her to the other end of town where she had found a position at a saloon and brothel. Robin sat at the bar discussing her circumstances with the proprietor of the brothel, Madam York. "Madam, they completely fell for the fake marriage license. After all, Rob said he wanted to marry me. We made love every day for almost a week when he came to get drunk at the saloon, said Robin."

Robin continued her story. "It's too bad that the angry cowboy tracked him down. Rob stole some horses and cattle from another cowboy while on a cattle drive. I think those cowboys that Rob stole from followed him to Chicago to get their revenge on him for stealing their property! Rob got shot in that gunfight outside the saloon the night of the Great Chicago Fire. That fire burned for several days. He was bleeding. He carried us away on his horse as far as we could go then, Rob fell to the ground. The smoke and blowing embers of the conflagration collapsed huge building all around us. I could not get anyone to help us. Rob bled out right there at the edge of town, said Robin."

I boarded the locomotive for New York while this strange purple light hovered around an illusion of Rob's image. He said he wanted to marry me, but I knew that I must have been dreaming or seeing an apparition. I felt the baby inside me kick. I found the papers among Rob's things that said he owned the factory, and knew that I had to go to New York, said Robin." She walked to her room in the brothel. She made herself comfortable in front of the fire. There was a tiny bag with a bundle of herbs and instructions inside of it on the mantle. Robin noticed it. She opened the drawstring tiny leather bag. The little bundle instructed her to toss some powder into the fire. She did!

Instantaneously, the purple corona began to light the room. Gail appeared like a stormy gust of wind standing beside the fire. Robin was taken aback. She wondered if she was hallucinating. "Who are you? Are you a new girl here in the brothel? I haven't seen you around here before, said Robin." Gail could only reply in the most prosaic way that she could think of. "I am the sister of Rob the Robber. He was the man you fell in love with in Chicago. You are carrying a child. I want you to follow the instructions inside the little leather bag. The coughing sickness will come soon. The herb tea will protect and cure you of the sickness, said Gail."

Robin held the instructions close enough to the fire to read the carefully written manuscript. "The coughing sickness had already gotten in the throats of some of the girls that work the brothel. I mostly serve drinks and greet customers here, seeing the fact that I'm pregnant, said Robin." Gail told Robin how to make the special

herb tea that would cure the coughing sickness. Robin would stay at the brothel and tavern as a barmaid for several more months. The child would soon be born. A brothel would be no place for a newborn baby. Robin would need to find a home for herself and her child in New York.

Gail scurried into the room. The lavender light surrounded her as she spoke. We are going shopping today my darling dear Robin. Today we won't be robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. We will be among the rich trying to convince them that we are one of them, said Gail." Robin was so enthusiastic. This would be the beginning of a new adventure together.



## “Industrial Revolution New York City Robinhood: Robin the Rich Gives to the Poor”

Gail spoke as Robin was sipping the healing tea. “We shall require a house close to the leather factory. Robin, you now own the factory as the sole proprietor. We will be receiving funds from the profits of the factory. We will need to meet with the accountant, the banker, and the lawyer. As far as we know Robert did not leave a will and testament, said Gail.” Robin had finished a whole pot of healing herb tea. The coughing sickness would not take hold of her lungs now. A meeting with Gail would be a nightly ritual for Robin.

The next day the morning sun broke through the clouds sending beams of bright sunlight through the windowpanes. Robin would now attend a meeting with the businessmen who would assist her with running a thriving leather factory in New York City. She dressed in one of the most subdued dresses that Madam York had to offer at the brothel. Robin was ready to rob the rich and give to the poor. Robin spoke to Gail as she descended the stairs of the brothel. The tavern that was adjacent was already filled with boisterous laughter and bravado.

The carriage went gradually through the streets of New York City. The downtrodden were cluttering the streets in a scurry hurrying to get to work. The factory had taken the place of the farm. The livelihood of the worker was now based on the revised version of the steam engine. An Englishman named Watt had reinvented the steam engine for common use in factory work. The first factories had found a faster and more efficient way of mass-producing goods. The cotton industry had been based on manual labor of slaves. Now manual labor was being done alongside machines to operate the machines.

Gail spoke to Robin as the carriage approached the factory. “We will have to devise a plan to run the factory and keep some profit from it. I think the marriage license should be enough to allow you to get some of the money from the leather factory to buy a comfortable

mansion in a nice area, said Gail.” The billowing plumes of smoke bellowed from the top of the factory chimney as the carriage pulled them closer to their fate and fortune! “This factory, will be mine. However, I will need some skilled wise business people to organize things for me. I will put the humble poor people to work to save them from their misery. I will rob from the rich land of careless moguls and tycoon. I will rob those old rich bastards and give to the poor working women and men in the factory, said Robin.” She was determined to make right what had been going terribly wrong in the industrial revolution.

Gail spoke with some foresight. “I think that these factory workers will soon be fed-up and frustrated with their mistreatment. The factory owners should try to treat the works like members of their own family to keep them happy. There may be an uprising. There may be strikes and demands made to improve work conditions. I think laws will be created to protect the factory workers from working for too many hours or being mistreated at work, said Gail.” The carriage was now passing through the foggy gates of the factory entrance. The workers were on their way back inside the factory laden with the fumes of toxic chemicals. The leather goods, such as shoes, coats, and saddles were being made on the factory floor. Women and small children were hard at work, working twelve-hour days to keep the machines running. There was no time for sick leave or vacation, just time for supply and demand, quotas, profit margins, and making money.

The carriages stopped and Robin stepped down carefully. She was meticulously trying to hide her protruding belly. Robin lifted the hem of her long blue plaid dress to avoid stepping in a muddy puddle of toxic chemicals. The air was suffocating around the factory. The chemicals used to produce leather goods were stifling her. Robin could barely breath without choking on the horrid cloud of fumes coming from the factory. She wondered how any man, woman, or child could tolerated such a nauseating environment. Two of the factory managers were there at the door to lead Robin to the office of the man in charge.

They spoke to Robin as if they knew she was coming. “Ma’am, you must be Mrs. Nightingale, Robert Nightingale’s widow. The judge

informed us that you were the only beneficiary to Robert's fortune. My condolences to the you Mrs. Nightingale. I am sorry for your loss, said the manager." The managers led Robin down a long broad corridor that was dimly lit in the weak light of the factory's electric light bulbs. The workers seemed to look away in fear, as the managers glared at them, like an overseer on a plantation. The workers shied away and cowered scampering back to their work stations.

The manager opened the door to the office revealing a large wood carved desk where the man in charge sat. He looked up from his documents to glare at Robin. He removed his spectacles and smiled as his eyebrows seemed to come to life with expression. He spoke as he stood up to extend his hand in salutations. "Ma'am, I assume you are Mrs. Nightingale, the widow of Robert Nightingale. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am the head man in charge here, the factory General Manager. I was hired here about ten years ago, when Robert Nightingale decided to go back out West to tend to his cattle ranch. He said that he had wanted some adventure and excitement outside the stuffy confinements of this factory office. I handle the day-to-day toil of the factory. I have several assistant managers helping me handle the payrolls and employees here. We keep things running smoothly. Please take a seat and allow me to elaborate Ms. Nightingale, said the General Manager."

The General Manger was a tall man with a sturdy square chin and broad square forehead. His dark shiny chestnut hair was slicked back with palm aid and his sideburns were trimmed with precision. He seemed to be a very inscrutable man who paid careful attention to vain details. His stiff white-collar shirt was high around his neck. His dark gray suit was made of fine fabric. His polished leather shoes, no doubt, came from this very factory that he ran. His hands were adorned with gold rings. This seemed like a man who wanted to get the brass ring out of life. His voice was genteel and educated. His demeanor was that of a gentleman trying to court a chased lady.

The General Manager spoke with business on his mind. "We run a tight ship here in this factory. We have to fill the orders for leather goods to our partners across the country and in abroad. We produce several tons of products here in this factory that must be shipped to

Europe on massive steamboats. This factory has a huge steam engine workforce as well as a flesh and blood one, said the general manager.” Gail hovered beside Robin as an invisible presence. The presence of greed and deception was ever-present in the room as the managers met with Robin. Robin spoke with concern for the workers. “Are there safety precautions taken. This factory can’t possibly be comfortable and hospitable to the workers. Why, when I walked in here for the first, time I could choked on the chemical fumes coming from this factory, said Robin.”

The General Manager spoke as the other manager abruptly closed the heavy wooden door to block out the rest of the factory. “This factory is safe, or no one would be working here, now would they. If the workers don’t like the facilities, they can just find another factory to work in. We do not force the workers to stay here. They are here quite by choice Ms. Nightingale. We have dormitories onsite for the children who work here as well as their parents. They accommodations are adequate enough, considering the squalor that these former vagabonds are accustomed to. We provide food, shelter, sleeping quarters, schooling for the child factory workers and a store where workers can purchase goods on credit, said the General Manager.” He seemed to make a snide remark.

Gail was hovering down the hallways of the factory in secrecy as the meeting continued. She observed the crowded factory floor filled with small children working to help operated the machines. Their parents were sometimes nowhere to be seen. The air was overwrought with toxic chemicals used to make leather goods. The workers were visibly fatigued and overworked.

Robin needed to know how to get some of the proceeds from the productive factory to purchase a house in a nice area. She spoke as a woman who commanded authority. “I shall need sufficient funds to acquire a proper house for myself and my unborn child. Robert was my deceased husband. Therefore, this factory belongs to me according to the law. Even still, any gentleman or business acquaintance of Roberts would oblige me, enough money to have a place to live. I should be allotted a living expense that will allow me to support myself and my child in a manner that we are accustomed to, said Robin.”

The room stirred with an awkward sort of rumination. There was a stoic silence. Then, Robin spoke. "There has to be some kind of reform. The factory chemicals are harming the air. The trees and grass surrounding the factory are dead. The water flowing from the factory is toxic and sickening. The workers are exhausted from breathing the fumes. I think they should wear masks while working inside the factory. The coughing sickness is spreading all across New York. Factories are breeding grounds for sickness. The factory floor is too crowded. The workers need more breaks. There is risk of a fire because of the chemicals and all of the clutter inside the factory, said Robin." She had intended to rob the rich, if she had to, and give to the poor.

The manager who had once led Robin down the hall to the factory office was now standing in front of the door to show her out. He was a stout stalwart man. He stood short and stocky. His broad shoulders and large round stomach were massive. His dark hair was thinning in the top and his mustache was trimmed as if a barber had attended to him. The manager cleared his throat as he opened the door and spoke to Robin. "Ms. Nightingale, we will consider your suggestions. There will be quite a bit of reform here. The factory is now primarily concerned with producing enough products to fill the orders that our customer have requested. If we slow down, or let people take days off, then we will fall behind. Being too generous with the wages and vacations could mean financial ruin for the business, said the assistant manager." All managers in the office seemed to glare at the opened door, as if they were insinuating that Robin should leave.

Robin did not stand up from her chair, and refused to stare at the open door. She would not be coaxed or cajoled into leaving the factory. Robin spoke with defiance in her voice. "I want the workers to be comfortable and healthy in the factory, so that they will work harder! I am no expert about running a factory. I only know that human beings need space, air to breath, and rest. I would not treat a caged dog the way you are treating the workers here. Not only do I demand better dorms for the works, I demand adequate housing for myself and the unborn child of Robert Nightingale, your deceased boss, said Robin." She was now shifting in her chair. She was a

proponent of women's right and worker's rights. Robin believed that all people were entitled to humane and civilized treatment.

Eventually Robin would have to stand up for herself. She gradually stood up from her hard wooden chair. She had been stern and outspoken. Now the managers knew that she cared about the wellbeing of the factory and the workers. She was also concerned about the profit margin of course. All reform to work conditions would be within reason. However, the business must maintain wealth and productivity.

The General Manager spoke in a serious and cordial voice. "Ms. Nightingale, Robert ran a very basic factory, nothing fancy. He wanted the most profit, with the least workers complaints. We give our workers a better opportunity here in the workers' village than what they would get in the street unemployed. We will be giving you a weekly stipend of income Ms. Nightingale. This money will be placed in your husband's company bank account. The company still has an account at the same bank. Your name, Robin Nightingale, will be added to the books. You will be allowed to buy a suitable house where you choose and to hire servants. An appropriate monetary amount will be given to you and Robert's child until the child is eighteen years old. A document has already been prepared stating these stipulations. All will be granted Robin Nightingale, as long as you keep your untrained, and inexperienced opinions to yourself. You are not familiar with factory policies or business conduct. I would advise you to attend to a woman's concerns, such as having a healthy baby and finding a house in which to raise that child, said the General Manager." He seemed to be an ebullient man who would speak his mind. His dogma was what he believed. His creed would not heed to the words of a woman, not even Robin Nightingale.

Robin stood for something. She did not want to fall for anything. However, when Robin stood up, she fainted and collapsed to her weary feet. The sudden sickness had befallen her as abrupt and unpredictable as a sudden storm. Gail hovered near Robin. Her ghostly hands wanted to help Robin stand for something. The managers surrounded her. The chivalrous side of the managers seemed to take hold. The men acted as gentlemen, as they lifted Robin to her feet. Robin immediately, came awake. She had blacked

out and lost consciousness. Now that she was aware of her surroundings again, she felt immensely embarrassed. Robin could feel her cheeks beginning to feel flush, and hot with blood as she blushed. "I will be fine gentlemen. It seems to be the air in this factory. I can barely breath. I will need an assistant to help me acquire the house and to accompany me to the bank, said Robin.

Robin was escorted back down the long corridor to her carriage. The mangers opened the carriage door for her and helped her inside. She was being handled like a fragile object of value. The General Manager leaned in toward her to whisper some gentle words of sympathy. "Ms. Nightingale, I mean Robin, I will personally go with you to the bank tomorrow and give you access to the business account immediately. Your need will be taken care of. Where are you staying tonight? I can get you a suite at a hotel anywhere in New York, said the General Manager." He seemed to clutch her hand with tender loving care as he helped Robin get inside the carriage.

Robin smiled politely before she spoke in short exasperated breaths of gratitude. "I am staying, well, um, above a friend's tavern in town. I would like to stay at a nice hotel, if that is within your means sir. Oh, what should I call you formally? I have only seen your name on paper as Richard, said Robin." She took a moment of pause. "I hoping that I could stay at the luxury hotel, if that is at all possible, said Robin." She closed her eyes tight and tried to imagine herself in a grand penthouse suite on the top floor of a lavish hotel. The General Manager, Richard replied with a confident and loquacious personality. "Yes, of course Robin. Only the best for you. Robert would have wanted you taken care of. I even recall him sending a picture of you in your red satin dress and pearls. I still have the picture and the letter from Robert when he wrote to me several weeks before his death. I recognize you from his picture and description in his letter. Of course, your actual flesh and blood body looks so much more beautiful in real life than in your photographs. I will send someone over to the hotel to accompany you today. One of the managers will see to it that you get the finest room and accommodations available, said Richard the General Manager."

The carriage brought Robin down the New York City streets through the heavy clouds of soot and fog until she reached the entrance of the hotel. Gail was beside Robin inside the carriage as the horses finally stopped in front of the hotel. Williamson had now reappeared beside Gail. The storm winds seemed to brew all around the trio of spirits. Robin opened the door for herself, and stepped down from carriage carefully. Robin was holding her round protruding belly as she slowly looked up at the hotel in awe. She felt that she had finally arrived. This would be the beginning of a new life for her in the polite society of New York City. The lavish luxury hotel was host to many socialites and wealthy businessmen. The Astor House was opening its doors to her like a welcoming embrace. John Jacob Astor was one of the wealthiest businessmen in the world. He had constructed this world-famous hotel to accommodate the elite and fashionable affluent member of society. Now, Robin Nightingale was about to take up residence inside of the hallowed halls.

A doorman opened the doors for Robin as she was escorted inside the hotel. Robin went from, shaking her tail at a saloon in the Wild West to being asked to enter the Astor House. Richard has followed the carriage and was now going to walk with Robin on his arm to get a room for her. They approached the hotel manager as Richard spoke on Robin's behalf. "I will require a room for this young lady, Ms. Robin Nightingale indefinitely. We have already discussed the terms previously. I had told you to prepare for her arrive today. Please provide any room service, carriage services, and accommodations that the hotel allows. Ms. Nightingale should be treated as a special guest here, said Richard the General Manager of the factory. The Astor House had been one of the old haunts of Abraham Lincoln when he was being inaugurated as president. Gail wondered if the ghost of Abraham Lincoln had followed her from the Ford theater to a place of great memories for the assassinated president.

The Astor House was one of the most famous and illustrious establishments in New York City. Broadway had become synonymous with famous shows, showgirls, and industries. The industrial revolution had taken hold of this new era of invention. The electric lightbulb lit the marble halls of the hotel. The walls were



adorned with large mirrors and carved wood panels. The crystal chandelier hung from the high vaulted ceilings. The plaster crown moulding decorated the walls. The veins of the white marble ran cold with blue blood. The ladies brunch hall would be the meeting place for the wealthy women of New York. Soon Robin would join them. First, she would need to go shopping for fancy finery to dress herself with.

Robin was now becoming a Pygmalion story. Her transformation was going to be like the ancient myth about a statue that turned into a real woman. Robin would go from satin rags in a brothel to brand-new silk riches in an extravagant hotel. Robin was a pretty woman that did not have any bags to be carried up to her suite, but her baby was still a little bundle of joy waiting to be born. Robin was in a delicate condition and would need to get the appropriate attire for a pregnant woman, maternity wear. Many women would simply retreat to secluded solitude when their pregnant bellies begin to protrude through their clothes. Women in polite society did not appear in public until after the child was born. The coughing sickness was sweeping through the crowded city. Thus, staying at home on bed rest would be a wise decision for a young first-time mother.

Robin walked down the long opulent hallway that led to her suite in the famous hotel, Astor House. The door was opened for her, and Robin was given the key to her room. Robin entered the room as the piercing rays of sunlight shimmered through the leaded glass windowpanes. The feelings of pain and fear ruptured some covert place inside her as she looked upon the grandiose room. This was not a room in a brothel or a hovel above a tavern, this was a room fit for a lady of prominent status in society! Robin was pleasantly surprised to realize that she would be staying in such an establishment.

Gail appeared in the room, as she walked through the ornately carved wooden door with Williamson by her side. Williamson and Gail embraced as if they had not seen each other in a long time. The romantic love that Williamson and Gail had for each other would transcend death. Gail had been searching for Williamson ever since she last saw him the night that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

Gail kissed Williamson in a passionate exchange that would warm the heart of a dead man.

They were bound together in the afterlife because they chose to be together. Gail spoke to Williamson as if she was overjoyed. She was so enthusiastic. "Williamson my love, I thought there would be an empty space in my heart where you once were. We will stay together now because fate binds us together as a couple, said Gail." Williamson was filled with fervor as he spoke to Gail. "I have no heart to beat, but love has beaten me with victory like a battlefield drum. I have no lungs to breathe but your kiss has taken my breath away. I have no eyes to see, but your beautiful face and figure have pierced my sight! I have no flesh to feel your touch, but my hands want to caress your tender legs so much, said Williamson."

The threesome was now inside the bedchamber. Gail, Williamson, and Robin were now practically inseparable. The trio entered the bedroom and closed the lacquered wooden door. The hotel room at the Astor House was austere in comparison to some of the more lavish bedchambers of the wealthy elite businessmen of New York. John Jacob Astor was one of the wealthiest men in the world. John Astor had made his fortune in numerous ways. John Jacob Astor had been touted as a fur trader in the fashion industry.

He was also rumored to be trading opium in China. Opium addiction was sweeping through the world like a plague. Entire sections of the city were devoted to opium houses where addicts inhaled deeply imagining their pipedreams and delusional fantasies. The intoxicating substance was the reason many women sold their souls. Opium was the reason why women wore holes in the soles of their shoes as streetwalkers in the redlight districts. Opium was the reason why women lived in houses of ill repute.

John Astor married Sara Cox and was a cocky real estate investor in New York. His somewhat shady and discernable business practices earned him a notorious reputation in the opium trade. None-the-less, John Astor retained his prominence amongst the businessmen and captains of industry in New York City. John Astor's wife, Sara Cox frequented the lady's brunches in the hotel and was seen shopping for fashionable clothes in New York. Soon Robin

would join the polite company of the ladies that brunch in the Astor House!

Robin settled into her new surroundings in her bedroom suite. She had started a fire in the fireplace, just in the same way that she used to whilst she was staying at the tavern in Chicago. She had taken the small thin kindling twigs and placed them at the base of the larger logs and lit the spark with the flint. Now she used the bellows to breathe air into the flames. The embers glowed in the regal marble fireplace as the room came alive with flickering firelight. The shadows danced upon the silk satin jacquard curtains. Silhouettes of two females figures and a stern tall male physique were outlined on the white plaster walls. The figures standing so statuesque in the suite were Gail and Williamson. Soon the couple was entangled in a loving embrace. The looming shadow of Gail kissing Williamson projected across the room. The purple powder had been cast into the fire with firewood to make Gail and Williamson visible.

Gail spoke with some words of wisdom, as she stood beside Williamson. "Robin you should get some rest. We shall want to meet the ladies at breakfast downstairs tomorrow, said Gail." Gail seemed optimistic and upbeat. "I have a plan to introduce you to the social scene here in New York, said Gail." Robin pushed around some of the logs inside the roaring fire. She stared stoic and without expression at the flames. Robin looked up slowly as she spoke her reply. "I have heard stories in the papers about those wealthy, affluent sorts of women, said Robin.

Gail spoke to Robin with enthusiasm. You seem so disillusioned about joining such a clique of socialites. Some of these titular and nominal so-called ladies have lived a life of debauchery and lasciviousness like Sodom and Gomorrah. Some have even frequented taverns such as the place where you once worked, said Gail." Gail was lit from behind with purple light as she spoke. Robin was reluctant to peel out of her clothes with Williamson's presence in the background. Gail sensed the need for privacy as she looked toward Williamson standing in the doorway of the room. "You stand there like our protector tonight. I think you should watch the hallway leading to this suite, while Robin and I chat, said Gail." Robin walked away from the fireplace and into the darkness. She had some bags

strewn into a corner of the room. The feathery warmth of the fire had not yet reached the shadowy alcove that was still chillingly cold and untouched.

Robin could imagine the gentle touch of some strong hand caressing her tender flesh. The sudden feeling of cold chilled her spine, as she thought of Richard, the manager of the leather factory. Now she would strip out of her confining clothes layer by layer. Gail stirred in the room amid the rambunctious firelight. "We will meet the ladies that call themselves respectable. You will be making a first-time appearance to greet them. We will have to make a first impression here at the Astor House, said Gail." Gail hovered closer to the fire as the lavender aura surrounded her.

"I think I should try to introduce myself to Mrs. Astor. Maybe she can show me where to shop for fashionable clothing here in New York, said Robin." Robin's voice seems to be more optimistic instead of pessimistic. Robin was hoping for the best outcome. "That proposition seems like a difficult task. Gail, do you really think that a woman of high social standing like Sara Cox Astor would even talk to me? We are not acquainted. We don't even have anything in common except for being at the Astor House, said Robin." Gail crossed the room to encourage Robin as she wiggled out of her corset. Robin stood beside the oak four-poster bed, in disarray. "What will I do Gail? What will I say? I have never met such a prestigious woman before. I am a saloon girl who has danced in taverns from California to Chicago. I don't know nothing about no high society, said Robin." "Oh, don't worry Robin. Mr. Astor has some very shameful means of making his money also. He smuggles and trades opium. I don't believe that a man capable of such unconscionable practices could look down on a simple young girl from humble beginnings, said Gail." Gail's voice seemed to sympathize with Robin. "I have left my reputation as a saloon showgirl in Chicago. Certainly, no one knows that I spent my first few nights in New York sleeping above a brothel near an opium den, said Robin."

Gail gazed over at Robin as she thought about who would know such information about Robin's past life of sin. "Only the Madam would remember you, Robin. You're pregnant, so you stayed pretty-

much out of sight. You were very inconspicuous while staying at that house of ill repute, said Gail.” Robin had pulled her nightgown over her head to cover her slender figure. Then she wrapped herself up in the layers of down feather covers and crisp sheets, as if a man was wrapping his arms tightly around her. Robin wondered who would keep her warm at night if she did not do what was right.

Gail uttered a few words, as Robin stole precious moments of sleep. Robin closed her eyes to block out the light of the fireplace. Gail would keep the fire burning all night as Robin slept. Gail seemed to have a mission for Robin as she spoke softly. “By first morning light, Robin, we’ll be dressed in our most subtle plaid dress. We shall be ready for breakfast with the ladies of New York, said Gail.” Robin tossed and turned in her large bed as she spoke. “We will also be meeting Richard to make arrangements for the bank account. I will be getting a monthly allowance to spend for my personal needs, said Robin.”

The blinding morning sunlight pierced the darkness of dawn. The sun broke through the windowpanes at the painful beginning of a new day. This day would be painful because there would be those stabs of fear eviscerating Robin’s stomach. Her abdomen already ached because she was pregnant with her first child. She had morning sickness and had to vomit. She also felt the sickening feeling of self-doubt and uncertainty as she approached the task before her. Robin yawned and threw back the heavy layers of lavish bed coverings. The crisp white sheets were exposed to the cold chilling air, as Robin sat up at the edge of the bed staring at her suitcase. The fire had gone out in the fireplace, and the room was filled with foreboding. Gail lit a lantern and dashed a small amount of powder into the lantern, in order to create the purple corona light around her figure. Now that Robin could see Gail standing in the shadowy corner, the day would begin.

Gail spoke to Robin but she was longing to be with Williamson again. He had decided to wait out in the hallway to give the women some privacy. “Robin, we will wear the only respectable dress we have that blue plaid frock. You, of course, cannot fit the corset anymore in your condition. We shall have to carry the empty suitcase in front of you to hide the protruding bulge in your womb, said Gail. “I

will have to try and conceal by bulge as much as I can until I can explain myself properly, said Robin.”

Robin dressed herself layer by layer in the constraining garments of a Victorian woman of the new industrial age. This was the gilded era of finery and refinement. The post-Civil War age was adorned in gold guild leaf and crown moulding. The Astor House was a new sign of economic development. The economy was growing because of the increase in factories using steam engine technology to mass produce goods. The leather factory was making saddles, shoes, and coats to attire a thriving population of newly rich working gentlemen and ladies.

Gail and Robin descended the staircase and entered the grand parlor. There was an area in the Astor House where ladies met for breakfast. The gathering socialites would have tea in the parlor at dainty tables. They were already gathering there even in the early hours of the morning. The women were adorned in sophisticated garb. Their dresses were of fine fabric from France. The dresses were designed to accentuate the small waist and the ample bosom.

The corset was made fashionable when Queen Victoria of England wore one to her wedding. Queen Victoria was also given a diamond as an engagement ring. Once the Queen Victoria had made these emblems of society popular, a diamond engagement ring became an integral important symbol of marriage, as well as wealth and commitment. A diamond was said to be forever, just like a marriage. Robin had not been proposed to with a diamond because Robert had not lived long enough to properly announce his engagement. Anyhow, Robin would be given the reputation of a widow and young mother to be. Off course, rumors would spread about her pregnancy being illegitimate, but they would cross that bridge when they get to it. Right now, Robin would hide her pregnancy until the right time would come to announce it to her affluent friends.

The carriage arrived, as the doorman had opened the door for Robin. Gail levitated beside Robin, now only dimly lit with the purple light of the lantern. The carriage trudged down the busy streets of New York City. They would make the journey from Broadway to the bank, where they would meet with Richard. Now the morning light

was burdened with the heavy cloak of gray clouds. The air began to fill with tiny drizzles of rainfall. The sound of the rain made finite tapping noises on the roof of the carriage as the horses trotted down the street. Gail looked over at Robin in the dark confines of the carriage as she spoke. "When we get to the bank you will act as though you are very familiar with accounting and banking, just like an expert banker. We will not have Richard pulling the wool over our eyes just because he is the General Manager of a leather factory, said Gail." She was determined to make a remark that would decide the positive outcome of the events that would transpire.

Robin glared over at the lantern and the purple light. Robin was suddenly realizing that the clouds had blocked out the morning light making the carriage dark enough to see Gail glowing in all of her glory. "Gail, how do you suppose that I pretend to be something I ain't. I ain't never finished schooling except for the eighth grade. I learned my math only enough to do arithmetic. I helped the Madams at all of my taverns keep count of the profits at the bar, and of course I helped the showgirls count their tips, but I ain't no expert, said Robin." Robin seemed nervous as she gasped with every word.

Gail responded with a pretentious remark. "Well, if we fake it until we make it, then perhaps we will accomplish our goal. Robin, you said you would rob from the rich and give to the poor like Robinhood. Now we will see if we are getting Rob's riches if we will get rich today. There must be some way to get as much access to those factory funds as we possibly can today, said Gail."

Gail's voice seemed to be enthusiastic and upbeat as she spoke to Robin. Robin replied. "We will need to get enough money to purchase a mansion somewhere, respectable. I shall be a kept woman. But I cannot expect to be kept as woman to long and still remain a lady. I don't think a man would allow a nubile viable woman lay untouched, and still pay for her wellbeing. I will have to find a way to appeal to Richard. I know from years working as a showgirl and barmaid that the mind is willing but the flesh is weak for these men. Even the ones that claim that they are happily marriage. We shall see what type of happy this Richard wants to be with tantalizing little me, said Robin" She smiled a sly grin covering her mouth with her gloved hands. Soon the carriage arrive at the bank.

The rain was now more than a drizzle; it was a downpour. The raindrops marched across the sky and blanketed the air like bullets across a battlefield. No one could take cover or protect themselves completely from being soaked. Robin did not have an umbrella. She draped her coat over her head like a tent and scurried into the bank as the doorman opened the door for a lady. Robin was recognized as a lady even now, before her fine clothing had been purchased. The blue plaid dress was one of the few dresses she salvaged from the Chicago fire. Now Robin would jump out of the frying pan into the fire as she would be ushered into an intriguing world of gentry and aristocrats in New York and London.

Robin entered the bank with a gust of rain dampened wind. Gail fluttered beside her like an invisible tempest of hidden strength. Richard had been waiting in the lobby of the bank as Robin entered. Richard immediately approached her with his arms outstretched in a welcome greeting. Richard smiled as he said salutations. "Robin, you have come. I was going to send for you and have a manager from the factory escort you to the bank. It seems you received the message that I left with the staff at the Astor House. I told them which bank the carriage should take you to. Now that you have arrived, I know that you are safe and could find for yourself in this magnificent and monstrous metropolis of New York, said Richard the General Manager of the factory."

Robin grasped her suitcase firmly in her lace gloved hand as she approached Richard. She smiled without showing her teeth in a shy and genteel way. She did not want to be gaudy or brazen in her demeanor. She wanted to be perceived as refined and demure. She was dumbstruck all of a sudden. She almost didn't know what to say to Richard. Suddenly she reached over with one hand and grabbed Richard's hand. Robin placed Richard's hand on the handle of her suitcase very close to her belly and midsection. She spoke in seductive whispers. "Here, take hold of my bag for me as I walk. It is becoming quite cumbersome to carry. I need a man's strong hand to hold it tight, said Robin."

Now Richard and Robin were walking side by side with his hand grasped around the handle of the suitcase while Robin was still holding on to it. It looked like he was holding her hand as they



walked. All the while Robin kept the sly grin across her face barely parting her lips to smile. She would have to part more than her lips and part with more than her dignity to get what she wanted from Richardson. Together Richard and Robin looked like a painting from some by-gone era, a regal women and gentlemen. Finally, they reached the office of the banker.

The banker spoke to them both with a nod and pleasant countenance. "Ah, Richard you have arrived for our appointment this morning. Seems a bad omen that it rains on such a day. Nevertheless, we will conduct business on this auspicious occasion. Have you heard that the market had turned a profit for those stocks that you told me to invest in for the factory? The buyers in London have also order another shipment to be made. That good old hard work has paid off at the factory. Now we have some New York leather goods for the Brits to buy! The factory is making twice as many shoes and saddles than we expected. We are ahead of schedule for the shipments oversees. The new steamboats will quickly deliver our leather goods to Europe, twice as fast as the old sailing ships ever did, said the banker with glee."

Richard shook hands with the banker as he entered his office, delighted with the good news. Immediately, Robin grabbed Richard's arm as if she needed help to walk. Robin spoke almost interruptingly to force her way into the conversation. She was aggressive and surly. Her abrupt words were quick and determined to make a point or a pointed remark. "I have come for the funds that my deceased husband Robert Nightingale promised me in his will and testament. I will not leave without proper details about every penny that his factory had earned and how it had been spent. I will have a say from now on, on how the profits from the leather factory will be disbursed. I will be needing, requiring and demanding a sizeable amount of money to purchase a house near New York. I shall be close to the factory where I will continue to conduct business in my dear dead husband's position as rightful owner of the company, said Robin." She spoke with a stern and decisive tone to her voice. She was curt and interrupting but careful to be courteous and cordial.

A roll of thunder shook the room as the rain began to pour down in torrents. Sheets of rain covered the air like blood. This was a

battlefield of female empowerment and male dominance. However, Robin, knew already that she would be willing to be submission. Robin would lie down on the fainting couch like a damsel in distress. Her dress seemed to tighten around her like a noose. The corset was so uncomfortable on her now that she was with child. Her pregnancy could not be concealed and hidden for much longer. She would be three or four months along. Soon she would not be able to explain her belly in any other way.

Suddenly, Robin fainted, again. She collapsed to the floor and closed her eyes in fatigue. The corset had been too tight on her and caused her to faint. The banker and the manager knelt beside Robin to lift her head from the cold marble floor of the bank. "Quickly get some smelling salt and some water or brandy for the lady, said Richard." He held Robin's head in the palm of her hands as if she was delicate and fragile like a newborn baby. Gail stared down at Robin, wanting to intervene. Williamson emerged from the door of the office as if he could attempt to rescue Robin.

Robin came to. She slowly opened her eyes to find herself settled into a chair with brandy upon her lips. She tried to utter a few feeble words of grace. "Perhaps I was too forceful with my demands. However, I will be needing a more permanent place to dwell. Robert would have wanted me to have a home to raise our child in. I will stay at the Astor House while I look for a home, said Robin." The banker and the manager of the factory were conversing with each other while Robin was just waking from her unfortunate fall.

The two men had come to an agreement when Robin was unconscious. Robin had been awake to hear the discussion. "We have agreed to allow you to shop for a mansion here in New York close to the factory. I will guide you around town whenever I am free to take time out of my schedule as General Manager of the factory. You will also be allotted some funds to purchase clothing and furnishing for the house. It seems that most of your belongings were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire. Therefore, you will need to start from scratch. That will take some time and considerable care indeed. Robin, you have my permission to go on a shopping spree at any fine store in New York, that your faint heart so desires! I shall

accompany you if you deem my services necessary, said Richard the factory General Manager.”

The banker shook hands with Richard and walked him to the door, with Robin hanging on to his arm for dear life. Richard had no choice but to escort Robin arm and arm to her carriage. In her delicate state, she just might faint again. Robin was guided to her carriage, and placed inside like a porcelain doll is placed inside of a display cabinet. “I would go with you, but I have some business to attend to at the factory my dear Robin. Take care, and get some rest. Don’t worry, you will be taken care of, in the memory of my dear friend Robert Nightingale, if not for the sake of common kindness, said Robert.”

The carriage carried Robin to the Astor House again where she would recuperate from her disastrous fall. Gail appeared in the carriage again with Williamson by her side, as Robin spoke. “It seems that every time I faint, I get what I want. Perhaps, I shall have to lie and lie down for my money from common men and from gentlemen alike. I rather like this New York City way of life so far. I have gotten a fine hotel to stay in and now a new mansion and a wardrobe to boot. I wonder what Richard divulged and revealed to that banker? He probably just wants me to keep my trap shut about the noxious chemicals oozing from the leather factory, all of the inhumane child labor conditions, and how much money he is stealing from the profits of the factory. He is most likely skimming off the top and pocketing too much from the factory accounts. Now that Robert is gone, there is nothing to stop him from taking as much money as he wants from the factory profits for himself. However, I think I trust Richard. He seems to have a kind enough heart beating in his strong manly chest. I am going to find out just how strong and muscular that brutish body of his is. Beneath that shining armor is a knight filled with passion! I am going to strip away that chainmail layer by layer until I find the real male underneath, said Robin.” She was going to be like Robinhood and lady Marian in Sherwood Forest. Richard seemed like a man that would surely have some wood for her.

## “Industrial Revolution New York City Robinhood: Robin the Rich Gives to the Poor”

The carriage returned to the Astor House. The rain had subsided now. The sun was coming out from behind the clouds. Robin stepped out of the carriage into the crisp air of a New York City afternoon. Soon she would be on her way to some of the finest stores in New York. Gail glided beside her incognito. The Astor House was now stirring with the activities of high society ladies in their elegant dresses and hats. The gilded age of wealth and style had christened New York in gold satin and silver buckles. Robin had wanted to be a part of this new realm of polite society ever since she read about it in the newspapers and magazines. Now she would transform, like some sort of Pygmalion statue into a new woman.

Williamson would be waiting for the two women in the corridor that led to the bedroom suite. While waiting for the two ladies he had seen some strange things. The rumor had said that Abraham Lincoln had haunted the hotel. Lincoln had died in Washington, but Williamson had seen some eerie apparition hovering across the hallway toward him. He decided to ask Gail for her otherworldly knowledge on the subject. Williamson spoke to Gail in curiosity. “Last night I believe I saw the ghost of Abraham Lincoln here in the Astor House. They said that Lincoln had stayed here and given a speech right before he was elected. Well, last night a tall slender man with a dark beard, was wearing a top hat when he spoke to me. He removed his top hat and began to walk toward me as if I was an old acquaintance. I was there the night Lincoln was assassinated. Sure enough, he expired, dying with the bullet of John Wilks Booth. However, the ghostly figure spoke to me with words of advice, said Williamson.” Williamson’s voice began to tremble a little with both excitement and fright about what might happen.

“What did Lincoln say to you Williamson? Some spirits can follow friends and loved ones wherever they go and make contact with

them. The Astor House was a special place for Lincoln. It was a place where he was about to emerge as a powerful man. This was a place of new beginnings for Lincoln before he was burdened with the heavy weight of the Civil War. Lincoln is escaping back to a place of hope before things all took a turn to a more serious era in history, said Gail.” She was eager to speak on the subject. Although, everything she said was just a guess or speculation of what might be the reason for the appearance of Lincoln’s ghost at the Astor House after all of these years.

Williamson spoke about the ghost of Abraham Lincoln that had been giving him advice for the last few nights there at Astor House. “Lincoln spoke to me wise words of advice. He said don’t chop down the cherry tree of love until the cherry blossom has bloomed in all of its flowery greatness. I woman will not wait to be plucked like a flower for a bouquet. She will most likely just wither, until the wind blows away her petals. Don’t wait for the petals of the cherry blossom to blow away. Capture the petals and blow harder than the wind to claim them, said Williamson.” He called himself quoting what the ghost of Abraham Lincoln had told him. “You know what else he told me? Don’t wait until the cherries are ripe, and they fall off the branch to taste their sweetness. You have to pluck them from the branch before they fall to ruin, said Williamson quoting Lincoln’s ghost.”

Now Gail stepped inside the hotel suite to have a girl to girl talk with Robin. We are going to go shopping for the most appropriate attire. The society women, socialite, social climbers and business men will frequent this hotel for morning tea and business meetings, said Gail.” The purple light illuminated her silhouette in the shadowy hotel room. Gail spoke with excitement in her voice. “Robin, the opulent surroundings needed to be accompanied with more luxurious clothing so that you could look like a woman of high society, said Gail.”

Robin cleared her throat abruptly before she spoke. “You intend to blend me in with these uppity high society types here at the Astor House. I ain’t gonna lie to anyone. I just want a nice place for me and my unborn child to live, said Robin.” Gail replied with a very prompt response. “I’m not saying that you should lie Robin. Just

bend the truth a little and pretty up your unfortunate circumstances a bit. We will eventually be robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. You are like Robin of the hood, princess of thieves, said Gail.” Robin shook her head and laughed.

Robin spoke as if she had already decided that she would triumph over her adversity and conquer the fear of being accepted. “We are going to meet Mrs. Astor. The Mrs. Astor is only married to one of the richest and most successful men in the world. He started this hotel. He was a fur trader and then an opium trader. Now, Mr. Astor is a real estate investor, said Robin.” Gail giggled a little and cast a generous handful of magnesium and potassium powder into the fire to create a bright purple corona from the flames. Gail spoke with exasperated excitement.

“Yes Robin, you are going to meet the Dupont family women of Delaware. One of the wives that married into the Dupont family is traveling to New York to go shopping for fine clothing and jewelry. Mrs. Dupont will be coming with her young son and daughter to attend many social events and see the sites here in New York. Mrs. Dupont will be meeting her husband who is here on business. They will be staying right here in the Astor House, said Gail”

Robin seemed to wiggle her hips and grin a sly smile as she spoke. “We will dine with Mr. and Mrs. Dupont and with Mr. and Mrs. Astor. I will weasel my way into their lives. I will con, connive and convince them to welcome me into their rich circle of friends. Then I will find not only a suitable mansion, but also a handsome rich husband to fulfill my financial need for the future. I plan to conceal my pregnancy and convince my new lover that the baby is his! Then the wealthy upstanding businessman will have to marry me or risk social disgrace and humiliating gossip, said Robin.”

Gail responded with a nod as she spoke to Robin in the flickering purple light. “I will help you choose the clothes, comportment, conversation and etiquette to convince these women and their rich relatives to accept you into their social circle, said Gail.” Robin sighed with exhilaration. “I will meet one of the Vanderbilts while I stay here at this hotel because Mr. Vanderbilt will be coming for a business conference next week according to the man at the front

desk. I overheard him telling the maid to get a room ready for Mr. Vanderbilt's stay here at Astor House, said Robin."

Gail snickered as she spoke to Robin. "I also heard that a Rockefeller would be staying at Astor House next month. You know, of course any member of the Rockefeller family or Vanderbilt family might introduce you to a single and eligible bachelor to sweep you off of your pregnant feet, said Gail." Robin spoke with a plan. "I am now ready to start shopping in the fashionable stores to bump into these wealthy women to convince them to like me. I will be sugar and spice and everything nice. Sweeter than honey, to meet these men with money. Baby, we are gonna make it big right here in this Broadway hotel, said Robin."

Robin changed clothes. Robin stripped away her blue plaid dress to reveal her corset underneath. Her corset and stays were adjusted for the bulge that was emerging from her abdomen. Gail grabbed the green plaid dress that Robin had not yet worn. Robin held the dress up to see if she could still fit inside of it as she spoke. "The madam at the tavern had decided to invest in me when she bought me this dress. That was when I decided to put this huge fake cotton padded stomach underneath all of my dresses. I told the madam that I could not fit the dress because I was much too pregnant. That is the only way she would let me stay above the tavern and work behind the bar instead of on my back like the other saloon girls, said Robin."

Robin removed the huge fake padded baby bump from under her skirt to expose only a slight pouch. Robin spoke while she rubbed her stomach. "I am only showing a little. Or not at all really because I am not even three months pregnant yet. I just put on few more pounds since I figured out that I was with child. I am certain, I am pregnant. However, I am not certain that I will not miscarry or that the child is indeed Robert's, said Robin." Gail could tell if Robin was being manipulative and lying to her. Ghosts had a certain sort of extra intuition about people. Gail understood the situation as she spoke. "I am not asking you to lie. Robert was the man who loved you and spent time with you the most wasn't he? Therefore, the unborn child has to be his, said Gail." Robin wiggled her way into the green plaid dress with the matching hat and delicate purse.

The ladies floated down into the foyer. The hallway in the front of the hotel was a buzz with excitement because there had just been a ghost sighting. The maid that was preparing Mr. Vanderbilts suite saw the apparition hovering beside the window upon first morning light. She was still crying and trembling with fear as she gave her eyewitness account. "It was Abraham Lincoln, the former president. I saw him with his big top hat. When the president saw me enter the room, he removed his hat and nodded his head at me. I was at the viewing of Lincoln's body when the Lincoln train was traveling throughout the country. I saw the president laying in his coffin. I know his face! This was indeed Abraham Lincoln. He is a ghost haunting this hotel, said the maid!"

The ghost sighting was not the only one observed in the Astor House, because Williamson had also claimed to see Lincoln and even have a detailed discussion with the assassinated president. The doorman opened the door for the Robin and secured a carriage to take her wherever she wanted to go. Robin stepped inside the carriage and made herself comfortable. Immediately, Gail lit the purple light of the lantern to make herself visible in the dimly lit carriage.

Gail spoke to Robin in a covert sort of whisper. First, we will ask the carriage driver where Mrs. Vanderbilt and Mrs. Rockefeller like to shop. I already heard information from the front desk. I found out about one of the expensive stores where Mrs. Dupont will be going next week, said Gail." The carriage driver was willing to divulge information about all of the women that frequented the Astor House when he was asked. "Why, you don't have to wait until next week for the Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Dupont, and Astor families to congregate here at the hotel. They are all here for the wedding of one of the Rockefeller family members. His brother will be wanting to get married soon as well, you know, to keep up appearances. His own brother will not outdo and upstage him, said the carriage driver."

Robin leaned forward to show interest. She was so enamored with the idea that she was going to meet all of these successful business people. "Really and who else will be gathering at the Astor House. I only want to be dress properly to meet all of the them in the parlor or tea room of the hotel, said Robin." The coachman raised



both eyebrows and titled his head back as he rushed the horses forward. He spoke while he was taking Robin to one of the most lavish women's clothing stores in New York City. "Not only will Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Dupont, and Astor family members be there, but Carnegie himself will also be attending a ball that they are having at the hotel. Also, Julius Morgan (of J.P. Morgan banking) is rumored to attend. One of the single bachelor Carnegie men will be there as well. The wedding is what everyone will be talking about as well as the gossip, said the coachman."

Soon the duo arrived at the fancy store. Robin exited the carriage seemingly alone, with Gail hovering nearby. She stepped down into the gleaming sunlight of a promising adventure. Robin would venture into the world of high fashion and polite society. Gail had extinguished her lantern of purple light. The doorman opened the gateway ushering Robin into a realm of surreal beauty. Robin would be opening an account at the store to purchase any and everything her heart desired. The store contained fabrics and dresses designed in some of the most exclusive European stores.

Robin waltzed into the store and was greeted. A woman dressed in fine fabric suddenly approached Robin to speak. "Welcome, Robin. Richard has notified us that you will be opening an account with us here. We will now be allowed to show you some new designs. You have a blank check (so to speak) with us here. You may purchase any item in the store. We can have dresses made for you. We have a tailor. We have a catalogue of designs as well as models to display the clothing that you may want to order, said the shopgirl."

Soon the two women were inside of a parlor where many mannequins and dress forms stood. The lavish dresses were on display in every part of the room. The shopgirl spoke to Robin as if she was one of their valued customers. "Just have a seat here ma'am and we will bring you some magazines and catalogues to show you some new dresses. Do you see anything here in this room on display that you would like? Some of these dresses are ready to wear and others have to be ordered. Some of these designs are even one-of-a kind bespoke couture, said the shopgirl without hesitation.

Robin made herself comfortable in her new surroundings. Robin tried to remove her green plaid gloves one finger at a time so that she may touch the garish fabric for her new dress. As soon as the gloves were off Robin spoke. She felt like a scared boxer entering the ring. Robin's voice trembled a bit. She did not know if Richard would allow such extravagant frivolous things. "I rather like this one here. It looks like something that I saw Mrs. Astor wearing the other day. Is this the new damask fabric from France? I also kind of fancy this satin dress for evening, said Robin."

The shopgirl was ready and willing to disclose gossip about the affluent families that she had waited on in her luxurious clothing store. "Why yes, of course it is. Well, Mrs. Astor has also commissioned us to design a fur coat for her, many fur coats actually, said the shopgirl." Robin was quizzical and wanting more inside information about the single men in New York, while she spoke. "I was wondering who was still single and looking for a wife?"

The shopgirl replied with some advice. "The Rockefeller men have their Standard Oil money. The Astor family has their opium dens and real estate. The Vanderbilts have their railroad. The Carnegie men have their steel. The Dupont family is busy making wars so that they can blow up the world with gunpowder. The rest of us have to work, rob, and steal to make money in this big city. But, trust me those tycoon types are poison! Philanders, adulterers, and cutthroats, every last one of them. Stay away from those blue-blood, cold blooded, blood-sucking, leach, lecherous lovers. Those magnates will make a magpie out of a beauty queen, and treat a princess like a pauper, said the shopgirl."

Robin sort of snickered waving her dainty hand as if she was shoeing away the words of advice. "Oh, I reckon I know enough about menfolk to handle anyone! Especially some gentlemen. Heck, I handled a lot more than that in my short time in the land of love. So far, I managed to fall in love with one rich man and capture his heart. We wed, now he's dead and my world is falling apart. Sounds like a love song or something but it's all true. Cried so much I don't know what to do, said Robin."

The shopgirl glanced up at Robin while she spoke. "I happen to know quite a few of those well-to-do types. They come in here all the

time. I can keep an eye out for any juicy gossip. I even know who is ordering a new dress for his mistress and not for his wife. I know when someone is ordering a lot of new suits in preparation for courting an impressive lady. I even know the gentlemen's particular measurements, be it large or small! I know them intimately. I know them all, said the shopgirl."

Robin selected several ready-to-wear dresses with matching accessories. "I'll have the velvet and satin dress with ruffles. I find this silk satin bodice simply irresistible. I will commission several furs to look just like the ones that Mrs. Astor has ordered to be made. I hope she won't be upset if I wear the same style fur coat to some of the social events. Please put in a good word for me with Mrs. Vanderbilt when she stops by. I shall want to order this jacquard embroidered dress that I saw her wearing from afar, said Robin." The shopgirl smirked and frowned. "I don't think it's a good idea to show up wearing the exact same dress as Mrs. Vanderbilt. She may be insulted and fear that you are trying to steal some of her limelight, said the shopgirl."

Robin slowly removed her other glove when she spoke. "I desperately want the attention and approval of these powerful women. I don't think my own taste is good enough to catch their eye, that is why I want to duplicate the taste and style of the socialites here in New York, said Robin." The shopgirl looked Robin sternly in the eye with her reply. "Yes, but I do not want to betray the trust of my coveted clientele by revealing the source of their beauty. The clothes do make the man and the woman, said the shopgirl."

Robin was so intrigued. She imagined herself in a blue satin dress with a corseted waist and many layers of ruffled lace. Robin spoke only of what she knew about the famous affluent families from the society gossip section of the newspaper. "I have heard that there will be a wedding. Now, I will just have to get myself invited. I would suppose that someone like you would have the connections to get me invited to this wedding, said Robin." The shopgirl nodded and seemed to widen her eyes with a sudden idea, as she spoke. "I could indeed, get you invited to the wedding, for a price of course. I could put in a good word and highly suggest that you should be on the guest list. You would of course, have to buy many dresses from

my shop. I get a percentage of the profit! Also, do not tell a soul that I helped you get invited, said the shopgirl.” Robin’s mouth opened in surprise and elation as she clapped her hands quickly in jubilation.

Robin spoke of robbing the rich and giving to the poor as she mentioned the well-known men who were supposed be at the wedding. “I have heard that the Rockefeller men would be at the wedding to represent their family industry. This wedding is an event where some networking and polite socializing can be made. Don’t call me a gold digger but a Robin of the hood. The Rockefeller family made their money in oil. The Standard Oil Company was founded. I heard they were ruthless and shrewd businessmen. They make their own barrels to hold the oil. The family bought and managed their own railroads to transport the oil. Oil is big money, no matter who is running the company, said Robin.”

The shopgirl nodded in acquiescence as she spoke in reply. “These millions of lanterns need kerosene oil to burn at night. I imagine that the Rockefeller mansion is just brimming with excitement right about now. I have seen portraits of Rockefeller. He looks like a slender lanky man with a strong oblong head and square shoulders. He his face is clean shaven. His is adorned in a tailored suit. The fabric of his clothing seemed stiff with starch. The crisp white shirt was tucked underneath the formidable looking tailored suit. The dark fabric of the suit was woven with the finest wool blend. The shoes on his feet were fashioned with high quality leather. These were the type of leather shoes that a gentlemen would wear to an office on Wall Street. Rockefeller was a captain of industry, said Robin.”

The shopgirl nodded and shrugged her shoulders as she spoke. “I only know what the socialites tell me about the Rockefellers. The men in the family are all going to follow in their father’s footsteps. They are heirs to a great fortune. Somebody said that with great wealth comes tremendous consequences and responsibilities, said the shopgirl. The other assistants entered the room with their arms full of lavish garments. There was one intricate and opulent dress after another. The shopgirl continued to describe the details about the Rockefeller family. That Rockefeller is a magnate that was monopolizing the business of kerosene. The government is at his

mercy. The politicians are talking in clandestine meetings behind Rockefeller's back. These New York politicians want to have power and authority over the wealthy businessmen. The politicians have so much clout and control over legislation, that they can create laws against big business. They want to stop the oil company from becoming too big and too controlling. All that they could do was try and make antitrust, antimonopoly laws against Rockefeller to stop him from controlling the majority, if not, the entire kerosene industry, said the shopgirl." The shopgirl sighed and took a deep breath.

Robin leaned forward and winked one eye as if she was about to share a secret with a close confidant. "That Rockefeller had a lot of children. He was fruitful and fertile. He went forth and multiplied with that wife of his. I suppose he had a regular size standard family with the profits from that Standard Oil Company. He can certainly afford to take care of his whole household. I would wonder about all of the finery and expensive things that a Rockefeller could afford, said Robin." Then Robin tilted her head to the side and took a deep breath. Her eyes panned upward at the opulent crown moulding in the ceiling as she imagined the interior of the Rockefeller mansion.

The shopgirl continued her oration about the Rockefeller. Meanwhile, the assistants displayed bolts of fabric to Robin in silk satin. The color citron yellow seemed too bold and wild, while the mustard yellow seemed too dull. The robin's egg blue would be her signature color. After all, the color robin's egg blue bore her name. She was supposed to be this fertile nubile woman ready to break a few eggs, and a few rules as well. Robin spoke in more finite detail about the Rockefellers as if she knew them, but she only knew of them from the newspapers. "That John Rockefeller was a supporter of Abraham Lincoln. He was a brave man, courageous and valiant. John Rockefeller was a Union Civil War soldier. John Rockefeller was in favor of freeing the slaves. He was an abolitionist. He really has a soft spot for misfortunate people and the underprivileged. He made the cost of kerosene cheaper. Rockefeller intends to make kerosene affordable to light every house in America at night, said Robin."

The shopgirl bit her bottom lip slightly and paused before she spoke. "Well, I guess that is a noble goal. But, you know, the bottom

line is to make money. The ultimate goal is to become more and more wealthy. What drives a man to be so ruthless and controlling, and so conniving and greedy, I really don't know. What is the motivation of someone so rich? Why does a man want to become even richer and richer, when it is blatantly obvious that he is already rich enough? Why keep acquiring more companies and more railroads to transport his kerosene, when Rockefeller is already wealthy enough to take care of his family for many generations to come? Does he fear that he will run out of money? Does he fear that he will go broke if he does not keep acquiring more companies and more power? Perhaps coming from humble beginnings makes men more greedy, ambitious, and avaricious, said the shopgirl."

Robin seemed to realize something as she gently furrowed her brow in thought. "Yes, Rockefeller is an ambitious man. Perhaps he does seem to fear that others will catch up to him, overtake him, and destroy his wealth and power. This frightful insecurity is what seems to make a shrewd businessman.

I have also heard that he is a philanthropist. That is a kind-hearted man that gives his money away to charitable organizations. Rockefeller has donated his wealth to universities and other institutions. He is trying to make the world a better place. He eventually decided that he had too much money. Therefore, his wealth was the source of great envy, and malicious attacks against him and his family. To give his extraordinary wealth a good image, he has promoted charity. John instilled the spirit of giving into his children. His descendants will be heirs to many charitable foundations, said Robin. Robin had been listening to what the businessmen had been saying when they were getting drunk in the taverns after work.

**The Rockefellers were the oil in the wheels of progress, no more, and no less. The last man standing was the best. The midnight oil burned in kerosene lamps that beamed so bright. The oil did ignite. The locomotives blazed a trail so fast it seemed like flight. The railroad would lead the tank cars to a greedy and ruthless plight. The other oil companies were refined, but could not put up a fight. They tried with all their might. The politicians will claim that the trust is so wrong, when**

**Rockefeller says it's right. The law will learn to hold the industry in its fist very tight. The eagle eye on the dollar is all seeing, as the blind man realizes in hindsight. Oil is to burning and rain is to flooding. Standing still without progress is in contrast to running. The world goes forward with fuel. While the coachmen on Wall Street whip the four horses like mules. If the politicians stop capitalism and freedom, they are fools! When it comes to making money there really are no rules. The rich man decides who is just instead of cruel.**

Robin was primed and ready to talk about the Carnegie Family. "I have heard about the Carnegie family of Pittsburgh. The Rockefellers started in Ohio and Carnegie started to dominate in Pennsylvania. This was the family made from steel, said Robin." The shopgirl seemed to have some covert information about the Carnegie family as she spoke. "One of the Carnegie men came here and commissioned a suit to be tailored. One of the Carnegie women also wanted a dress made of silk satin and lace. She wanted a new corset fashioned for her just like the ones found in Paris. They say queen Victoria started everyone wanting a corset for their wedding as well as a diamond ring, said the shopgirl."

Robin ruminated on what little she knew about the Carnegie family, as she spoke. "That Andrew Carnegie took quite a command over the steel industry like a fire breathing dragon swooping down over the countryside. Carnegie was born in Scotland and immigrated to America. He was once a financier who fueled the American fledgling companies with European money. The new-fangled idea to build the transcontinental railroad connected the West Coast to the East Coast from California to New York. The oil was out there in Texas, being pumped out of the ground by the barrel, said Robin."

The assistants suddenly entered the room with jewelry displayed on mannequins. Robin widened her eyes in surprise as she paused in here speech. The railroads and locomotives steam engines transported oil, coal, and goods from the West to the East faster than ever before. This was the path that made the rich from the poor. Everyone in the cities needed more. The road to success was paved with blood and gore. The red ruby was like a drop of blood glistening in the dim firelight as Gail appeared standing beside Robin. Then

Gail disappeared as the shadows shifted in the room. The assistants had looked away for an instant, and the shopgirl had turned her back to pick up some more jewelry to show Robin.

The shopgirl elaborated on the subject of Andrew Carnegie. "The steel industry is responsible for making the railroads that the trains ride on. The locomotives need coal to burn as fuel. The Mellon family in Pittsburgh got together with Carnegie family. Certainly, Carnegie needed coal to make steel, said the shopgirl." Robin replied with her own knowledge. "I hear discussion among architects that get drunk in the tavern. They say that steel will be used to build tall buildings in the future many stories high, said Robin."

Robin cleared her throat politely as she began to speak again. "That Carnegie is also rumored to be a very generous man. I hear he is also a philanthropist that wants to give away large sums of money to respectable causes. There will be many buildings and statues named after both the Rockefellers and the Carnegies. I saw a portrait of Carnegie somewhere. He is sitting in a large leather chair in some official business surroundings. I noticed the keen refined tailored suit and bright linen shirt that was buttoned tight around his neck, said Robin."

The shopgirl had some insight into the conversations about Carnegie. "The steel and iron is used to make railroad tracks all across the country, over thousands of miles long. During the Civil War that Andrew Carnegie was an important official in the government. He helped run the railroads for the Union army. The North had all the factories, railroads, steel, coal, oil, and power that the Union needed to win the war. Thank goodness we whipped those Confederates. Lord knows what condition this country would be in if there were no thriving and productive industries, said the shopgirl."

Robin seemed to suddenly comprehend that she was dealing with the aftermath of the Civil War, as she spoke. "The Civil War caused all of these industries to become more profitable. Without a war there is not as much need to make steel and oil or railroads. Carnegie was also a generous patriot that profited off of the war. He is vilified in the press as making money from the misery of others and from misfortune such as the Civil War. War will always make someone rich and profitable. I would not be surprised if the



businessmen actually wanted to start a war, just so that they could manufacture supplies and resources for battle, in order to become rich from the government contracts, said Robin.”

The shopgirl seemed to bite her tongue a little as she made her next phrase. “I hear some of the businessmen say that the Chinamen are being used to build the railroad out West. They are cheap laborers that will work for very little money. Some men are even Shanghaied and kidnapped in Shanghai, then they are forced into a sort of slavery as shipmates and railroad workers. They make the Chinese men light the fuse for the dynamite stick to blow up huge holes in the sides of mountains. Sometimes the railroad needs to go through a mountain and a tunnel needs to be made. So many people die when the rock falls on them after they blow up a stick of dynamite. Explosives are what it is called. The Chinese men used to use it for fireworks and celebration. Now the industrialist of this gilded era of gold, use the dynamite to destroy mountainsides blasting a path for railroad tracks, said the shopgirl.”

Carnegie made the steel and stole first place in a competitive industry. Soon, buildings would be built taller in the big city.

**Locomotives cannot run without railroad track, and the railroads cannot be built without steel. The fear of the trust was real. Carnegie made an alliance with other business giants. Steel barons needed coal, railroads and had a reliance. The envious and controlling politicians would soon be in defiance. Once the moguls became so rich from their businesses, there was no denying how much power their money was buying. Many politicians were being paid to allow success while others were lying. The big businessmen wanted to dominate everything and stop the little business from trying. Those who were not competitive enough went home poor and crying.**

The diamond necklaces sparkled in the dim light of the parlor as more jewelry was put on display for Robin while she formed a phrase. “The Rockefeller men and the Carnegie seem generous and compassionate to the poor. I have been called somewhat of a tenderhearted considerate person myself. I have some concerns for the poor factory workers that labor all day in my leather factory. My husband left me a great and prosperous company. I now want to be

a philanthropist to help the poor women and children who have to work in such brutal conditions. Perhaps I can strike up some sort of conversation with one of the of Rockefeller relatives or the Vanderbilt associates and charm their pants off. I don't mean to be crude or brazen or anything, but what type of woman do you suppose those men like? I hope they are interested in a roll in the hay or two with a young saloon girl who used to sing in taverns. Oh, tell them that I now own a profitable shoe factory, but I am a widow, as single and free as a bird, said Robin."

The shopgirl was immediately astonished when the emerald necklace was placed around Robin's neck. The saleswoman emerged from the hidden façade of the timid shopgirl. The shopgirl spoke as she tried to persuade Robin to buy the necklace and a dress to match. "Robin, you should get the dazzling green emerald necklace to accompany that green silk stain ballgown and corset. Of course, we will have to take your measurements and make adjustments in the fit. By the way, the Vanderbilts might be there as well, speaking of railroads. The railroad industry spurned the whole thing. Your deceased husband may have used those same railroads to transport beef and leather goods. Maybe there is already some sort of familiar business connection there. Who is the man running your husband's company now that he has passed on? You will need someone to escort you to the party. A suggestion from me won't necessarily get you invited with certainty, said the shopgirl."

Robin immediately understood that being invited to the wedding would not be guaranteed. Robin's voice seemed to rupture with vulnerability as she spoke. "Yes, there is a man named Richard who is the manager of my deceased husband's company. He has swept me off my feet and onto my feet after I had a fainting spell in his office. I even fainted at the bank. Richard will be allowing me to spend as much money as I choose, as soon as I am done with him. I hope to work some charming magic on him somehow, said Robin."

The shopgirl had some extra information about the businessmen. "Carnegie had some ties with Pullman, when he started to sell his famous sleeper cars. Vanderbilt railroad, traverse the nation. Those locomotive trains could suddenly carry people comfortably across the country from California to Chicago, to New York. I have been in

one of those sleeper cars before. Girl, I tell you, it was the adventure of a lifetime. I saw the Wild West on a trip to California. I looked at some fabrics and dresses in San Francisco. There was silk there from China that was as vibrant as a spring day, said the shopgirl.”

Robin adjusted her dress and held a sapphire bracelet in her hand as she thought about her dear Robert. “I can remember the day that Robert and I took the train from Chicago to New York. It was the last night we were together. He had carried me through the flames of the Great Chicago Fire. I will always love Rob for steeling my heart, and steeling away to a safe place for me. I survived! He sacrificed his life for mine. I will always be eternally grateful, said Robin.” Tears began to well in her eyes as Robin became nostalgic. She reminisced about the memories from the past romance that made her heartache with lament.

The shopgirl was so enthusiastic and energetic when she tried to talk about the Vanderbilt family. “The Rockefellers had a large family, that Carnegie I guess is too busy for children. He might be spending too much time away from the wife on business trips. The Vanderbilts are talking about building some huge mansions. You know, Vanderbilt made his fortune with railroads. The railroad has been the impetus for so much tremendous wealth. The steamboats are part of the Vanderbilt empire, said the shopgirl.”

The shopgirl wanted to tell the details of her vast world travels, like a sojourner. “Thanks to Vanderbilt, a girl can now go all the way across the continent in a railroad sleeper car, and then catch a steamer sailing across the Atlantic Ocean. I traveled on a steamship on a transatlantic trip to Paris. I got off the steamer just off the coast of Canada. Newfoundland is where I saw vast sheets of ice drifting in the water. There was something so ominous and dangerous about that ice. It made my blood run cold as the steam liner pushed past the huge icebergs floating off the coast of London England. The northern Atlantic Ocean is so cruel at unforgiving at times. I stepped off the steam liner, where I was once in the lap of luxury, and into the simple austere streets of London. When I arrived in Paris several days later, I began to acquire fabric and fine leather. I have been told that your leather goods are some of the finest in the world Robin. Your deceased husband really made a name for himself both in

America and abroad. One of the Vanderbilt's relatives asked me about getting some custom-made leather riding boots for polo, and also a new horse saddle for his new stallion. I shall refer him to you now that we are properly acquainted Robin, said the shopgirl."

Robin was going to speak about how Robert had fought hard in the Civil War and made many acquiesces. "One of the people he had once bragged about meeting was a Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt was an enormous shipping magnate with a vast fleet of steamers. Some of the largest steamers he had were donated to the Union army in the hopes of victory over the Confederacy. That Vanderbilt has a great many children, not just from his wife, but also from other women. This of course is a salacious rumor that is pernicious in nature. He is now over in Harlem trying to expand his railroad empire even more. With a name like Vanderbilt, that sounds like it has the word built in it, he has built some impressive things, said the shopgirl. The shopgirl was part of one of the most prominent haberdashers and atelier fashion workshops in New York. "

Robin had heard that Vanderbilt had many descendants and relatives. Robin spoke hoping that she could meet one of the Vanderbilt relatives to find herself a millionaire suiter. "I have also heard that the Vanderbilts liked to entertain quite a bit. They throw some lavish and extravagant parties that spare no expense. The wedding will be as grand as any party that the Vanderbilts attend. Not only will I get myself invited to morning tea, but also to one of those infamous seven course dinners at that Vanderbilt mansions, said Robin."

The Vanderbilts built so much. **The tracks of the railroad blazed a trail. The locomotive pushed forward with steam and they did not fail. The gold rush and the Manifest Destiny was a reality riding the rail. The railroad blasted forward and did explode. The trains trained the workers to carry a large load. The train passengers were fearless and they were bold. They came from all places and all ages both young and old. They came from the lands of sweltering sun and they came from the ice cold. The Vanderbilt railroads built a road. The frontier was conquered with the stories the Vanderbilts told.**

The shopgirl had already been romantically involved with one wealthy descendant of the Dupont family. The shopgirl spoke as if she was still feeling the ups and down of falling in love. "I fell in love with a Dupont man, and I got my heart broken. My emotions were shattered like tiny shards of glass from a broken mirror. He was so romantic at first. Then he started to ignore me more and more. He stopped sending me flowers and taking me to opulent, fancy parties. Later, I heard he had taken up with some other girl, an heiress, said the shopgirl."

Robin was still hopeful about meeting a wealthy man as she spoke. "I'm so sorry to hear that you were a jilted lover. I want to try to snatch up one of those Dupont men if I can. They can make things explode like gunpowder in the bedroom with me all they want to. I'm already at the Astor House, so why not have some appropriate fun of course. It has been said that the Dupont family came from French aristocracy. The family fled the French Revolution to seek refuge in America. Now they can seek some solace in the arms of a loving woman and wife. I also heard that those Dupont men like to marry their own cousins. I shall have to break them up from doing that too frequently, said Robin."

The shopgirl had a sudden epiphany about the state of the post-Civil War gilded era. "Something good has to be the result of terrible tragedy. The horrendous and atrocious evil of slavery was a plague upon the nation. The dark reign of the slave trade ruled the South. There were terrible consequences of slavery that made very wealthy men. The plantation owner became so rich from the free slave labor. They did not have to pay any of their profit from cotton to their slaves. The masters only had to provide enough food and shelter to keep the slave alive. The slaves were tough. They could make it. They were strong enough to stay alive! The war was a terrible result of the desire to abolish slavery, said the shopgirl."

Robin had some input about the war as she ruminated speaking on the subject. "Slavery came to an end because of a bloody battle of good against evil. When really, both sides caused good equally as much as both sides caused evil and pain. The good that came from the Civil War was that many men became captains of industry. The new magnates and businessmen got very rich from the Civil War.

Every family that we named today made a multitude of money from the Civil War. The Dupont family made mountains of money from blowing up mountains and gold mines during the California gold rush. However, the Dupont family also had a contract with the government to make gunpowder for all of the wars that were fought. If there is no war, then Dupont does not make as much money, said Robin.”

The French Revolution was the impetus that caused the Dupont family to flee France. The family was part of the landowning aristocracy. The Dupont family was nobility in France. The shopgirl cleared her throat and raised her arched eyebrows as she spoke. “They had a lot to lose when they left, but if they had stayed, they may have lost their heads. The French revolutionaries were beheading their own King Louis, because he was too powerful. King Louis was not compassionate and inconsiderate. He cared little about the despair and the disparaging difference between the rich and poor. King Louis had the responsibility of taking care of the impoverished portions of the population. However, instead of a crust of bread, his infamous wife Marie Antoinette only offered the starving masses cake. Marie Antoinette was quite famous for saying: “Let them eat cake!” I personally think that cake, would have caused a toothache for the undernourished mouths of the poor French peasants. Even after Marie Antoinette was executed, her tribute to French cuisine and sweet confections of dessert will forever be immortalized in myth. The modern world has its heroines, heroes, and demigods, who will not be soon forgotten. America is now making its mark in the annals of myth and legend. American legends will be the gunfights and lawmen of the Wild West, the California Gold Rush, the Civil War and all the wars that will follow. All of this destruction is exploded with Dupont family gunpowder. I shall not be too ashamed to say that I almost married into such a notorious family, said the shopgirl.”

Robin seemed to squirm in her chair eager to speak. “I shall be pleased to say that I am married into such a family, or any family of great merit. I hear drunken chatter at the taverns that the J.P. Morgan businesses would be dominant in the railroad industry, as well as steel, and eventually banking or financing. I heard a lot from

the Wall Street types. I have been listening to women chatter here in the Astor House during morning tea. I will simply have to find a way to get noticed among this crowd. I will try to secure some future husband for myself who is of some prominence. Perhaps I will become Robin, the steel magnate's wife, instead of Robin of the hood, said Robin."

Dupont was a doer. A Dupont could get things done efficiently beside the flowing rivers of their chemical factories. A Dupont chemist could concoct powders and potions like an apothecary or alchemist of the ancient world. Chemicals would rule the modern world. Some men could change lead into gold, while other chemist could make an explosion of emotion. The promotion of gunpowder put the locomotive wheels of war into motion.

The sun was beginning to set, when its luminous light was cascading through the windowpanes. It almost pained Robin to leave the parlor showroom, but she had to be back to Astor House before nightfall. "I must go now. I shall commission you to create a great many dresses and suits for me, as well as corsets. This is a grand opportunity for me to tell you that I shall like some lingerie as well, to wear for these intimate moments, said Robin." Then Robin put her elegant gloves back on her hands one finger at a time and glided toward the door of the parlor. Soon, the doorman opened the door for Robin to enter back into the outside world. Robin had now stepped out of the realm of a socialite filled with fashion and gossip, into the world of thundering rain.

The carriage arrived to carry Robin back to the hotel suite. Whilst inside the carriage in the dim light Gail appeared with her glowing lilac lantern corona. Williamson sat beside Gail. Williamson seemed to grasp Gail's hand as they sat as a couple side-by-side. Gail spoke as she laced her fingers between William's fingers holding his hand. "Robin, I was hoping that you would finally emerge from that fancy clothing store. We have great news! Williamson and I have found my dear brother Robert. He is keeping company with Abraham Lincoln there awaiting your arrival at the hotel. Robert is in good spirits and wishes you well, said Gail."

The rain reigned tyranny upon the bustling city below. New York was under assault, as the thunderstorm raged in the skies above.

The carriage had thundered down the crowded streets of Broadway and arriving at the hotel. The rain was unrelenting! The wet drops splashed against Robin's face, as she wept think only of her dear Robert. Robin missed her deceased husband and felt a bit of guilt in searching for a new beau. She should still be dressed in black as a mourning widow. However, many years had passed since that fiery night in Chicago that took her beloved Robert from her.

Gail hovered beside Robin as they ascended the stairs to her bedroom suite. The hallow halls seemed to echo a certain sorrow. Now, Robin had many aspirations for tomorrow. Gail spoke hoping to hear about the many bespoke dressed that Robin would have custom made for her. "I suggest you liven up your mood and attire for morning tea tomorrow. I have found a way to get you invited to the wedding! A dear friend of mine, who is a servant in a wealthy household here in New York, has had your name placed on an invitation to the wedding. Both Howard and Wyoming have friends who work in the homes of the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers. The secretary, who takes dictation for the wedding invitations has been persuaded to write your name in calligraphy on one of the invitations. Also, you will be introduced as Mrs. Nightingale! As you should retain your married name for social reasons. Robert Nightingale had quite a few friends among the businessmen here in New York, said Gail."

That evening Gail cast some more powder into the fireplace. The lilac light glowed allowing Robin to gaze upon Gail. They were a threesome now. The threesome converged on the bedchamber. Williamson and Gail began to feel a genuine love for each other. If they had lived, their flesh and blood would have been united as a happy romantic couple. Now Williamson and Gail were united together even after death. Gail spoke again with upbeat tone as Robin disappeared into the bathroom to remove her long satin dress and corset. "Robin, we have to decide what you will wear at the wedding. For all we know, you might be meeting your next husband. Don't continue to be a widow in mourning. Robert has just given me the permission to tell you, to pick up and go on with your life, said Gail."



Suddenly Robert appeared hovering in front of the fireplace shrouded in lavender mist. He spoke with trembles of love and fear in his voice. "Robin, I have been searching for you all through my life and even in my death. I loved you for only a brief fleeting moment. We laughed, we cried, we almost died in each other's arms. I escaped the flames of the Great Fire of Chicago. I took you into my arms and carried you away from the inferno. Now we are together again. I will never leave your side again, said Robert." Gail's brother Robert had survived the tragic fire and lived to tell the tale!

The thunderstorm outside was drenching the windowpane with raindrops, while the windows to the soul were flooded with the painful teardrops in Robin's eyes. Robin embraced Robert, as they were united as one. The emotion poured from Robin in torrents of bitter sweet happiness. The feeling of sudden surprise overwhelmed them both. There was laughter through tears as the couple was reunited. Happiness is to laughter as sadness is to tears. Tears of joy are to surprise as screaming is to fear. Suddenly, the ghost of Abraham Lincoln appeared. Robin streaked in terror, and fainted in shock!

## “Industrial Revolution New York City Robinhood: Robin the Rich Gives to the Poor”

Robin, the steel magnate’s mistress, might be the woman to steel a man’s heart and his wallet! This was the age of steel! This was the gilded age of gold. The goal was progress. The steel industry was foraging a pathway from East to West. Some people said it best, as Manifest Destiny. The powers that be had decided to push further and further West. The gold rush had conjured the spirits of greed and avarice. The Wild West would be brought to justice. Robin would meet men that would want her for their mistress. The long list of suiters would leave her listless. The end result of her pursuits would be bliss. Robin was still caught up in Robert’s kiss. Then, amidst the happiness of the moment, Robin realized what she had missed.

Robert spoke to Robin as they sat by the fire enveloped in purple light. “There are forces of good and evil at work in this city. The good forces want to help other people improve their lives. The good forces want to make other people happy. The evil forces are bad because they want to destroy other people’s happiness and cause pain and suffering. The bad ones want to make personal gain selfishly from upheaval and wrong doing. Robin, the bad forces want to take from the poor and helpless to make themselves even richer. Some of the bad forces want to take from the poor and give to the rich, said Richard.”

Robin wrapped her arms around Robert feeling the warmth of his strong muscular arms and strong broad shoulders. It was indeed her Robert! He had lived through the tragedy of the Great Chicago Fire! Now after such turmoil, Robin and Robert would conquer the world of oil barons. Now, Robin spoke to Robert while looking into his crystal-clear eyes. “I have been invited to the wedding of a famous businessman’s daughter. Since I have been in New York I have been staying at the Astor House. Now that I have been having morning tea and chatting with several socialites, I have been cordially invited to

the wedding. I suppose we can now go the wedding together, said Robin.”

Robert replied instantaneously. “No, Robin! You will attend the wedding alone. I will be waiting for your return from the wedding. I want you to do a bit of conversation about business. We will want the guests at the party to think that I am dead or missing. This is to find out who I can trust with my business and investments. Suppose you should try and make polite acquaintances with a Rockefeller, for I had met one once during the war and quarreled with him quite a bit about trusts. If you could somehow make a good impression, then I could be in good standings with Rockefeller again. I hope to make some business partnerships to increase my fortune, said Robert.”

“Robin held Robert even tighter as she kissed his cheek. She spoke as her wet lips touched his face. “I have heard that the Vanderbilts will be there also. I would like to go on a trip on one of their steam liners across the Atlantic. I have heard so many fascinating things about the steamships. The interior of the luxury liners is as lavish and exquisite as any famous hotel. The walls are lined with red satin. The floors in the steamships are covered with fancy carpets and marble. The bedchambers are furnished with fine carved wood beds. We didn’t get a chance to have a honeymoon, Robert. We should go on a grand excursion across the Atlantic to London and Paris together, said Robin.”

Robert replied as he sighed and kissed Robin on her forehead. “That is a grand idea, Robin. We shall sail across the ocean on steamship together and honeymoon in Europe. First, we have some business to attend to at the Dupont wedding. Robin, you will want to talk to Carnegie or his wife and find out which company he will buy next. Perhaps there will be a business trip that he is going on. Any hint or clue could help us make a good business partnership with Carnegie, just like Carnegie and Mellon. Ah, steel and coal, a match made in heaven. Robin you shall steal as much business information as you can find out from any businessman at the wedding reception. Don’t forget to try and charm you way up to a Dupont. Your French lessons will come in handy now. As I recall you were fluent in French. In fact, when I first met you at the Tavern in Chicago you told

me you were a French woman from Paris. That is where, you said you learned to dance professionally, said Robert.”

Robin strolled over to the bed and parted the silky red curtains. She needed Robert to loosen her corset, so that she may undress. “I will be wearing the most sensational dress at the wedding. I hope the bride will not be too, upset. I shall get more attention than she will, said Robin.” Robert loosened Robin’s corset as she wiggled out of the tight garment. Her bare back was exposed to the flickering fingers of firelight. The purple fire blazed in the fireplace. Robin sat on the bed. She was now facing Robert as the dim candlelight danced in his eye. The couple kissed again. Suddenly, Robin reached down to remove each silk stocking one at a time. The skin on her bare neck seemed to respond to every touch of Robert’s strong rough hands. Robin was now without her corset and confining clothing, as she nestled herself under the covers.

Robert had been contemplating a lot while he slept. He had been thinking about his business and how prosperous he could become. He was thinking about how many greedy businessmen would be at the wedding and how he could somehow convince them to make him wealthier. Robert had spoken with Richard before he left and remembered a conversation that he had with the manager of his leather goods factory. Richard said some peculiar things that day. “Every man needs a pair of good leather shoes no matter what path he takes. A trailblazer needs some good soles on his shoes, because he is going to walk through the fires of hell to get to a new level of progress. It takes a brave man to step forward and accept the challenge of trying something new. A man who marches to the beat of a different drummer is a bad soldier and a fool, but that soldier is someone noteworthy enough to make up a common phrase about. Any man who is marching needs good boots. Another war would do us some good. We might try to nail down a government contract for combat boots, said Richard.”

Robert remembered Richard taking a puff from his tobacco pipe as he grinned. Robert had replied. “Rich, you don’t have the name Richard for no reason. You aim to be a Rich hard living man of worth. But, it’s always hard to remember that all of the money belongs to the government. No matter what country you live, in the currency

says what nation will honor the bill. It used to be a question of what bank would honor the bill. You could then take that money to the bank and cash it in for gold. Someday the government won't have enough gold to cover the paper dollar bills that they issue as money. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, said the scripture. The government can give you money and the government can take it away. So how do men become so wealthy? How do men accumulate so much money, without the government or some enemy taking their money away and making them broke?" Richard took another puff from his pipe.

"Now, my dear friend we have stumbled upon the subject of popularity and admiration. The man that has the money is well-liked by the government, as well as many of the people who he does business with. I would guess that men like Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Dupont, Mellon, Pullman and others have created a wonderful product that the mass population just loves. The reason why the product and the brand are so respected is because the customer is always giving the best opinion. The customer likes the price and the quality of the product that these wealthy men sell. Therefore, the government does not sanction them and prevent their product from being sold. If the product that the businessman sells is an evil product, like opium or other addictive drugs, then the product has to be restricted. Many times, the dealer of an evil product is vilified in the media. Sometimes the media just vilifies extreme wealth. Some of these men have control over the majority of the industry that they are in (making a monopoly). Absolute power corrupts absolutely. All good things must come to an end, said Robert."

Robert recalled how Richard took a long hard deep breath and continued to talk about business. The two men had reunited in the parlor of Richard's home on Fifth Avenue. Richard had been astonished and presently surprised. "My dear friend we are talking as if you never left. Well, I say you should find out what wars are brewing, and also what companies need financial assistance at the Dupont wedding tomorrow. Those men became rich because no one took their money away. Most importantly the country that gave them that paper dollar bill is still in existence. The Civil War taught us all a

thing or two about obsolesce. The Confederacy printed money, hoping that the South would become its own nation. When the Confederate rebels of the South fell to factories and wealth of the North, all of that paper money that the Confederate government printed was useless. It could not be spent. That Confederate money lost its value as cash. Any government or nation can become no more. That means the money that that nation prints as currency can become arcane and without value. As I always say, strong country, strong dollar, said Richard.”

The next morning Robin would dress in her custom-made attire and prepare to attend the Dupont wedding ceremony. The dawn broke through the clouds that morning as Robin stood before the mirror in the grand suite. She was naked and ready to put on her clothing one layer at a time. First she would put on her under garments that she wore underneath her corset and stays. Soon she would need assistance getting inside of her corset. Robert emerged from the shadowy alcoves of the bedchamber. They had spent the night wrapped in each other’s arms. Robert had loved Robin as if she was the only woman in his life. He had almost died for her in the Great Fire of Chicago. Now the burning flames of passion were blazing in his heart. The love and fervor for each other had been reignited all night long.

Robin had stolen a kiss from her beloved Rob. Rob robbed her of her inhibition. She lost control. She let go of her tightly corseted Victorian attire. She bared all for her loving husband. He had picked her up, and swept her off of her feet. She had wrapped her legs around his firm muscular, male physique. She could feel Robert’s rippling muscles against her tender female flesh. He was as hard as steel. He stole the breath from her chest as they embraced. Rob had waited so long to hold the love of his life. He had even defied death.

## **“Robin and Rob of the Hood: Steal from the Rich Men Made of Steel”**

The day of the Dupont wedding had arrived. The sun broke through the clouds as if the light was shattering the darkness. Robin awoke with the morning light piercing her eyes. Robin had rekindled her love for Rob. They had spent the night tangled in each other's arms. Rob was about to steal Robin's heart more than any steel baron ever could. Today was the day that Robin would attend the wedding as a guest. Robin dressed in her bespoke tailored satin dress. She could feel her corset tightening around her tender delicate flesh as she breathed a sigh of excitement. Robin gave Rob one last kiss goodbye. Then she dashed down to the carriage that would carry her to the wedding.

The carriage was dimly lit and foreboding. Gail would accompany Robin to the wedding as the carriage scurried down the winding streets of New York City. Mrs. Dupont Mrs. Dupont Rockefeller was the eldest daughter of John Rockefeller. She would happily marry Charles A. Strong. Mrs. Dupont had been lauded almost as much as the queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> of England. Her marriage to a philosopher would be the epidemic of social events of the year. Robin glanced over at Gail. Gail lingered in the purple lilac light in the back of the carriage as she spoke. “When we arrive at the wedding you will not mention reuniting with my brother Robert Nightingale. After more than two years everyone will assume that Robert is legally dead, said Gail.”

Robin nodded in agreement as she spoke to Gail. “Rob told me to steal as much information as I could from the tough as steel businessmen. He wants me to find out about business deals and investments by making friends with as many influential types of people that I can meet at the wedding, said Robin.” Soon the carriage arrived at the location of the wedding. Robin emerged dressed in her corseted finery. Her satin dress shimmered in the gleaming light as she glided toward her rightful place among the other socialites attending the wedding.

Robin was seated to watch the wedding ceremony. The bride was adorned in intricate white lace. Her diamonds sparkled like a night sky full of stars. The gleam of the diamond cut through the dim light like the piercing blade of a dagger to the heart. The groom was dressed in a striking black tuxedo designed especially for the occasion. He was dapper and well attired. The cerebral life of a philosopher had now been intertwined with the socially stimulating lifestyle of an oil heiress. The abundant fortune would be the lubricant for many lavish luxury lairs. The bride seemed resplendent after the wedding ceremony as Mrs. Dupont stood beside Mr. Dupont. Their marriage would be a strong marriage not just in name only. The bond between the couple was strong as Ms. would become Mrs. Dupont.

The affluent people of New York were in attendance at the wedding. Suddenly Robin joined a conversation about ghost sighting of Abraham Lincoln at the Astor House. "I have stayed at many places in New York City since I relocated her from Chicago. One of the most haunting and mysterious is the hallowed corridors of the Astor House. The ladies' ordinary is a famous function. The gentlemen's lunch menu is illustrious, but the apparition of the esteemed Abraham Lincoln is infamous. I once saw the ghost of old Lincoln hovering down the hall as he disappeared into the wall, said Robin"

One of the members of the Dupont family decided to chat about Lincoln. "My father tells stories about how he met Lincoln in the oval office. The curtains of the oval office were heavy with the soot of war. War is a dirty business of bloodshed and muddy battlefields. When the dust of gunpowder settles there are men lying dead on the ground. My father had been close enough to the frontlines to hear the cannon fire. The Dupont family had inked many contracts with the federal government to produce gunpowder. Every time the Union cannons fired a Dupont heard the sound of coins jingling. A Dupont had been put in control of the explosive power of gunfire. Many small factories were built by the rivers anticipating a disaster. Impending danger was everywhere nestled along the banks of the river. Working in those Dupont chemical factories was sometimes fatal. One explosion had killed many workers at once. So many small



factories were built in case one explodes the others would still be intact to make more gunpowder, said the Dupont family member.”

Robin nodded. Robin seemed engrossed in the old war story as the Dupont family member continued the anecdote. “When the dust settled and the smoke cleared from the cigars lit in the oval office, the cannon fire and gunfire of the battlefield had made the Dupont chemical empire a lot of gold dust. The drummers played a loud and rattling refrain as the men marched across the smoky fields of the Civil War. Dupont chemicals created those clouds of misery and victory, said Robin.”

The Dupont family member had married her second cousin. They had fallen in love but were somewhat put together through an arranged marriage to keep the close-knit Dupont family together. The money stayed in the family. The family secrets were as tightly kept as a valuable chemical formula. The Dupont woman was gracious in her demeanor. She was adorned with her Victorian finery. Her lavender satin dress was corseted at the waist. Her large hoop skirt had many ruffles that gathered in the back. The shimmering fabric flowed to the floor. The Dupont woman spoke. “I heard that your husband’s factory exploded and burned to the ground in Chicago during the fire. Our family had had some experience with factories exploding and burning to the ground also. In fact, the chemical factories were made small and spaced farther away from each other anticipating the terrifying event that the small gunpowder factory could explode at any time, said the Dupont woman.”

Robin was intrigued with the concept of volatile chemicals and sudden explosions. Robin thought about how her heart would explode with fiery passion if her husband was the head of a powerful chemical empire as she spoke. “The Dupont family could use some of those French concepts of freedom and liberty to help encourage the need for factory safety and reform for factory workers, said Robin.” The Dupont woman, seemed to smirk and give a scathing reply. “The Dupont factory workers were fully aware of the potential for danger when they signed up for the job, said the Dupont woman. The Dupont woman turned and walked away from the conversation.”

The room full of wedding guest stirred with excitement as the one of the Vanderbilt family members entered the room. She was suitably

addressed in the finest silk satin fabric. Her pale blue corseted dress was tailored to her figure was precious and meticulous intricacy. Her eyes were small and close together, and seemed to hold a curious gleam. Her rouge lips were parted as she spoke to Robin. "I have heard many socialites speak of what tribulations you have experienced since you have relocated to New York. I am told you stay at the Astor House (a fine establishment). Though I do believe you are in need of an architect and a realtor to assist you in your endeavors, said the Vanderbilt woman."

Robin leaned closer toward the Vanderbilt woman with a wide-eyed sort of glee glistening in her eye. "Yes, I am in want of a good house builder. I tire of seeing the haunting apparition of Abraham Lincoln hovering down the hallow halls of the hotel. I have been told tall tales about Vanderbilt meeting with Lincoln during the war, said Robin."

The Vanderbilt woman glided toward Robin as she seemed to take interest in the conversation. "Yes, he tells me all the time how he was in charge of all of the Union railroads. Vanderbilt was the most blatantly obvious man for the job. Afterall, Vanderbilt was already a big successful businessman at building and controlling railroads. We Vanderbilts know our way around the railroad industry. He always told me about how he used to hear the cannons fire so close to the frontlines. The hazy smoke of the battlefield would hover across the horizon, as the soldiers marched forward toward their uncertain fate with exacting precision. The soldiers marched on a path of destruction as the railroads brought them to the battlefields. The railroads brought the guns, food rations, the uniform, and soldiers to the frontlines of war. The clouds of coal billowed from the locomotives like smoke signals of danger. Those railroads just kept on bringing those supplies to the Union soldiers. Sooner or later the endless replenishing of guns, ammunition, and food kept the Union forces strong enough to win the war, said the Vanderbilt woman."

The walls of the oval office were host to such men as Vanderbilt. The curtains had been parted open to allow some of the penetrating sunlight to pierce the covert secrecy of the this prestigious inter chamber of the White House. Lincoln had sat at his large wooden desk with a sense of foreboding heavy laden on his furrowed brow.

Vanderbilt had been using his railroad system of interconnected train stations to deliver critical supplies to the Union army. Meanwhile, the Confederates in the South were busy blowing up as many railroad tracks as they could. They were making their own gunpowder, and stealing Dupont gunpowder from Union factories. Some say that Dupont was also selling gunpowder to the Confederacy. However, this was rumored to be before the war officially started in 1861.

Soon the Vanderbilt family would be building more lavish and extravagant estates for their family legacy. The mansions would be famous centerpieces of many cultural events for many generations to come. Robin would need to build a bond with such people who knew about building mansions. Soon Robin would build her own impressive mansion. Robin had been invited to vacation at summer villas in Europe, mansions in Delaware and fifth Avenue. However, she had yet to construct her own abode.

Suddenly the bride and groom entered the room amid applause and adulation. The Rockefeller family contributed tremendously to the war effort with their oil lamps. That Mrs. Dupont had fallen in love with an intellectual man, a philosopher. Meanwhile, Robin had been languishing as a widow for almost twenty years in New York. Robin was a fixture there at Astor House, as a resident socialite that no one ever really socialized with.

Now was the opportunity of Mrs. Dupont to finally make interesting chatter with the mysterious widow of Astor House, Robin Nightingale. Mrs. Dupont approached Robin gracefully. Robin seemed to ingratiate herself, humbling herself to the lady of the moment, the bride. The bride spoke to Robin as a curious gossip rather than a wedding guest. "I have been hearing these ghost stories about old Abraham Lincoln haunting the hotel. You have been there so many years, have you seen the apparition? I would be horrified if I ever saw a real specter, said Mrs. Dupont."

Robin seemed to feel a cold shiver slowly climb up her spine as Mrs. Dupont spoke about Lincoln. "I have seen the ghost of Abraham Lincoln. He has even spoken to me on many occasions as a close confidant. He has given me candid and sincere advice. Many times, I am startled. Other times, I am pleasantly surprised. Lincoln is a gentle spirit that seems to be benevolent and docile, said Robin."

Mrs. Dupont seemed captivated and frightened as she spoke. “I think the afterlife is all an illusion of a convoluted dilutional mind. The philosopher in me refuses to believe in ghost, but the spiritualist in me wants to entertain the idea or the possibility of life after death, said Mrs. Dupont. She continued to give her opinion as she spoke to Robin. “I am a Dupont, now I intend to hyphenate my name to keep my family as part of my identity. Afterall, the Dupont name is noteworthy and prestigious. My father worked hard to build up such a family name. I am glad I married the man I love. However, I shall always be known as Mrs. Dupont to friends and family even in death.

Robin seemed to feel a sense of urgency to rush back to the hotel and check on Robert. Her husband had returned to her. Robin glanced around the room for a glimpse at the decadent surroundings. The setting seemed surreal and ethereal. Robin felt like she was floating on a cloud of acceptance and admiration. John Rockefeller had been an oil baron, a magnate, a businessman. The kerosene oil lamps had revolutionized the way the American population lived. Now people could work longer hours burning the midnight oil. Rockefeller had been the oil in the gears of progress for the new world of factory workers and night travelers.

Mrs. Dupont spoke candidly about the Rockefeller family. “Our family has always had a tight bond with the other big business families. The Vanderbilt railroads carry the kerosene oil from the refinery to the customer. We try to make our own railroads and our own cars to carry the oil, but somehow we will overlap with the powerful railroad empire of the Vanderbilts. The oil needs to keep flowing. Even during the war, the oil lamps were lighting the way toward victory. Now the oil lamps are part of everyday life for most of the population. Back during the war, the whale oil lamps burned bright. However, my father would be the torch bearer for the next generation of wealthy men in American industry. He had always carried a torch for the love of money, said Mrs. Dupont.”

Mrs. Dupont seemed to want to divulge more information about the close ties of business. “The Carnegie camp is always built close to Mellon, the Pullman family and the Vanderbilt family. The Carnegies have that steel! They always steal your heart with some of

their power and influence. Carnegie made the industry successful during the Civil War, said Mrs. Dupont.”

One of the family members that was related to Carnegie was in attendance at the wedding, and stepped forward. “I know the Carnegie family well. That Andrew Carnegie is so busy making business moves he doesn’t seem to have time to make a move for the female of his choice! Please forgive my crude phrasing. Andrew Carnegie was friends with my uncle who was a Union soldier during the Civil War. My uncle said Carnegie was as brave as any soldier, but did not have to get his hands dirty actually fighting on the battlefield. His steel company helped make the guns and cannons used to fight the Confederacy. My uncle was in a small town outside of Virginia when he was fighting as a cavalry soldiers for the federal army. He said Carnegie sat far off in the distance on his horse. The battle had raged from the wee hours of the morning until the sun crept below the horizon to hide. Carnegie stayed close enough to the front to see the smoke of cannon fire hovering overhead like a harbinger of death. The gun smoke shrouded the air like a veil of death. Many men would gasp and run for cover but Carnegie remained towering over the battlefield in the vast distance looking down from his brave steed like a watchman of sorts. He watched the cannons fire and the guns unload upon the gloomy topography. Carnegie gazed down toward the battlefield looming over the rivers of blood that he had caused to flow. Carnegie steel had produced the weapons of destruction that had rained blood and tyranny down upon the killing fields of death, said the woman.”

The woman’s uncle had only known Carnegie from afar. The uncle had not been a close friend of Carnegie. Her uncle had been one of the fighting men who had sent letters back to his family and friends giving detailed accounts of the war. The woman continued to tell her tall tale about Andrew Carnegie. She painted a portrait of Carnegie that was ambivalent and indifferent not really passing judgement on him. She hesitated to say how she really felt about Carnegies role in the Civil War. “The wealthy men of the North did profit from the Civil War. The Carnegie steel company did grow ever stronger and more prominent during and after the war. Carnegie steel flowed like blood and molten lava from a volcano of death. The

war made the steel industry explode like the deadly eruption of ancient Pompeii. Carnegie's company reigned molten steel. Carnegie stole any hope of competition from other businessmen. Carnegie rained a tempest of blood during the war, said the woman."

Robin glanced at the woman as she seemed to continue her tirade. "Carnegie got his coke and his steel flowing more profusely than the blue blood through his cold veins. Andrew was as tough and hard as the steel he produced. Soon the coal from Mellon's coal mines would help Carnegie make steel. One cannot make a lot of steel without a lot of coal to stoke the fiery furnace with. Like the true believers from the scriptures. Carnegie and Mellon stood by those fiery furnaces together stoking them with the bellows and fueling the fires of war. The war made both men a tremendous profit. Both Carnegie and the hawks of war would be great bedfellows regardless. Mellon also gave his coal to fuel the locomotives that carried guns and soldiers to the battlefields of death and destruction, said the woman."

The woman seemed to be very convinced that she had inside knowledge about Carnegie from her uncle's letters written during the Civil War, as she continued. "My uncle said that Carnegie used to sit on his high horse and watch the battles unwind from a viewpoint high above. He would say Carnegie sat there watching the battle as if it was a sporting events, as he smoked his large cigar. Reporters and war journalist stood alongside him. Carnegie rode around on his thoroughbred stallion as if he was going to the horse races.

My uncle said he had a conversation with Carnegie. After one of the battles, he was watering his horse and overheard Carnegie talking to a war journalist. Carnegie had said some very interesting things. He said: I would gladly give away some of my wealth to those in need. I would give my money for a good cause. You can't take it with you. I might as well spread around some wealth to help others. My name can be remembered for something other than ruthless business practices and somewhat questionable monopolies and trusts. I give a great product to the world of industry with my steel. I steal nothing from the common poor man, and I make the rich richer. Carnegie had said this while the war reporter jotted down some notes, said the woman."

Robin seemed interested. "Tell us more about Carnegie's beliefs and sayings. I have heard that he said that he believed that those who could not survive financially should be allowed to perish, said Robin." Robin nodded and raised an eyebrow as she glanced at the woman. The woman responded immediately. "I have heard that Carnegie wanted to better society with his wealth, but also that the poor unsuccessful businessmen should be allowed to parish. He espoused to the theory of survival of the fittest in business and making money. Any rival of his was surely not fit to be wealthier than him, for he tried to destroy all competition. Carnegie succeeded therefore, he considered himself to be the fittest to rule in the steel industry. My uncle had spoken directly to Carnegie about this subject. My uncle had been fit enough to survive battle, therefore was more fit than those who died during the Civil War according to Carnegie. My uncle now works for Carnegie in the steel industry to this very day, said the woman."

Robin was interested in some good advice and words of wisdom as she cleared her throat gently to pose a phrase. "There are rumors that Carnegie's steel workers are very uncomfortable in their work conditions. The wealthy businessmen of this gilded era are covered in gold while the workers that make them all so wealthy are covered in soot, blood, sweat and tears. I hear rumors of a workers' strike all the time in the streets. Businessmen and common steel workers from Carnegie's company get drunk in taverns here in New York and talk about what misery they were forced to endure under the authority of Carnegie, said Robin."

The woman did not seem informed so much about the toils and tribulations of the common steel worker. She replied in surprise. "Well, I haven't heard anyone complain who worked in the steel industry. My uncle has made a pretty penny agreeing with every inspired word of men like Carnegie. He would not tell us anything bad about Carnegie's steel mill practices. I would imagine that the person running such a huge company would have no idea exactly what it is like for one of the common steel works. If the conditions are truly bad, then Carnegie should do something about it. I hope that he is such a committed and noteworthy philanthropist as he claims to be, said the woman."

Robin seemed to tilt her head to the side and make a phrase that would make a newlywed cringe. "That Carnegie is a spry old man with life in him still. Although he is newly married, I would wager that such a conquering hero would be interested in some new leather that he has not worn out yet. I have such leather, a whole factory in fact. Perhaps he can try his hand at some supple young hide that he could slide his powerful foot into. The leather industry may somehow coincide and collide with steel, if only to steal a bit of limelight in the newspaper headlines, said Robin. The room was filled with polite chatter as, Robin mumbled to the woman with a sly expression on her face.

Robin watched transfixed as an enigmatic figure crossed the room. This was a woman with something to say. "I happen to know someone who works with Mr. Mellon. The Mellon family is not famous for farming, or producing melon, but (as you well know) for mining coal! They are the coal miners that put everyone else out of business with their ruthless policies and fierce competition. The plumes of smoke billow out of the chimney of progress. The coal fuels the locomotives trains that carry us across the country. Why, I myself arrived here from San Francisco. I rode in luxury and style in one of Pullman's passenger cars. The clouds of coal smoke emerge from the engine room of the train. The train brings people together, said the woman."

The lavish wedding ended. The guests filtered gradually out of the room. The carriage came to carry Robin back to the Astor House. Robin had been living at the Astor house as a resident for many years now. She was a fixture there for the ladies' regular lunches and morning tea. Robin has stolen away into the morning sunrise to attend the wedding. Now Robin had returned to Rob with stolen bits of information about the big businessmen. She had made acquaintances with some of the Dupont family, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, the Carnegie, Mellon, and Pullman. Now the Nightingale company was prime to make a move into big industry. The factory had been prosperous but there were still issues. Robin wrapped her arms around Rob as she returned to the bedchamber suite there at the luxury hotel.



Robin spoke with excitement in her voice. "Rob, I met so many influential people at the wedding. I was surprised that people from Delaware would invite so many socialites from New York to attend the wedding, said Robin." She was now undressing in front of the mirror. Rob was helping Robin remove layer after layer of clothing. "Rob, I do believe I will be attending a meeting tomorrow at the factory. Some friends of mine from the Women's Society will be meeting to discuss some issues about this abhorrible coughing sickness and the work conditions inside these factories. The factory workers are becoming sick with the awful throat illness. They are dropping like flies. I should hope that they would drop to their knees. The workers should thank me for giving them all someplace to live and work, said Robin."

Rob dropped to his knees slowly sliding down Robin's body until he felt the cold hard wood floor on his bare flesh. Then he embraced Robin holding her as tight as he could as he kissed her tenderly. Robin closed her eyes and slowly sighed in ecstasy as Rob stole her heart. Her heart seemed to beat faster when he touched her. His hands were searching her body as if he was looking for a mysterious opening to a cave in the darkness. The heat of the two bodies seemed to warm the room even more than the crackling fire that blazed unrelenting in the background. Their love was like a ship at sea rolling and rocking toward the destination of pleasure. They reached the crest of the waves at the highest point of passion. They were sailing across an ocean of love, life and death.

## “Women of the Nightingale Society. Meet in New York”

Robin Steals Away in the Night to be at the meeting of the Nightingale Society. Another meeting of the Nightingale Society would soon take place. The Women of the Nightingale Society would congregate in the woods under the cover of night in a gale storm or in fair weather. The Ladies of the Nightingale Society were not fair-weather friends. They were always there for each other. They were friends both in times of sorrow and famine, and in pleasant times of plentifulness. The sky stirred with sinister heavy clouds of dismay. Something was about to emerge from the shadows. A representative from every domain and surrounding village of New York was going to be at the meeting. The coughing sickness was still killing men, women, and children both in the factories and at in their beds at night. Robin rose early that morning. She found Robert with his loving arms wrapped around her.

The door to the dark carriage opened as the light of the full moon cast mysterious shadows upon the hallowed ground. The sound of the horses galloping resonated and echo in the night. The air stirred with tension. The carriage brought Robin closer and closer to the meeting in a clandestine location hidden deep in the woods. The leaves trembled in the trees as the carriage rode through the forest. The wind seemed to scream burdened with the dying breath of those stricken with the illness. The howl of the unrelenting wind burned in Robin's ears like blazing fire. There were bodies being stacked as tall as a two-hundred-year-old oak tree. These bodies would be burned to ashes as the coughing sickness had taken so many lives. The ancient oak held many mysteries, as well as a cure to the coughing sickness. The Women of the Nightingale Society would gather together wood, bark, herbs, and sap in the forest to find a cure.

Robin's carriage finally arrived at the meeting. There was a large blazing bonfire lit like a funeral pyre in the middle of a massive circle. Robin emerged from the carriage with Gail by her side. Williamson

and Gail never left each other's side. Williamson and Gail had formed a loving bond as a couple. The three of them were a threesome of fearlessness and fortitude. Robin walked toward her first meeting of the Nightingale Society with determination and curiosity. Robin tossed the hood back off of her head revealing her courageous face beneath her cloak.

The meeting had already begun. One of the first speakers had stepped forth to give a report. She was a woman from Brooklyn. The woman from Brooklyn wore a plain dress that was suitable for factory work. Her large oblong head had a broad sturdy forehead and thick dark eyebrows. Her gargantuan round hazel eyes were fringed with thick dark eyelashes. She blinked the tears out of her misty eyes as she spoke. She was a working woman who labored all day in a factory. The conditions in the factory were dismal. She spoke in between sputtering words. She gasped and coughed because her lungs had been filled with coal that burned in the furnace of the factory. The steam engine helped run the machines that made cooking pots in the factory. "The factory where I work is filled with coughing sick people. Even the small children that work in the factory grow tired and weak before the day ends. We have no breaktime and no time to eat and relieve ourselves. The coughing sickness is killing more workers than the coal smoke that blackens our lungs," said the woman."

The woman had been working in factories heavy laden with smoky air so much that her voice was raspy when she spoke. "I have witnessed many men (sandhogs) dying while building the Brooklyn Bridge. They work underwater, with nothing but a candle or a kerosene lamp to light their way. They dig deeper and deeper underneath the water of the river to make the foundation for the towers that will hold the new suspension bridge. The men working on the bridge have come back with a strange sickness that we do not know or understand. The men also have the coughing sickness from working in hot cramped, small spaces under the rushing waters of the river," said the woman"

She tried to clear her throat as she continued to tell the story of the Brooklyn Bridge workers. "They call the Brooklyn Bridge workers 'sand hogs.' The men work under water inside watertight

compartments. The men dig deeper and deeper into the sediment mud of the riverbed until they reach the bedrock at the very bottom. The man who engineered the Brooklyn Bridge has died of tetanus after his foot was amputated. His knowledgeable son has taken up the torch and continued on in his father's place. However, not the son has been stricken with an illness they call the bends, a paralyzing disease that afflicts many of the underwater workers. The son descended into the watery abyss day after day while fighting a fire in one of the underwater chambers, and that is how he became so ill. The son also suffered from the coughing sickness, said the woman from Brooklyn."

The woman from Brooklyn cleared her throat and dapped the tears from her eyes. "I am acquainted with his wife Emily. I gave her the bark and herb tea that Robin had given me, and the son stopped his terrible cough. Unfortunately, he is still confined to a wheelchair, while his wife Emily cares for him daily. Emily is now relaying messages from her husband, who is the chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge to the workers daily. The building of the bridge continues. The workers build the steel cables and towers reaching across the river between Manhattan and Brooklyn. Many more men would have died from the strange coughing sickness if it weren't for the bark and herb tea, said the woman from Brooklyn."

The trees in the dark woods in the outskirts of New York seemed to stir with a restless unrelenting wind. The full moon stared down at the forest, as the massive fire burned in a carefully constructed bonfire. The women had been adding branches to the fire to make it burn as blinding and bright as they could. The women were all standing around the bonfire awaiting the news of a cure for the coughing sickness.

The woman from Brooklyn struggled to speak as tears welled in her eyes. The emotion she conveyed was a mixture between excitement and fear. She spoke as she had witnessed an accident at the construction site. "The rushing water of the rivers was a great divide that separated Manhattan from Brooklyn. There was an engineer who had imagined a way to build a bridge across that great chasm of water. The hungry masses that thrived in the crowded

domain of Brooklyn had a daily commute across the river to earn their living, said the woman from Brooklyn.”

The woman from Brooklyn held back tears as she continued to speak. “Many men died trying to build the Brooklyn Bridge. These impoverished men came from places in Europe. The day that construction started the head engineer Roebling was holding a compass and taking some measurements. Not having too much experience around busy boating areas, he got his foot stuck. He had cried out in pain with a shrill scream that resounded across the riverbanks. It had seemed that the engineers’ dream of making a bridge had been crushed with the bones in his foot. His toes had to be amputated to save his life. The engineer had very little faith in medical science and would not take the advice or care of his doctors. Soon an infection set in and he died of a sickness, said the woman from Brooklyn.”

The woman from Brooklyn continued her story, as her smoky voice broke and trembled. “His son took the helm of the project as if he was a captain steering a ship safely across the river. However, his voyage was not safe either. The day the fire broke out was like a nightmare. The sandhogs were descending deep beneath the surface of the water in compressed air wooden caskets! The sight of the water tight compartments was like looking into a large watery grave. The wooden coffin-like chambers were hot and suffocating. The air was heavy and laden with misery and worry. The compartments were crowded with workers digging deeper and deeper in the dismal, dim candlelight. The firelight flickered in the darkness. The Kerosene lamps lit the way, but when knocked over could start a firestorm. First came the fire of conflagration then came the cataclysmic deluge of flooding water. The men shrieked in terror as they caught fire. Then the watertight chamber ruptured. Bursting, the wooden compartment filled with water, drowning the men as they screamed. I shall not forget the unrelenting terror that poured from these poor souls as they drowned in both flames and dark cold water, said the woman from Brooklyn.” Her voice trembled and then suddenly began to be fortified with strength. “There has to be some type of healing for the men who work on the bridge, said the woman from Brooklyn.”

The woman from Brooklyn continued her story of dismay and misery. "I labor all day in the factory with no time to take a breath between shifts. I barely have enough to feed my growing family. Last week there was a fire in the factory. There was no exit to quickly leave the building. The factory floor was cluttered with obstacles that blocked the tiny exit. There was a clatter as factory managers, men, women, and children rushed to the door. There was a roar as the flames ripped through the factory. Children who worked in the factory cried out for their mothers. Men screamed in hard brutish yells as the fire scorched their flesh. I ran toward the door in a flood of people trying to escaped. I was nearly trampled to death in a stampede. I made it out of that factory fire. I stand here to tell the tale. Many other factory workers did not, said the woman from Brooklyn."

The woman from Brooklyn's voice broke with emotion as she continued to talk. "I was afflicted with the coughing sickness. I recovered because I used these mysterious herb and bark teas as well as ointments and elixirs. We have to try and cure the other sick factory workers before too many people die from the coughing sickness, said the woman from Brooklyn."

Another woman stepped forward. She was dressed in a simple dress of fine fabric. Her prosperous husband had been in the tea business. She lives in Manhattan just across the river from Brooklyn. Her face was oval with large brown eyes. Her plumb cheeks were rouged with a subtle blush. Her lips were colored with a bright accent of pink. Her eyebrows were delicately arched. Her broad round forehead was framed with meticulously groomed ringlets of curls. When she spoke, her eyebrows raised as she spoke in a gentle but fervent tone of voice. "I saw the draft riots of 1863 unravel before my eyes. I stood in shock as Manhattan men violently rioted. The rioters did not want to be drafted into the Union army. The men were opposed to fighting the Civil War because they thought it was a rich man's war that did not concern them at all. Manhattan was on fire with violent anger and upheaval, said the woman from Manhattan.

The ritual of the burning fire circle was at the center of the meeting for the women of the Nightingale Society. The woman from Manhattan had attended several meetings about the plight of factory workers and impoverished women and children in New York. The full

moon loomed overhead as another part of the ceremony took place. Several nightingale birds were released into the trees at the stroke of midnight to symbolize liberty and hope.

The woman from Manhattan grasped her hands together and took a deep breath before she began to speak again. "I watched the immigrants enter Manhattan from Europe. These new immigrants were searching for a place to live and work. Many of the new workers crossed the East River into Brooklyn. Men came from Brooklyn on small ferry boats to Manhattan to work. The river was clogged with throngs of commuters on boats. The Brooklyn Bridge seems to soar above the surface of the water of the busy river like a man-made mountain of hope. The hope is all tied up in the metal wire ropes that suspend the bridge connecting the two domains together, said the woman from Manhattan."

The woman from Manhattan pressed an embroidered handkerchief to her cheeks to restrain her tears as she spoke. "The bends, is what they call the sickness that the men get from digging in a compartment underwater. However, there is another sickness that is strangling the throats of the men and women who crowd the Manhattan streets. It is the very same coughing sickness that has plagued us since the war ended. The herbs and bark ointments seem to help cure the coughing sickness when the sick person places the ointment on the neck and chest. The ointment is added to boiling water and a large blanket is placed over the head of the sick person. The steam from the ointment is deeply inhaled. This treatment seems to stop the coughing sickness dead in its tracks, said the woman from Manhattan."

Manhattan was at the pulsating heart of a thriving metropolis. After the Civil War New York was growing in population by leaps and bounds. The crowded streets of Manhattan were lined with stately apartments. The woman from Manhattan was living in an apartment with carved wood panel wall and portraits of herself and her husband painted in the impressionist style. The portraits were so true to life that they looked like photographs. The harsh reality that she saw everyday was too brutal for the eyes of a camera, and too cruel for an artist to interpret in a romantic fashion. The woman from Manhattan had paintings from Monet, Renoir, and other

impressionist artists of the era. From far away, the Monet paintings looked detailed and meticulous. However, from up close the obvious small brush strokes stripped away the illusion of reality creating an artist's vision. Oil paint on canvas was the subject matter of the wealthy socialite, just as much as oil in a kerosene lamp was the topic of interest for oil barons and businessmen.

The woman from Manhattan had a husband that came from a wealthy tea empire in England. The English tea barons were not proponents of labor laws. The tea was harvested from India. The workers in India were treated harshly. They had long arduous workdays in the sweltering heat with no relief. The workers worked from sunrise to sunset. Tea was big business in England and the New World of America. In the South, tea drinking was entrenched in the mainstream culture of socialites. Teatime was a part of the social culture. Now, tea was also a magical elixir that could cure the coughing sickness in Manhattan.

The woman from Manhattan spoke in an ingratiated humble manner. "Every time I take a sip of hot tea, I swallow slowly feeling the hot liquid flow down my throat like a river of life. The healing tea completely surrounds my senses. The bitter-sweet taste feels like comfort wrappings its arms around me. The feeling is of spine-tingling warmth on cold dark nights. I look into the tea cup, glancing at the deep amber golden liquid as a cure for any ailment. The coughing sickness vanishes with every sip I imbibe, said the woman from Manhattan."

The bonfire stirred, as the roaring blaze continued to burn through the night. The full moon sat nestled in a blanket of stars. The woods echoed the howl of the wind. The leaves shivered as they clung close to the trees. Suddenly, a tall spindly woman slowly walked into the firelight. She was draped in lavish fine fabrics of silk satin and ruffles. Her Victorian corset forced her female form into an hourglass silhouette. Her round face was fixed with rogue. Her thick dark hair was carefully placed atop of her head in pressed curls. Her hat sat upon her head to coordinate the fine fabric in her dress. She was a woman from the New York domain of Queens. She spoke as though she wore a diadem and held a scepter, like a monarch or ruler. Queens was named after the Queen of England. The area was



named when the Dutch relinquished the territory to the English long ago. However, the woman from Queens was humble and soft-spoken. The coughing sickness had stolen most of the fierce fiery tone from her exuberant voice.

The woman from Queens was outspoken and as ebullient as an angry bull when she spoke. "I have seen entire families fall ill of the coughing sickness. It is not like any plague we have seen before. I have been using an elixir that cures the coughing sickness for good. My husband came home from a business meeting with a cough that would not subside. He had always been a stalwart and steadfast man. Nothing ever bothered my husband or ever made him ill. When the coughing sickness began to take hold of many other people, he was unaffected. He was impervious to the flood of sickness that came rushing across the ferries of the East River. One night he came home from a late-night game of poker with an unrelenting cough, said the woman from Queens."

The fire blazed even brighter as the night went on. The full moon was now veiled with a shroud of dark clouds. The woman from Queens glanced up at the midnight sky as she recalled the night her dear beloved husband came home. "My darling husband had always been a cold cruel man. He had his temper. On this evening before he left for the social event of gambling, he was a bit perturbed. He had been upset about the business of oil. He sat beneath the illumination of kerosene lamps as he gambled the night away. He had puffed on a cigar of foreign origin, but partaking in tobacco had not been an unusual occurrence, said the woman from Queens."

The woman from Queens was being comforted. She stood before a gathering of women from all over New York. The bonfire gave off pervasive waves of permeating heat that made the air hot and sultry. The crisp air of the cold night was intoxicating. The woman from Queens could feel her heart throbbing in her chest. She could taste the bitter-sweet elixir on her tongue as if she had just taken a sip. The scent of burning oak wafted through the air as she cast some of the elixir into the ferocious bonfire for all to inhale the healing smoke. She could see the sparks fly from the humungous fire as the healing elixir ignited in the flames. The sound of the fire resonated to a

thunderous cacophony. The elixir was cast into the blaze, as if the fire had swallowed the mysterious medicine.

The woman from Queens was brimming with some sort of emotion when she spoke of her husband. "While my husband was away for a night of gambling and poker. I was using a poker in the massive fireplace of our mansion. I relished the idea of a new delicacy. On that night my flavor of the moment was my new carriage driver. He was a young brutish male that could really deliver all that I desired. My new carriage driver was full of passion and vigor when he was running errands and doing favors for me, said the woman from Queens."

The socialite clique in Queens called this woman who stood before the huge fire the Queen of Questions. Others referred to her as the queen of Queens. She was the queen of strange questions that generally had no answers. This Queen of Questions would raise curiosity in some of the most bizarre subject matter. She spoke leaving all of her questions silent. "I had so many questions at first. When my husband fell ill, I was ambivalent with emotions of both relief and worry. I was somewhat relieved that my husband could not speak to yell at me in fits of frustration and rage. The coughing sickness had stolen his voice in the same way that he had stolen my voice and ambitions. However, I was worried that he would die from the coughing sickness, and I would never hear him utter another word to speak again, said the woman from Queens."

The lavish and lascivious risqué parties of the Victorian era were wrought with frivolous fun and fantasy. Women wore tight corset to shape their waists and figure. Some women chose to pose without their corsets on in photographs. There were fancy parties that involved taking photographs in the nude. Many risqué women would pose for the pictures. Although the taboo of nudity was still frowned upon in polite society, many Victorians of the industrial revolutions and gilded era saw the naked portraits as art that could impress their husbands and potential suitors. This Queen of Questions was of course curious about the risqué parties and the Victorian lingerie.

The woman from Queens continued her story. "I decided to go to a lingerie party to think of ways to lure my husband back home to me. The night he went out to gamble, we had argued so loud that

both of us nearly lost our voices. At the risqué lingerie party, I tasted the curative elixir that would soon rid us all of the coughing sickness. I had been posing for fashionable photos in my garden all day. Several of the other ladies at my lingerie garden party had also felt the urge to pose for pictures. The flash of the camera was exhilarating. I eventually posed nude to bare it all for my man. After I had a few drinks, the elixir seemed to be more effective. Several women at the party had been taking the elixir every night to prevent the coughing sickness. The other women who took the elixir had also discovered that drinking wine and spirits seemed to make the potion more effective. Not one woman had a cough after taking the potion and drinking four glasses of red wine, said the woman from Queens.”

The huge fire in the center of the circle stirred wildly as the woman from Queens seemed to laugh with delight. The woman from Queens stepped back into the shadowy glow of firelight while yet another woman of the Nightingale Society stepped forward to speak.

The woman from Staten Island emerged from the darkness. The woman from Staten Island stepped forward into the dim moonlight. “I have been told that the abolitionists and famous freed men had come to a Hotel on Staten Island to celebrate the end of slavery in New York. Staten Island was a place of excitement and grandeur. The freed slaves came to speak and make festivities to celebrate freedom. Then there were hospitals filled with the sick that were created on Staten Island. Now that we have chased away the quarantine hospitals, we are cloistering ourselves away in a secluded alcove of healing. We have made halcyons to cure the coughing sickness. In Staten Island I have, cured the coughing sickness with steam and salt sauna of boiled bark and herbs that I have gathered from the forest, said the woman from Staten Island.”

The woman from Staten Island glided around the circle of fire as she spoke to the gathering of women from the Nightingale Society. “Staten Island had once been a place of refuge and isolation for hundreds or even thousands of sick people. The sickness had caused the afflicted to be shunned. Their family and friends had to distance themselves from the sick so that they would not become ill with the same sickness, said the woman from Staten Island. The

coughing sickness took hold of Staten Island and swept through the households like a brush fire, said the woman from Staten Island.”

Gail appeared from the scant patches of Shadow. A bit of potassium powder was cast into the bonfire, as the purple corona light began to glow. Robin held a lantern with a bright violet flame to shine a light on Gail. Gail gazed at the flaring bonfire as she listened to the women talk about the cure for the coughing sickness. The full moon glowered with its power pouring down on them. The wind stirred bellowing the fire to burn even hotter.

The woman from Staten Island was dressed in bright crimson satin silk from head to toe. She even had a little hat covered with silk red roses to match her dress. Her large amber eyes glistened in the moonlight as she spoke. “On Staten Island I throw many dinner parties. Each night, couples come to swing on my porch swing and dine at my exquisite dinner table of delectable cuisine. I have tried the elixir and the rubbing ointment on those who had a cough and felt that they might be coming down with the coughing sickness. The results are really promising for these herbal treatments. The elixirs and the ointments are like rouge on the lips and cheeks. The rouge brings the woman to life and enhances her beauty. One night I was making a new rouge recipe for my lips and cheeks and found that the coughing sickness was cured with my rouge recipe. I smashed together several assortments of pigments from flowers and berries as well as adding the ointment to my rouge. Once the healing elixir and ointment was added to the rouge, I told all of the ladies at my dinner party to try it, and they all did. One such guests took the rouge with ointment and healing elixir home and put it on her sick daughter’s lips and cheeks. Immediately, she stopped coughing, said the woman from Staten Island.”

The woman from Staten Island seemed to be pleased with the results of her rouge recipe. She herself, was covered in layer after layer of rouge on her lips and cheeks to match her crimson dress and hat. The woman from Staten Island seemed to look up at the moon and dark midnight sky as she recalled the quarantine hospitals of Staten Island burning. Now she can see the fire before her as a flame of hope as she spoke. “Every sick girl that applied the rouge with the elixir in it, was instantaneously cured of the coughing

sickness. All of your life and even in death you cannot expect anyone to look at a blank surface and call it a wonder. A woman's face and figure are like a blank canvas. Monet or Renoir would want to paint an elaborate illusion to create art. Without a stroke of paint, rouge or grooming a woman's face is a blank canvas. Once each feature is emphasized the blank face become a portrait full of life instead of a blank canvas. A blank sheet of paper has no purpose, if it has no written word, drawings, or symbols on it, no man would glance upon a blank sheet of paper and stand in wonder and in awe of an empty page. Once my rouge recipe is written on that page then the world (as we know it) will begin to change. Ladies, I give you the rouge that heals the plague, said the woman from Staten Island."

Gail glowed in the purple light of the lantern. Robin stood in awe of all that was unfolding before her. The woman from Staten Island spun around in little circles. The woman from Staten Island twirled her skirt and laughed as she yelled out each ingredient in the rouge, ointment, and elixir. The fire roared as if it was echoing the words that the woman from Staten Island spoke. "The Staten Island ferry would carry workers. The sick people that were quarantined were not allowed to leave the island, but many would sneak away to avoid getting reinfected with the horrible illness. Many of the patients with the coughing sickness did not want to stay and get reinfected. The second or third time they got the coughing sickness, the symptoms were not as severe. The people who were reinfected healed a lot faster. Some of them had no symptoms at all but could still pass the coughing sickness on to other people as carriers, said the woman from Staten Island." The tree branches seemed to bend as if they could dance. The wind shook the leaves and howled through the darkness of the night.

Suddenly, the woman from the town of Yonkers in the Bronx stepped forward. She was a short, stout and stocky woman. The woman from the Bronx was dressed in a yellow and green plaid dress. Her large round eyes pierced through the darkness as she spoke. "A river divides the Bronx into what we call the Hills and Flats. Many of the ladies who live in the Flats threw some garden parties and got sick with the coughing sickness, while the women of the Hills threw caution to the wind. The women in the Hills heeded the

warnings of others and stopped socializing in large crowds to prevent the spread of the coughing sickness. Women from the Hills began to disassociate themselves from the women from the Flats. You could say they avoided them like the plague, said the woman from the Bronx.”

The woman from the Bronx shrugged her shoulders and grasped her hands together as she began to speak. “The river is full of turmoil, and it is also full of promise and hope. I had a garden party where I showed my unusual assortment of flowers and fruit trees and botanicals. There is a tree that I cultivated in my garden that bares a very unique fruit. The taste of the fruit is like a shiver that rushes through your veins like a river of energy. The fruit feels like a firm round ball. The composition of the fruit causes the fruit to bounce when it drops from the branch when it is ripe. The fruit looks like a bright yellow lemon, but with a strange purple stripe down the center of the fruit. When the fruit is torn open a strange squeaking noise can be heard, and this is how you know the fruit is ripe. The inside flesh of the unique fruit it like a lemon but is bright purple, said the woman from the Bronx.”

She spoke with an excited loud voice that seemed full of energy. She swayed back and forth and waved her hands in the air as she talked about the exhilarating concoctions that she had created. “I used this mysterious fruit in several alcohol drinks at my garden parties. I found that the fruit had romantic side effects. So many of my guest said that they felt as if they were falling in love when they ate the fruit and especially when combined with any type of wine or alcohol. I have studied botany of plants and horticulture of gardening so much that my friends like to call my garden a botanical garden. The mysterious fruit also had rejuvenating properties that made the old feel young, and the young feel invincible, said the woman from the Bronx.”

Gail seemed to be glistening in the lavender glow of the lantern as the huge fire blazed beside her. The stories of healing that the women told mesmerized Robin. The midnight sky was like a blanket of stars above them as the moonlight put a twinkle in every eye. There was hope and perseverance in the words of the women.

The woman from the Bronx suddenly revealed a large ripe round fruit from inside her bag. The fruit seemed to shimmer in the untamed firelight. She forced the fruit open with her hands. There was the funny squeaking sound that she had talked about, and then a thick vicious juice that flowed from the mysterious fruit. The women from the Bronx continued her speech. "You can now see the vibrant juice that flows from this fruit. Everyone that has partaken in this mysterious new fruit has been cured of the coughing sickness once and for all. First, I allow the fruit to drop from the branch and bounce upon the ground. This bounce upon hitting the ground signifies that the fruit is ripe. Then I rip the ripe fruit open with my hands to release the squeaking sound, this sound also indicated that the flesh inside the fruit is at prime condition to be used in the love potion that cures the coughing sickness. I combine the fruit juice and pulp in a large glass of red wine, said the woman from the Bronx."

The woman from Yonkers in the Bronx seemed to be overcome with exuberance when she continued to talk about the potion that seemed to cure the coughing sickness. The massive fire still burned its unrelenting light upon all the women as they were being enlightened. "Seven other fruits are added to the mixture. The seeds of the fruit are roasted for several days and then ground up with a mortar and pestle to make fine powder. The flesh of the mysterious fruit is fermented for several weeks then combined with other fermented fruit. The rind is dried and ground with mortar and pestle. When all of the ingredients are combined, the potion is left to ferment in a clay pot buried underground in a cool dry place for a week. The potion is then used in small portions. Only a drop or two is added to wine or other spirits to cure all that ails the body. The older people who imbibe the love potion will feel spry with a bounce in their step. The potion makes all that drink it feel indomitable. The potions is effective even when they face the threat from catching the coughing sickness again after they are cured the first time, said the woman from the Bronx."

The final portion of the ceremony was about to begin. The Women of the Nightingale Society had spoken about pain and strife. Many women had stepped forward to speak about terrible conditions in the factories for women and children, and the plight of the men

building the Brooklyn Bridge. The cure for the coughing sickness had been found in various different forms. The nightingale birds had been released to symbolize freedom. Now the great gargantuan bonfire would be put out. To extinguish the fire, the leader of the women stepped forward and looked up at the gathering clouds. She cried out in an interminable voice that echoed through the woods of New York. "Let there be thunder! Come thunder, come! Let there be rain from the clouds filled with lifegiving water that cannot be confined, said the woman wearing a long sapphire blue cloak."

She threw the hood of her cloak off to reveal her face veiled in black lace. Through the black lace, her penetrating eyes stared steadfast at the darkness surrounding her. She raised her large oval head to look toward the full moon. Immediately, the thunder began to shake the air. The rain began to come down in tiny spatters of wetness. The wind stirred and then the rain drops became heavier and louder. Instantly, there were torrents of rain streaming from the sky endlessly. The rain fought hard against the flames as the humongous fire was extinguished making the forest dark once more. The light was gone except for the dim moonlight.

The shadowy images of the women scattered across the landscape vanishing as quickly as they had come. The haunting pale light of their kerosene lanterns and torches lit their way back to their carriages. Some of the women rode away on horseback riding a stride the stallion as well as side saddle. The sound of the horses galloping reverberated through the dark forest as Robin, Gail, the women from New York, and the other Women of the Nightingale Society returned to their humble abodes. The households that the women went back to would be cured with the healing potions and elixirs that had been brought before the burning circle of fire. They would all be cured beneath the full moon of midnight!



## “Robin Builds a Nest”

The sunlight began to rupture the darkness, as the morning broke through the clouds. The carriage was just arriving at the Astor House. The sound of the horses galloping ceased, as Robin returned home from the meeting of the Women of the Nightingale Society. The dawn had come of a new tomorrow. Robin emerged from the carriage, shimmering in the bright sunrise of a new day! The doorman and staff greeted Robin like a familiar face. Robin had been making the plans to move out of the hotel and into a new home. Robert had returned many nights ago. The baby that was inside her was beginning to kick more and more. Robin knew that the child was ready to be born soon. Robin and Robert had conceived the child before they were separated the night of the Great Chicago Fire.

Rob was waiting in the suite at the hotel to steal Robin's heart. None of the Steel barons could make her feel the way Rob had. After all, Robert had been the one who had saved her life when he snatched her from the flames of the fire. Gail was waiting by the fire amid the shimmering lavender light. The lilac light from the fireplace had cast a long shadow across the room. Robert sat in the shadows awaiting Robin's return.

Suddenly, Robin felt a sharp stabbing pain in her stomach. Robin grabbed her abdomen in writhing agony. The seething indomitable pain would not subside. This was the irrefutable pain of child birth. Robin had gone into labor. Some women labor all day before they push the child from their bodies. Robin reached for Rob. She clung to Rob as she fell to her knees. Robin gazed up at Gail as she felt the stabs of labor. Robin spoke with an aching gasping sound in between her words. “Gail, you are skilled in the art of healing and women's health. I will need you to help me have this baby. You will be my midwife, said Robin.” Gail grabbed Robin's hand and helped her to stand. Robin grimaced as she staggered to her feet.

Robin could feel the child slowly moving down her birth canal. There was an interminable throbbing and unrelenting pain! She pushed and pushed repeatedly. Robin was now in a squatting position holding on to both sides of the bathtub. Robin's clothes had

been quickly removed. She had been helped into the bathtub, that was only partially filled with water. Gail was holding her hand throughout the entire childbirth. Robert paced the floor back and forth as he anxiously awaited the arrival of his newborn child.

The feeling of giving birth was like a wave rising and falling. The panicle of pain reached its most intense moment. Then suddenly, the wave crashed to the beach destroying everything in its path with pain. To Robin, childbirth was like a whirling storm. The pattern of pain was like unending rain of blood, sweat and tears. The pain rained down on her like a tempest. Robin felt like a ship at sea being tossed around in the turbulent swells of the angry ocean of blood. Gail stood beside her, while she helped the baby come through. Robin shrieked in perpetual agony. Tears rolled down Robin's cheeks as she grimaced. Another torrent of torture rained upon Robin as she pushed. Robin breathed heavy and pushed once more. Several hours passed as Robin was coaxing the baby to emerge.

When the child appeared the feet came first, a breach birth!! Gail pulled the child the rest of the way out and into the world. Gail spoke with caution and fear in her voice as her voice rang through the room. "Robin the baby is stuck inside of you! It will take some effort to free him from the cord that is tangled around his leg. I have to find a way to cut the cord and pull him free from his bondage inside your body, said Gail!

A roaring boisterous cry resonated throughout the lavish hotel suite!! Gail quickly, and carefully cleaned up the mother and baby. Soon the baby was wrapped in clean bed sheets and towels. Robin was now a new mother. Robin was cleaned with soap and disinfected. Then she was rubbed with several herbal ointments to prevent infection and to sooth her pain. There were several types of tea and elixirs for Robin to take. Gail was brewing another cup of tea, while Robin was holding her newborn baby boy. Robert tentatively entered the room with hesitation.

Robert slowly walked through the door wondering if it was suitable for him to enter the bedroom. Rob spoke as he stole a look at his wife and child for the first time. "Is everything fine now?" Robin looked up and smiled as she reassured Robert. "Yes, Rob, I am fine! I feel great considering what I just went through. The tea with some

sort of healing ingredients made me feel so relaxed after giving birth, said Robin.” Gail glanced over her shoulder as she started to pour another cup of tea. Gail was preparing the ointments with a mortar and pestle while Robin held her child near the flickering firelight.

Robert spoke again with curiosity and jubilation in his voice. “What is the sex of the child? I think I heard you say it was a baby boy, said Robert.” Robin smiled and looked up at Rob with a bright-eyed twinkle in her eye as she spoke. “Yes, it is a baby boy. You now have a splendid new son to raise!! Robin was vivacious and exasperated. She had just brought a new life into the world!

Rob looked down at his new son with admiration. Having a newborn baby to dote on brought out a softer side of Robert. Rob would now have to be as strong as steel to find his way back to the top of the industry. As a businessman, Rob had always depended on shrewd advice from Richard, the manager of his leather goods factory. The calfskin that he used came from the cattle that he raised in Texas. From Texas to Chicago, Rob stole away with millions both in legitimate transactions and in illegal business deals as well. In fact, Rob’s stealing had gotten him in trouble with some ranchers the night of the fire in Chicago.

Rob spoke with determination in his strong masculine voice. “I will have to re-establish myself as a businessman in New York. Hopefully the factory will continue to thrive. I have already met with Richard. He has gone over the books with me. The profit margin of the past fiscal year has been phenomenal. We have made so much money that we have too many orders for new leather shoes to fill. And there is a rumor of war or conflict. The military may be ordering some combat shoes from the factory soon, said Robert.”

Robin leaned over toward Rob as she spoke with an exhilarated quiver of excitement in her voice. “We shall need to build a grand mansion, just like the other business moguls in New York. The wealthy families build their mansions over on fifth Avenue in Manhattan. We will search for a plot of land in the fashionable part of town and build an impressive structure, where we will host garden parties and diner parties for the socialites and business barons of New York. The captains of industry will command our attention, said Robin.”

Robert spoke with a very cunning yet impetuous phrase as he stroked the new beard on his square chin. "Yes, that is a fabulous idea my darling wife. We will choose a plot of land in the countryside for our retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city. Also, we will maintain the large apartment that I have already purchased in the heart of Manhattan, said Robert." He looked over at Robin with a very satisfied and deliberate expression on his face. He raised his eyebrows and looked down at his son in awe and elation. A sense of happiness and gratification filled with hope.

The newborn baby boy was being cradled in Robin's arms, as both parents looked down, adoring their son like a treasure chest. The baby boy slept nestled in Robin's bosom as she spoke. "We shall name him York, because he was born in New York and he is the new addition to our lives, said Robin." Baby York has sandy brown curly tufts of hair like the shores of Rockaway beach. He had large round eyes that hesitated to open, and were most likely amber or pale gray like his parents. He pouty berry red lips were puckered as if he wanted to blow a kiss. His ears stuck out from the side of his head as if they were angel wings instead of ears. His plump rosy cheeks seemed to express some sort of irritation or excitement when he cried. Baby York's tears were rocked away swaddled in the blankets in Robin's arms. Soon baby York would be called Robert Nightingale II, Robert Nightingale Jr., or Robbie.

The next day dawned across a new horizon. There was hope emblazoned across the golden and crimson sky as the sun rose. Robbie had had a difficult time being born. Robin was healing well after childbirth, thanks to the herbs, elixirs, salves, and balms that Gail administered to her every day. Robin looked over at Rob. Robin spoke as she nodded her head with certainty. "We should start construction on the new house soon. We will keep the apartment in the Manhattan. That apartment has been left in a state of disarray since you left for Chicago many years ago, said Robin." Robert sighed and looked out of the windowpanes with pain in his voice. "I sorely regret going to Chicago for so long and leaving things here in New York so disheveled. We will have to renovate and remodel the Manhattan apartment. Whilst we build a new mansion in the countryside, said Robert."

Robin seemed resplendent when she spoke about the prospect of construction a new fashionable mansion for everyone to marvel at. "We will want acres and acres of land. I imagine a sprawling estate where there will be manicured lawns and gardens. I will grow special plants in the garden with healing powers to make ointments according to Gail's instructions, said Robin." Robert glanced over at Robin as he formulated a plan. Robert spoke with conviction in his sturdy voice. "I want a mansion fit for the moguls and barons of New York to have dinner parties, just like they have here at the Astor House, said Robert."

Several months passed while Robin recuperated from childbirth and Robbie opened his large round eyes. Robin dressed in modest attire to venture out into the countryside. On this day Robin and Rob would steel away into the woods to search for a plot of land. The carriage pulled away from the hotel. The sound of the horses galloping echoed in the dimly lit carriage. Soon the hustle and bustle of the cityscape gave way to the serene tranquility of the forest surrounding New York. The carriage entered the woods, as the shade from the massive ancient trees enveloped them. Gail sat beside Robin illuminated in the lilac light from a lantern. Williamson sat beside Gail as the couple held hands in sublime bliss. Williamson and Gail had decided to come along to help Robin and Robert select the ideal alcove secluded away in the forest.

The carriage emerged from behind a thick cluster of trees into a clearing. The clearing was a grassy meadow filled with various varieties of wild flowers. The flowers bloomed in a bright array of color. The goldenrod yellow flowers sprawled across the vast field. Large tiger lilies bloomed beside Queen Ann's lace flowers. The dandelions scattered their seeds in the wind it bellowed across the wide-open space. The enormous oak trees that surrounded the field loomed over the meadow like watchful guards. Robin felt safe and relaxed in this place. Robin stepped down from the carriage and felt her feet touch the firm dark soil of her new land. Gail and Williamson looked in approval from inside the carriage.

The wind stirred in the trees as Robin made herself one with the land. She had a fervor inside herself that made her want to build a nest for her newborn child and husband just like a mother robin bird.

Someday the baby bird would fly away. Hopefully, the baby would not have a broken wing. Robert and Robin embraced in the middle of the field of wild flowers. Gail and Williamson held tight to each other, as the couple could feel their love growing like grass in the meadow below.

Robin Spoke as she stretched out her arms in the open field. "This is where we will build our home, said Robin." Robert stood beside her and stared out over the vast plain. Soon there were workers putting the wheels of progress into motion. Across the land stones were being queried piece by piece to build the foundation of the mansion. This grand house would be built out of wood in the Victorian ornate style that had become popular among the prominent home owners. The stones would build the sturdy foundation of the house.

Hordes of workmen converged on the plot of land. The immigrant workforce and the impoverished laborers were willing and eager to begin the daunting task of construction. Some trees were cleared to be used as lumber. One by one the mighty oaks fell and were stripped of their branches. The rough bark was peeled off the long trees. Some of the oaks would be left to shade the mansion in the hot summer months. The oaks were so much a part of the history of the land that they whispered a covert unspoken language. This clandestine language was utterable only to the wind that whispered through the trembling leaves.

Robert spoke to the oak as if they could answer. **"Oh, old mighty oak tree, you were here before me. Oh oak, you were planted before my forefathers roamed this land. Oh, oak you were a grandfather of a strong and courageous man. Oh, oak, the rings inside your wood tell us that you were the leader of the band of living things that first settled here before the Mayflower touched the sand. Oh, oak you are a pillar of power where you stand. Oh, oak you touch my soul as you touch my hand. Oh, oak, the woman I love stands beside me, and you fall at my command. I will build her a house of oak wood as she demands. Oh, oak, I love this woman more than anyone would, and for her love I have done anything that I could, said Robert."**

Robin stood in awe of Robert's poignant words as she spoke. "Rob, you steel my heart, as always. I now remember what a poet you are with your romantic and elegant prose. I can recall some of the love poems you recited to me when we first met in Chicago. I was just a girl in a tavern, a saloon girl dancing for tips and slinging mugs of beer for drunk patrons when you swept me off of my flaming feet. Now, here we are building our own love nest, said Robin."

The house was being assembled in the woods outside the bustling city of New York, whilst the former bachelor's apartment was being renovated for the young couple to reside in Manhattan. The style of the wooden Victorian mansion would have stately turrets (circular rooms reminiscent of medieval castle turrets with pointed roofs. The wraparound porch would allow the couple to spend evenings taking in the sunset on the porch in the balmy summer heat.

The interior of the mansion would be adorned with carved wood panels that depicted and painted murals scenes from Greek and Roman myth. There was Zeus with his lightning bolts in one wood carving and wall painting in the foyer entrance. There were also marble carvings and sculptures displaying Athena the goddess of war with her bow and arrow. Then there were marble inlays on the floor that illustrated pictures of the mythological god of wine Dionisius. This would be the place in the house where debauchery, dancing and parties would occur with the other socialites that Robin would invite.

There were several rooms in the mansion. The six bedrooms were adorned with lavish wood carvings on the fireplaces and marble. The plaster was lime rendered complete with crown moulding displaying elaborate scenes from Greek and Roman mythology. The walls and ceiling were painted with detailed murals like the Sistine Chapel. There were inlayed patterns in the hardwood floors. The imported tiles from Morocco were bright colored with complex patterns. The marble floors were imported from Europe with the veins of a blue-blood coursing through it like aristocracy. The copper and bronze sculptures were hundreds of years old family heirloom that bore an antique patina. The sculptures and other

paintings had made the long journey across the Atlantic from Robert Nightingale's ancestral homes in Europe.

Soon, both Rob and Robin would make the perilous luxury voyage across the Atlantic back to England. Rob had many business acquaintances to wine and dine in England. Robin had much antique curating and fashionable dress shopping to do in the salons of London. The journey across the ocean would come in several years. For now, they would build their nest as a happily married couple receiving guests at their estate in the countryside of New York.

Whilst construction started at the new house in the countryside, the old bachelor pad apartment in Manhattan was being renovated. The Manhattan apartment had been Robert's primary residence before he had given thought to having a family. After he met Robin, he was spun into a whirlwind romance. Now that the baby had arrived, Rob and Robin could plan for a larger house. Perhaps nannies and babysitters could watch the children at the house in the countryside while the Manhattan apartment hosted business meetings and informal acquaintances. Robin would help Rob decide décor and furnishing for both properties.

The curtains at the Manhattan apartment were decidedly understated. Rob had always envisioned plaid curtains with a firm sort of masculine influence, reminding him of Scotland. The walls were wood panel made of stained oak. The plaster walls were lime rendered with decorative frieze or plaster relief that showed scenes from the Bible. Rob had not been particularly religious, but the designers of the apartment had chosen the décor on his behalf. The "Last Supper" replica of Leonardo Da Vinci's classic painting. The walls of the bachelor pad were hung with portraits that Robert's family had commissioned from prominent artists of the era. Rob had sat for a portrait of himself riding a stallion alongside a herd of cattle in the Wild West.

Soon rain came and did not subside. Torrents of rain cascaded down in an interminable thunderstorm. The streets of New York became flooded with a deluge of dirty rainwater. The water began to rise higher and higher. Some parts of Manhattan began to flood. This storm had been foretold in a nightmare that Robin had envisioned since she was a child. She dreamed that a storm would come and



wash away all of her jewels and satin dresses leaving her poor and penniless in the middle of the street. The bachelor pad was soon flooded. The water rose and rose as the lavish dusty rooms filled with water. The ornate wood world was drenched with the flooding rain storm. It rained for several days without end. Robin and Rob were up to their ankles in rainwater in the Manhattan apartment. The Astor House was a welcome retreat to them. Rob and Robin would retreat to the hotel, for it was on higher ground than the Manhattan apartment and had not flooded.

Rob's wonderful wardrobe was soiled with silt from the storm water. The pets were gathered from the apartment. Robin had become fond of a tiny kitten and a puppy that were dreadfully frightened of the ankle-deep rainwater in the apartment. Robin and Rob would have to salvage what they could from the waterlogged Manhattan apartment later. Rob's wardrobe would have to be laundered and placed back in his spacious closet made just for a gentleman and his bride.

## “Robin is Robbed While Riding Through the Hood”

Many adventures of a precarious nature had taken place during the building of the country estate. Robin rode home in the carriage one day while she was travelling from the site of the country house. The carriage rode through the thick forested area surrounding New York City. The trees cast heavy shadows down upon the carriage carrying Robin. On this day the thunder rolled across the horizon as loud as the doomsday trumpet. The sky illuminated with lightning. The moon glowered down upon the weeping willows as the rained soaked the ground. This flood of angry rain was an exact moment of weakness that an adversary would take advantage of.

The highwaymen lumbered down the road toward Robin's carriage. The sheets of rain cloaked the air with endless danger. The thunder rolled and the lightning flashed as the scoundrels raced relentlessly toward Robin's carriage. For many months the thieves had been waiting and plotting. The highway robbers had been stalking Robin night and day. She was a woman alone. She was the feeble and fragile widow. Soon Robin would be a damsel in distress. Men were lurking in dark shadows from sunrise to sunset preying on the young widow. These men were watching Robin as she came and went from the Astor House. She was obviously a woman of wealth and means. She was a young helpless widow, who no longer had the protection and security of her husband.

Little did Robin know, Rob had many enemies waiting in the wings to overtake him at every turn. These enemies were business rivals and men who had personal vendettas against Rob. Not only had Rob robbed the cattlemen of several of their cattle, he had some very questionable business practices in every aspect of his business career. Rob had obtained his wealth in some very dishonest ways. Robin would not suspect the approach of Rob's enemies. For, how was she to know who these evil deceitful men were? Robin was being pursued from the moment she rose in the morning to the instant that she drifted off to sleep at night. These adversaries were

the enemies who stalked her like an incubus in her nightmares. They were an evil insidious presence that was always following her every move waiting to strike like serpents. Only, these malicious men knew whether or not they would exact a lethal bite.

These enemies that followed Robin were more interested in getting Rob's money than in murder. Luckily, Robin did not give the enemy anything to gain financially if she dies by their lethal blows. The carriage carrying these evil belligerent men was riding faster and faster approaching Robin's carriage. These highwaymen were bent on committing highway robbery. In the darkness the men roared toward her intending to run Robin's carriage off the flooded road. The weather was not in their favor, but Robin's carriage driver always drove through thunderstorms, and rarely had any trouble navigating the roads ahead.

Terror would unfold as the carriage came closer and closer toward Robin's carriage. The evil men would stop at nothing to extort money and valuable goods from Robin. They sought Robin to rob her of her riches. She was a solitary woman, alone and weak in their eyes. Only her carriage driver could protect her. Her carriage driver could protect her if he dared to risk his own life in a chivalrous act of self-sacrifice. The evil men approached with four horses galloping inexorably toward Robin's carriage. The carriage driver was suddenly distracted when several men on horseback rode out of the woods on his right side. The men on horseback narrowly missed smashing into Robin's carriage on the right side. This crowd of men on horseback was merely a distraction to get Robin's carriage driver to look away. Meanwhile, the men forced the four horses of the carriage forward to ram Robin's carriage. The horses stalled and stood up on their hind legs. The horses from the evil man's carriage trampled Robin's carriage running Robin off the road and into a tree. Robin's carriage was destroyed and toppled. Robin was tossed about inside the back of the carriage as it tipped over. The door of the opposite side of Robin was smashed to pieces. Robin crawled from the shattered carriage along the side of the flooded muddy road. The highwaymen intended to rob her.

The carriage was looted. The horses were unhitched and guided away from the decimated carriage. All of the trunks that were on the

back of Robins carriage were carried away by the stealthy robbers. They had intended to rob Robin of her carriage and the contents of her travel trunks. Her chests were ripped open along the side of the watery road. The greedy enemies riffled through the chests looking for valuable goods to steal. They had their steel daggers and pistols by their side. They would not hesitate to cut Robin to take what they wanted from her chest and from her bosom.

One of the highwaymen pretended to have collided with Robin's carriage quite by accident as he spoke. "Oh, my lady, it seems we have met under such grim circumstances. Pardon me as we had the right of way on this road. You should have been watching where you were going. That senile old man drove your carriage right into ours, as a fool would, said the deceptive man." Robin struggled to stand up from the mud as her flowing hoop dress and corset seemed to confine her movement. The burden of being a female figure now rained down on her like a tempest as she spoke. "Sir, do you take me for a fool? I surmise that you intended to run my carriage off the road to tip my trunks and rummage through my valuable goods later. Surely, you jest, that you did this crash on purpose to take the wealth bestowed upon my carriage from me, said Robin as she staggered backward away from the evil enemy. The deceitful man feigned fatigue and injury from the crash, when all along his group of robbers had intended to wreck Robin's carriage filled with jewels and money, said Robin. The man reached down and ripped the jeweled necklace from her neck. The pearls and rubies fell to the ground like drops of blood.

She felt so weak and helpless when the robbers took away her goods. Luckily, Rob had many more valuables than what was in those trunks. His enemies barely knew the wealth Rob was about to accumulate. This night would be a lesson to him. Rob, now knew he had to protect his wealth in secrecy. It was too late to subdue his extravagant style and flamboyant displays of luxury. Now Rob and Robin were the targets of conmen and robbers who sought wealthy people to extort their fortunes!

Robin spoke with spite in her speech. "Take your hands off of my precious chest! I have suffered and struggled to amass this fortune every single day and every single night of my life for many years.

How dare you ride up on me and shattered my carriage to take what I have worked for with my blood, sweat, and tears! You men have the fortitude to gather your own wealth even more than what you are stealing from me. You could have used your time to earn a way for yourselves instead of being highwaymen. What could a poor widow have in her carriage that an able-bodied man could not gain for himself with a little bit of hard labor. A man could put forth a few days' work and amass twice what I have stowed away in my trunks. But you steal from a woman! You hit a woman! You shatter a woman's carriage to take what little she has left in this world, said Robin."

The men stumbled away pretending to be hurt. Meanwhile, their consorts had dragged the valuable trunks away into the depths of the woods to be looted and plundered. Robin was uninjured as she gathered her strength. Soon another carriage came by to help her put her life back together. The good Samaritan helped Robin ride back to New York. This so-called good Samaritan was actually a mole. He was a spy who would deliver information to Robin and Rob's enemies later. The good Samaritan spoke to Robin as he helped her into his carriage. "Ma'am, I can take you to Manhattan with your carriage driver if you would like, said the good Samaritan." Robin was still in shock as she looked down at the scrapes and bruises upon her delicate flesh. Her corset was still so tight that her bosom heaved up and down, while she breathed so deep and heavy. She was actually dangling on a string of anxiety. She was caught between harsh reality and delusion. Robin could barely believe what had just happened to her. Robin had heard of the terrible tales of highwaymen, but she could not fathom being a victim of a highway robbery!

The good Samaritan dropped Robin off at the bank where she would store the rest of her jewelry. She spoke as she gathered her breath in her chest. "I will give you a bit of money for giving me a ride back to New York. I see that you were there to conveniently deliver me with my bedraggled and disheveled remains back to civilization. It seems you are some sort of savior, but I fear you will give up information about my financial standing to my enemies either by mistake or on purpose. I will tell you now that I have exactly the

amount to give you as any woman riding in a carriage would expect to pay you. Take this common fee and be gone. Do not besmirch your own honor by joining the men who hunt me like a prey in the woods. You cannot seek to gain much from following me around hoping to get rich from my downfall, said Robin.”

The tempest continued to stir in the cauldron of the sky like a witch’s brew. The clouds turned every hue from bright red to blue. Rob and Robin had been through turbulent times. The tempestuous situation continued throughout the day. The highwaymen did not just leave Robin’s riches alongside the highway then carried away her chest of jewels and gold coins. The law would have to be alerted to the situation immediately. Unfortunately, the so-called law was already aware of the ordeal. In fact, the police and law enforcement in the area was already thoroughly woven into the fabric of organized crime that was present in New York City.

The malicious men were still watching Robin, waiting for her to falter so that they could take advantage of her. The vultures were circling waiting to tear her flesh part. The evil men had deceptive and deceitful hearts. Robin was naïve and not as streetwise and smart. Rob and Robin were together as a couple, not to be torn apart. Robin paid a coach to take her back the Astor House, where Rob would be waiting for her. The storm stilled rained down on her as she made her way through the crowded streets of New York. The sound of the horses galloping echoed in her ears while the thunder claps resounded in the dark skies above.

Suddenly, the robbers decided to resume their mayhem. On the way back to the hotel another carriage appeared accompanied by men on horseback. Then the men tried to charge Robin’s carriage again. Robin was instantaneously thrust into the high-speed chase to run away from the mean men! She wanted to evade the scoundrels chasing her.

Then from the shadows Williamson emerged. He had aimed his Civil War rifle at the men to shoot them down. The men were struck. Williamson remained invisible to the men without the purple light of a lantern. Williamson aimed and fired his rifle making each man an easy target for a marksman. The greedy men had targeted Robin to rob her, now the men were targets for Williamson to slay in the

streets of New York. The men were gunned down. Williamson shot each one of them. Two of the men were fatally wounded when Williamson aimed directly at their heads. Robin was riding through her neighborhood close to home. The men had followed her from the woods to attack her!

Finally, Robin arrived at the familiar entrance to the Astor House. Robin's fine blue silk satin dress was covered in silt and mud from the flooded road. The Manhattan apartment was now knee-deep in water from the storm. Rob and Robin might have to remain at the Astor House for at least a week while the Manhattan apartment dried out after the storm. Robin reached the room where her husband would be. She opened the door to find Rob standing by the fire. Robin cast some powder into the fire place (magnesium and potassium). The flames began to glow a violet corona again. Williamson now appeared with Gail standing beside her.

Robin spoke with tears in her trembling voice. "A gang of men attacked me and stole my chests along the side of the road today! I was on my way back from the construction site where our country house is being built. The stone masons were arriving with the quarried stone to lay the foundation. I was consulting with the architect. He was telling me how long it would take to complete construction on the mansion. His vision for the countryside house was truly intriguing. I was still thinking about how the mansion was going to look when this gang of men charged upon my carriage while I was riding through the wood. The storm made it worse, but these men were organized. They did not happen upon my carriage heavy laden with trunks filled with jewels by accident. These men had been watching me come and go for some time. They had expected me to travel down this dangerous road where the horses might get stuck in the mud or run off the road, said Robin."

Immediately, there was a knock at the door. Rob touched Robin's shoulder to comfort her. Then he went to answer the door. Rob was cautious to reply to the knock at the door as he spoke. "Who is it? We will need to not be disturbed, said Robert with a stern voice." The masculine voice echoed from the other side of the door. It was the calm genteel sound of one of the hotel staff members. "Sir, a

gentleman is here to see you. He says his name is Richard, the General Manager of your factory, said the hotel staff.”

Robert seemed jovial and glad to hear from Richard as he spoke. “Richard, come in. I have been intending to have a business meeting with you about the state of the factory recently. I have been away for many years acquiring new business connections and opportunities to make money. I regret that I did not communicate with you right after the Great Chicago Fire. My only concern was to get you to safety Robin. I knew that there were dangerous men looking for me and I did not want to put you in danger by associating with you. Richard, I did not want to lead the angry men back to my factory, because they were hungry for revenge after I stole their cattle, said Rob.”

Richard had some grave news for Rob as he entered the room and sat down before the glowing lavender fire. Gail and Williamson stood vigilant by the fireplace as Richard spoke. “Rob, I’m afraid that some very angry men arrived at the factory today. They came during the storm with many men on horseback and carriages. These men were armed with rifles and pistols. They said that they would get lawyers and take you to court for the damage that was done to their cargo on that stormy road yesterday. The men said that your wife’s carriage ran them off the road with the intent to do harm to them and their cargo. The men said that they would make you pay for the loss of their goods. Several men emerged and dismounted their horse with bandaged heads and bloody wounds. They claimed that they were hurt when one of your men shot at them. They claimed that your wife’s carriage hurt them when Robin intended to run them off the road yesterday. I exclaimed that the storm was to blame for any mishap that took place on the flooded road in the forest. He replied that it was his word against Robin’s carriage driver. That old dog wasn’t looking where he was going. Rob, the men threaten to go after the assets and profits made from the leather factory. They do not claim much that we cannot quickly pay off. It is the concept of extortion that bothers me, Rob. These men sought your wife as a mark to make money. These malevolent men want to rob Robin and steal from the profits of your business. Rob, you are well-known as a wealthy and successful businessman in New York, that is what



makes these thieves come after your money with these lying schemes, said Richard.”

Rob frowned and looked up at Richard as she spoke. “How can we prevent this from happening in the future. These men seem to hold a vendetta against you Rob. They want money, retribution and retaliation. Could this be because of the stolen cattle, or for another fiasco that you perpetrated Rob? I highly advise you to keep your actions legal and honest so that malice filled enemies do no mount against you to attack your assets, said Richard.”

Rob, spoke with certainty in his voice. “I know, I know Richard. I have done some questionable things to obtain my wealth, but nothing more serious than a good game of poker or blackjack. Everything in life is gambling. Richard, I just have to roll the dice and hope that I don’t get snake eyes. I may have rolled the dice too many times with those guys. At least they seek legal retribution instead of trying to kill my dear wife. Robin, I don’t think those men would have killed you! They hoped to extort money from me and my business, and did not want to spill your blood, said Rob.”

Richard spoke in a serious tone as he cleared his throat. “Rob, we now have to negotiate with these thieves to get them to leave you, your wife, your assets, and your newborn child alone. These men are dangerous and ruthless. They do intend to get their revenge and some of your money too Robert. These types of men are organized crime. They feign to be white collar, criminals who work with the system to defraud men of wealth and stature. At times like this we have to play rough Rob. We have to get some sort of protection against these men. These greedy thieves work from inside the system to trick the law into believing that they are honest (when in actuality) they only intend to steal from the system and from the wealthy. They will find laws and lawyers to help them fight you to get your money. We can prevent them from going any further by paying them off now. I warn you Robert, if we pay these men off it looks bad for your business. Thieves will flock to you and try to get money out of you for false claims until you are broke. You will become a mark for conmen, and highwaymen will follow your every move until they have drained you dry of all of your money. We have to join a group of criminals, that can protect us from these sorts of extortion attempts.

They even threaten to kidnap the newborn baby and hold him at ransom, said Richard.”

Robin jumped up from her seat in shock and worry. Her voice seemed frail at first then angry and tough. “These men threatened to take my newborn son from me! How dare they! What could they possibly hope to gain from kidnapping my son? They would ask a ransom and then we, would have to kill those sons of bitches before the breath even left their mouths to speak. I reckon the saloon girl personality would come out of me at that moment. Immediately, I would grab the pistol from under my skirt and shoot every last one of those bastards, said Robin.”

Robin rushed into the other room to pick up the newborn baby (little baby Robbie was called Robert Nightingale Jr. II). She hovered over the crib. Robin looked down and saw nothing but an empty cradle! A scream rang out from Robin as shrill and piercing as a gunshot! “They have taken my child! Those evil bastards have taken my newborn baby boy, said Robin. Robin fell to her knees sobbing and grabbing her stomach in pain as if they had ripped the child from her womb. Robert and Richard rushed into the bedroom to comfort Robin. There was a knock at the door! The hotel staff had been given a letter from the baby thieves. Richard and Robert rushed over to grab the letter and rip it open. Richard and Robert took turns reading every line of the letter in horror and bewilderment! They say so many terrible things in this letter.

*To Whom It May Concern:*

*We have taken your child for payment of the money that you owe us. You have gone too far dear sir. We cannot get you to give us the money we asked of you for the accident on the road. Those meager trunks of jewels will not suffice. We want your son and we want his life. We will be paid our sum or he will die by the knife. You cry now, for your loss, but this is the beginning of your strife. Give us this ransom or we will also kill your wife. We will make the exchange for the child and the money at the dock tonight at midnight under the light of the full moon. Be there if you dare. Don't be scared. If we get the money, we will not harm a single hair on his head, do not despair.*

*Sincerely,*

### *The Men You Know Very Well Not to Mess With*

Robin was still clutching her stomach and rocking back and forth on the floor. Now she was angry and ready to fight. She suddenly stopped crying and stood up sturdy and steadfast as she spoke. "What the hell do these men think they can get away with. I will personally shoot every hair off of their beards myself and watch their blood run the streets, said Robin." She went to the chest of drawers and drew a pistol from her personal items that she had wrapped in satin lace lingerie. The pistol was among her unmentionables. Now Robin brandished the gun as if she was ready for a shootout in the Wild West.

Richard and Robert rushed to the bank to gather the funds for the ransom. The exact location of the place at the docks was specified in the letter. The sun was setting low in the sky. The streets were still flooded from the perpetual rainy days before. The echo of the horses galloping across the streets of New York rang in the ears like a funeral dirge. All Robin could imagine was the stifled cries of her newborn baby boy reverberating through the cold night air.

The carriage arrived at the bank where Robin had just withdrawn money the day before. The bankers were told about the situation in covert quarters. "The police should be alerted to help resolve the situation sir, said the banker." Rob replied with wisdom. "I assure you that the police are working in accord with these thieves to extort this ransom from me and my wife for the life of our son, said Robert." The banker lit a cigar and poured a glass of brandy. He sipped the brandy as he spoke and offered some to Robert and Richard. "Here, you gentlemen look like you need a drink. These sorts of men will stop at nothing to get rich quick. Violence and murder are not what they want. They want to corrupt the system from the inside to get what they want from rich men and women. You will always be at risk unless you become a corporate entity, said the banker."

Robert and Richard glanced at each other as they sipped the brandy. Richard spoke first. "Yes, like the Rockefellers or the Vanderbilts you should become a business entity. Operating everything through a company makes it harder to get your assets in a lawsuit. You should think like a corporation instead of foolhardy gambler or an amateur, said Richard." Robert spoke with anger in his

voice. "However, nothing can stop these thieves from endangering the lives of my close family with asking for ransom to release my son. We have to pay them or they will kill my baby in his crib! My wife is not safe either. These malicious men will harm her too if I don't give them whatever they want, said Robert."

The men sipped brandy slowly as the banker made a suggestion. "You have to join the underground society of ruthless men. They will ask for a gallon of your blood and a portion of your profit, but your wife and children will be left untouched and off limits, said the banker." Robert swallowed the last drops of brandy and stood up abruptly. "We will join this underground society immediately! But tonight, we must go to the specific location at the docks to deliver the money that was demanded as ransom to make exchange for my son's life, said Robert."

The night grew cold and dark. The wind howled through the trees. The spatters of putrid teardrops soaked the slick New York City streets. The underground society had agreed to accompany Rob and Robin to the docks to retrieve their child from the thieves holding him for ransom. Men on horseback surrounded Rob and Robin's carriage on all sides as if to shield them from any oncoming attackers. Suddenly, they arrived at the exact location where they were supposed to make the exchange for their only son.

The rain still wet their checks like tears as both Rob and Robin stepped out of the carriage and into the shadowy darkness of the night. The ocean cried to them like a deafening scream. In an instant the cries of their newborn baby boy echoed in their ears as a beckoning refrain. The light of the full moon glistened off of the surface of the watery oblivion. The couple walked toward their fate. Each step brought them closer and closer to the group of men that held their baby boy captive. The gathering of sinister men loomed in the dark abyss of terror before them.

One of the kidnappers spoke with a rough husky voice that rattled in the air like broken glass shattering the silence. "Why have you come here with a posse of men? I warned you not to try anything. Remember we are Men You Know Very Well Not to Messed With! Give us the trunk of money and we will give your baby boy! If you try to exact any revenge you will certainly regret it, said the kidnapper."

The wind whipped across the docks as the gathering of kidnapers and rescuers huddled together ready to stand for the life or death of a small infant. Robbie's cries resounded louder than thunder as the storm still rained down on them all!

Several men emerged from a ship that was anchored at the docks with a bundle of rags. The screams of the baby reverberated louder and louder as the men came closer and closer. The newborn baby boy had been swaddled in a bundle of filthy rags. The trunk filled with money made a heavy thud as it hit the wooden planks of the dock. It took two strong men to lift the hefty trunk off of the back of the carriage. Four shadowy figures came forth to lift the trunk on all four sides and opened it right there in front of Rob and Robin. The men seemed to be counting the money. Then the four brawny men lifted the trunk and carried it to the ship. The child was handed over to the parents. The tall man that was towering over Rob and Robert tossed the baby toward Robin as if they were expecting the mourning mother to catch her little bundle of joy like a pitch at a sporting event.

The leader of the kidnapers spoke in a raspy voice that threatened the couple. "Take your child and leave us with your money. You and your wife are being watched with hawk eyes from every angle. **You will pay for your past sins, Rob. You will pay for those of us whom you have robbed in the past. At last, your reign of wealth will not last. Your days of glory are in your past. Your life of privilege and riches is fading fast. Your disguise of honesty will be unmasked. If you tangle with us again you will feel the brunt of a pistol blast,** said the leader of the kidnapers."

Robin caught her bundle of joy (baby Robbie) in midair. She fell backward and was held up on either side as she wrapped her arms around her newborn baby boy. Robin's eyes filled with tears of joy as she spoke. "I will stand up for my child and carry on. If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything. I stand for courage and steadfast strength. I believed that my child would be returned to me and my baby boy was given back to me. I will hold him in my arms until I calm his cries and dry his tears, said Robin as she cradled Robert Nightingale Jr. in her arms."

Williamson was ready and willing to use his rifle again if he had to. He was waiting at the dock with his weapon aimed at the malicious men ready to kill for his friends Rob and Robin! Gail stood in the distance watching the road that would lead Robin home. Without the illumination of the purple flame Gail was invisible to the naked eye! No one knew whether baby Robbie would live or die! Wailing babies cried and black crows would fly as emotions went from low to high.

Robert Nightingale II was now safe and sound inside the carriage. The underground society of men protected Rob and Robin as they closed the doors to the carriages and their horses galloped off into the night. The thunderstorm still rained torrents of terror down upon them, but their baby boy was not safe. Soon Robert Nightingale II stopped crying and drifted off to sleep in Robin's arms. As they made the journey back to the Astor House the baby boy was lulled to sleep as if nothing even happened.

## “Robin Flies Away”

Years passed and the baby boy grew toward childhood and adolescence. Robert Nightingale Jr. was a sickly child who seemed to have trouble breathing. The condition would be called asthma in modern times. Back in those days the gasping and struggling to breathe was mistaken for everything from the coughing sickness to tuberculosis consumption. The little boy seemed to be begging for every breath as he became a toddler. The little boy's eyes seemed to be dimming. Robbie's sight deteriorated, and his hearing seemed to need help. Several meetings were called for the Women of the Nightingale Society to try and cure all that hearing and vision problem little Robbie Jr. had in his elementary school years. Many teas and elixirs were formulated to strengthen little Robbie's sight and hearing until he was hearing and seeing as well or better than most!

Robin had been a mother now for more than ten years raising her beloved son Robert Nightingale Jr. (known as little Robbie). On this night there was a meeting of the Women of the Nightingale Society. The bonfire blazed in the center of the circle in the woods. This particular meeting was held on the grounds of Robin's countryside mansion that had hosted grand garden parties and dinner guest of New York society for the past ten years now. Robin had been a fixture in polite society now for over a decade. Rob and Robin no longer lived in fear of attack from evil men. The night that little Robbie was held for ransom was a distant memory.

The fire blazed in the middle of the circle towering over the gathering of women in the woods. Robin spoke with her voice waving in the wind. “The leather factory makes the shoes that make men march into battle. The crowded factory floor is a breeding ground for the coughing sickness. The women and children labor together. Soon there will be new laws that say that children cannot work long hours as if they are mature adults. A child that is not yet ten years old should not have to work a twelve-hour day beside grown men and women in a crowded factory. There was a fire in the factory! The exits were blocked with debris so much that several

workers could not escape. These work conditions must improve for all factories. I regret the day that I ignored the needs of my workers in order to make a profit. The managers, who are men, care more about the bottom line than caring about the safety of the factory worker, said Robin”

The circle of women seemed to listen attentively. Robin spoke more about her observation of factory workers as the firelight illuminated her exuberant face. “The fumes that come from the chemicals in the factory are created when the leather is tanned. These toxic chemicals suffocated me from the instant I took my first breath inside the leather factory. I was pregnant with baby Robbie at the time. I am certain that those fumes had a detrimental, negative, effect on the health of my unborn child. My son had various illnesses and problems. I will strive to get rid of such pollution in the air and restore the grounds surrounding the factory to being green and filled with thriving grass and trees. The air will once again be clear to breathe. I will strive to eliminate pollution from the factory. I will not stand idly by and allow child labor or violations of workers’ rights, said Robin.”

The factories were filled with the coughing sickness. The industrial revolution had made mass production and profit margins more important than worker’s rights. The industrial revolution was started because man wanted to see how far he could go with technology. The steam engine made it possible to make large quantities of manufactured goods in a very quick process. The first industrial revolution factories made things like pots and pans in England.

The conditions on the factory floor were horrendous. Children worked beside adults for very long hours with no breaks or sick days. The days of the industrial revolution would decay, because labor laws would be passed to make it illegal to treat people in such a terrible way. The fire escape and fire exits had to be in each factory, so that the workers could escape during a fire in a hurry.

The laws protecting workers would cost extra money. The costly reforms made some factory owners cause such fury against workers’ rights. However, Robin and Robert would agree. The power couple would acquiesce to any changes that needed to be made to make



the factory safe for the workers. They were compassionate and wanted to avoid misery or suffering in their factory. After all, their very own son baby Robbie had suffered the effects of the factory's toxic chemical fumes, which resulted in health problems. Robin wanted to reform the factory system in favor of the workers. She believed that this was a valiant and noble cause! Robin wanted to help make better labor laws.

Robin had her groundskeepers extinguish the bonfire on her property. Robin Nightingale then returned to her stately countryside mansion in the woods outside New York City. Robin pulled back her hooded cloak to reveal a dazzling silk satin blue dress beneath. The moon looked down at her through the fancy, stained glass windows in her mansion. Instantly, Robin cast some magnesium and potassium powder into the fire to create the corona of lavender light. Gail appeared in the violet light as she stood beside Williamson, the man she loved to death.

Gail spoke with some words of advice. Her voice seemed to echo through the massive room. "I have heard many grand things about California. There is so much land out there that they are giving it away for free. They are calling the Western expansion, Manifest Destiny. There is a belief that the United States should expand into the West. The Homestead Act is giving hundreds of thousands of families a plot of land in the West to encourage settlements. There are people who believe that the city life is too harsh and filled with diseases like the coughing sickness. There is the philosophy that farm life is better for the health and urban life is detrimental to good health, said Gail."

Robin looked up at Gail as she shrugged her shoulders and spoke. "That is a splendid idea, Gail. Staying in this urban metropolis has caused thieves to put us in danger. We would be safer in the rural area as long as the natives don't attack or the Wild West cowboys don't have a shootout with Rob. He tells so many stories about running from cowboys that he has stolen from or wronged in some way. The stories Rob tells involve Chicago and not California. Maybe Rob and I could discuss moving to California to stake out a claim there, said Robin."

Robert entered the room with Robbie. Robert Nightingale Jr. II was now an elementary school child, age ten. The memory of the kidnapping was still an ever-present danger. Rob Sr. had to keep ties with the underground society of ruthless men in order to prevent another kidnapping or threats to his family. Robin had to travel with large burly men to prevent someone from robbing her carriage. Their life in the perilous city was filled with constant anxiety.

Robert spoke to Robin with concern in his voice. "Robin, perhaps the rural life is better than living in the city. The more untapped and purer the land is, the easier it is to get away from crime. There is so much land out there in the West, because of Homestead Act! We should be a part of the Manifest Destiny movement to as far as California! What do we have to lose? We gain an adventure and some great stories to tell at parties. If we don't like it in California we could always just come back here or even pick up and move someplace else, said Robert Sr."

Robin leapt into Rob's arms and kissed him. She was so excited when she spoke that she could hardly contain herself. "They say that the agrarian is a man who prefers to be a farmer that grows his own food and lives off the land. A factory worker is someone who lives in the stifling urban environment that pollutes the land. I think I would like to try and live off the land from now on, Robert. Let's try to be rich farmers on the frontier in the Wild West! I still remember how exciting it was to be a saloon girl in Chicago. Maybe moving to the rugged wilderness of California will be more interesting because it is a more rural and uncivilized wilderness, said Robin."

The next day the household was in an uproar as the servants were preparing many travel trunks bound for the Wild West! The sunrise broke across the horizon of a new era. This would be the world of the Wild West wilderness. Neither Rob nor Robin knew what to expect. Robin spoke to Rob with a trembling enthusiasm in her voice. "We are going to the Wild West with wisdom learned from Chicago and our difficult times here in the crime ridden city of New York, said Robin." Rob stole a glance at Robin. She made his heart flutter like the wings of a bird as he spoke. "The Wild West is much more spontaneous and dangerous than New York, but at least we do

not have any enemies in the Wild West like we do here in the city, said Rob.”

Rob pulled Robin close and kissed her passionately! Robin was breathless as his lips wets hers. She spoke with surprise in her voice. “What was that for Rob? Does danger turn you on? The Wild West seems to be some sort of aphrodisiac or love potion for you my love, said Robin.” Rob pulled Robin even closer and grasped her around her dainty waist. He caressed her delicate flesh to arouse a sense of eroticism in her. He kissed her as if he could possess her with his lips. The sun cast long shadows upon the walls as Rob tossed Robin’s silken garments off onto the hard wood floor. They were a couple in love that made their hearts sore. They did not want less and they did not want more. Their love was a world of wonder waiting to explore. Love was for both rich and the poor. Their love was like a cage bird set free ready to soar. Robin was like a bottle of wine growing finer with age. She was uncorked like champagne bubbling over ready to pour. Robin was a woman of desire who knew what her nubile body was for. Rob stole Robin’s heart and loved her to her very core.

Soon the family was all packed up. They were in the carriage on their way to the train station. The Pullman sleeper car would be their comfort until they reached California! The railroad would carry them from New York to California. The Vanderbilt empire had helped make the transcontinental railroad. The carriage stumbled down the familiar roads toward the unknown. The family of three was now at the train station. The servants loaded all of their travel trunks onto the train as Rob, Robin and Robbie Jr. were ushered into their large sleeper train car. The accommodations were similar to a hotel parlor. There was red satin on the walls and curtains draped in swags of silk. The table was made of intricate carved wood. The bed area was plush and cushioned for comfort. The room was pleasant and filled with light from the large windows. The locomotive billowed steam as the train began to slowly move and pull away from the station. The conductor had yelled, “all aboard” as the train whistle blew a resonating shrill sound. This was the beginning of an adventure!

Rob and Robin watched the train pull away from the dangerous and unpredictable urban landscape of New York City. The locomotive

was like their love. The locomotive was thrusting forward. Soon they came to a tunnel. The train penetrated the tight narrow tunnel grinding faster and faster forward as the hot steam burst from the smokestack. Rob and Robin stole away into the darkness of night as they embraced. Their love was made of pure steel as strong as anything that could not be broken. Rob was like a steel sword thrusting into a sheath. Rob and Robin would be together through any tempest or turmoil. The oil of love burned all night in a well-oiled machine that moved forward through tunnels and rock-hard mountains of love.

The landscape displayed itself before them. Little Robbie kept his face stuck to the glass of the luxurious sleeper coach staring at the awesome wonder of the wilderness. The trees were shedding their leaves. The autumn leaves were vibrant colors of bright yellow, crimson, and dark auburn. The leaves fluttered to the ground leaving the branches almost bare naked. The wind stirred the forest floor as the train rode through the woods. The sky was a blanket of sparkling stars above the train while the locomotive traveled across the transatlantic railroad. At night the horizon was dimly lit with the light of the crescent moon.

The locomotive would stop at some stations on the way further and further westward. The steam streamed from the smokestack creating clouds of hazy illusion in the darkness of midnight. The howl of a wolf echoed across the frontier. The rigid familiarity of urban civilization was stripped away layer by layer as the train traveled away from the large cities like Chicago. Robin spoke as she pressed against Rob. Now, she held tight to his arm in bed. "Rob, I don't think it would be wise to visit anyone in Chicago. We have not been back here since the night of the fire, said Robin." Robert raised his eyebrows and cleared his throat before he spoke. "I do agree. I should hope that I never cross paths with those cowboys that I fought with that night ever again. I stole some horses and cattle from them. I was so impetuous and foolhardy, but now I am reformed, said Rob."

Robin sat holding Robbie on her lap as he drifted off to sleep, while she spoke. "We will have to travel through many states before we get to Illinois. First, we will travel through Western New York.

Maybe we can make a sightseeing tourist trip out of this journey. We could stop and visit Niagara Falls and have something of a belated late honeymoon. We could visit the Pennsylvania Dutch Amish village and see how they live. The coal miners and steel plant workers could take time away from their hard work to watch our train go by in Ohio. We will need more coal to shovel into the steam engine of this locomotive to get to Indiana. I have heard that there are Indians in Indiana that will smoke a peace pipe calumet with you in a longhouse. The tribe could have a pow wow with us. We could go on a vision quest hallucinating in the woods. I do think we should stay on the train and pretend Chicago is a whistle stop, said Robin”

Robert shifted in his chair and glanced at Robin with admiration. There was a twinkle of wonderment and awe in his eyes as he spoke. “The next state we will enter into will be Missouri. Dear old Kansas City is full of twisters and cyclones that terrorized the town. We may just go straight through Iowa and the fields of golden corn as tall as a man standing at his full height. The ears of corn will listen if I come singing for our supper in Iowa! Then we will blow through Nebraska with the wind waving through the golden wheat fields. The cattle will graze across the prairie in Nebraska as we push past the pastures. Wyoming has that grand Yellowstone national park that Ulysses Grant has granted to us. We will be in awe of the majestic geyser called Old Faithful as she explodes spewing hot water from her opening like an excited woman in love. The Old Faithful will become filled with so much desire that she will explode like a watery volcano of love every time like clockwork. Old Faithful, is like a sweetheart that always responds to the caress of her beloved with a wet watery enthusiasm. The park is full of soaring mountains, flowing waterfalls, grizzly bears, and wolves allowed to run wild without a poacher’s rifle to threaten them, said Rob.”

Robin leaned forward in her plush red velvet chair as she pondered the vast adventures that would be unveiled in the state of Utah. Utah is one of the most uncharted and explored states in the West. The red rock formations form stone bridges in the dry desert canyons that rivers have rushed through. They say that a religious group called the Mormons live there believing that a profit has led them to the Great Salt Lake. They say that gold and silver can be

found in Nevada. There is vast desert with sandstone figures towering. There are snow covered mountains and mighty rivers and streams where desperate miners can pan for gold. Not many of them will strike it as rich as the two of us, because we have love as deep as a canyon. Our love is something money can't buy, said Robin."

Rob embraced Robin, as their lips met in a passionate kiss that stole the breath from Robin. The kiss made her heart flutter like the wings of a bird. Rob spoke with a joyful sort of optimism in his voice. "After Nevada, we will arrive in California! California is the land that we won from Mexico and was conquered except for a few patches of Indian natives and Wild West outlaws. The word Indian is actually not the right way to describe the native tribes of America. However, that is the name that all the settlers use when they speak of the Native Americans. I hope we don't meet any Indian chiefs or gunfighters that we can't battle, said Robert."

Robin rested her head on Robert's shoulder as she spoke. "I heard about those dreary frontier families that went on the Oregon Trail to stake their claims. They say many families died, and the others found land. However, they wished they were dead because of how cold the winters were in Oregon. I don't want to ever see a snowflake all my live long days. I would rather dodge bullets from a gunslinger's saloon standoff than to feel the cold of a bitter winter, said Robin."

Robin was gazing into Rob's eyes as the sun was setting across the open prairies. The train thrust steadily forward in the perpetual unending, motion of the locomotive. Robin sat wrapped in Rob's arms as if they could steal a few snatches of pleasure. The couple was passionate about building a new life in the Wild West, as they kissed and caressed each other. Robbie Jr. tossed and turned in his sleep dreaming of Wild West adventures into the wilderness. He imagined a grand merry-go-round with colorful wooden horses going in circles round and round at a circus in the vast open space of the Wild West!

Robin looked over her shoulder to see the purple lantern that she had lit earlier. There they stood Gail and Williamson. Gail spoke as a calming feeling swelled in the ornate red satin surrounding of the sleeper train car. The train pulled into the station as far West as

Robbie had been in his young life. He rubbed his sleepy eyes and looked out the window. Suddenly, loud war cry resounded from the woods of Wyoming territory! Several Indian warriors emerged from the cover of shadow. They leapt from deep inside the forest. The native tribes were called Indians by a mistake of geography. The settlers did not call the tribes Native Americans back in the days of the Wild West. The Indian warriors rode on horseback charging toward the train. Their horses galloped beside the train car, as they yelled their battle cries. The warriors had spears and tomahawks in their hands. The chief sat far off commanding his men with his vibrant feather headdress. The violent men were ready to do battle with the locomotive passengers. The engineer had already been taken captive.

The chief was giving the locomotive engineer a list of demands. The thick raspy voice of the Indian chief rumbled through the train car like thunder. "You will give up all of the valuables on this train to our tribe. Your people have robbed, looted, and taken things from our land. If your passengers don't give us their gold and valuable goods, we will take their lives! This is the point of no return. You will surrender or you will die, said the Indian chief."

The engineer spoke with anger. He was perturbed as he spoke in a strong commanding voice. "What you are doing has no honor. Your tribe has made enemies with this railroad company and with this country. Your tribe will now be hunted like prey. The Buffalo Soldiers will come with their rifles and blow your warriors away like a cyclone cloud, said the engineer." The engineer signaled for the conductor to speak. The conductor was stalwart and steadfast as he spoke. "I will alert the passengers of the train to give up their valuables. We do not need spears pointed at our throats to conduct ourselves, said the conductor."

Rob stood up abruptly. He looked out the window in shock as he spoke. "I do believe that this locomotive is being taken over. These natives have boarded the train here at the train station. I can tell by the sound of their voices that they want blood, said Rob." Robin swiftly held Robbie in her arms as if she could protect him from harm. Robin spoke with an anxious trembling in her voice. All this ruckus and commotion is because the Indians have stopped the

train. I am a man that is always armed! My Smith and Wesson revolver in hand, and my hunting knife at my hip in case I run out of ammo. I can strongarm any warrior and force my way off of this train with you and Robbie, said Rob.”

Robin was surprisingly calm as she stared out the window at the tribe surrounding the train. She spoke with spontaneous sounds of expression. “Oh, what are we going to do Rob? This ain’t the first time I been held up by robbers for my jewels. I’m an old pro at getting fleeced for my valuables. We will give the conductor our gold and hope that is all these Indians want, said Robin.” Robin’s voice seemed to quiver as she noticed warrior with bow and arrow aiming at the workers on the trains. “No, Rob I don’t think valuables are all the natives want. The native tribe wants their land back! The warriors with bow and arrow could target someone from far away and kill the conductor or engineer with one precise arrow, said Robin.”

Rob decided to take matters into his own hands. He spoke with determination in his voice. “My gun can fire at any man from his position. This hot steel can steal the life of anybody. The robbers may be tribal warriors, but they have not met the likes of Rob before. I plan to introduce myself, said Rob.”

Robert cleared his throat and swallowed as he planned his warpath. Rob crouched down to hide himself behind one of the large cushioned couches inside the sleeper coach. Immediately he emerged, jumping out to grab the Indian warrior! Rob placed his blade at the warrior’s throat. Rob smothered the feral warrior yell as he placed his hand over the warrior’s mouth. The humongous hunting knife glistened in the new light of sunrise as Rob pressed the sharp edge of the blade to the warrior’s Adam’s apple. The warrior tried to be brave, but he swallowed hard and his eyes enlarged with fear.

Robin followed Rob’s lead with Robbie Jr at her side. Suddenly, the Indian warrior was flailing his arms wildly. The warrior had tried to escape Rob’s vice-like grip. Rob had clutched the warrior life in his palms as he squeezed his throat. Then, in an instant he was wriggling and writhing in agony as Rob used his blade in a smooth and graceful movement! The blood spewed from the warrior and covered the floor in crimson red. The sun had finally set now, draping



the elegant red satin sleeper car in darkness. The warrior fell to the ground as he choked and gurgled on his own blood. The warrior would not die that night, but he would not rise to inflict harm on Rob, Robin or Robbie Jr.

The conductor was given the task of collecting all of the valuable jewels and coins from the passenger's bags. Soon the hold-up would be over without loss of life. The dastardly scoundrels were thieves in the night. They were renegade robbers. The tribal nation had just made a new treaty with the government that promised to allow the railroad to pass through their territory. However, not all of the native tribes agreed to the treaty. Those tribes that did not want the railroad, were sworn enemies with the other tribes who wanted to allow the transcontinental railroad.

Rob spoke softly as he whispered to Robin and Robbie. "I think we should stay on the train. If we get off, the warriors will completely surround the train. We would have to fight them on their territory. They are hungry for blood. The natives are looking to make an example of the settlers or intruders on their land, said Rob."

Rob, Robin and Robbie Jr. stayed hidden beneath the lavish carved wood table in the opulent sleeper car whilst the native tribe pillaged, plundered, and pilfered the train passengers. The family had decided to stay on the train until it reached California. The native tribe took all that they could from the travelers, but did not consider it thievery. The tribe was merely collecting a tax to travel through their land.

The tribe had experienced misery and famine since the buffalo had been poached on the prairie. Hunting the bison is a way of life for the tribe. Once the settlers came with rifles and started to shoot too many buffalo, the herds became scarce. There were very few bison to be found anywhere because of the frontier men. The fur trappers (like Astor) made themselves wealthy from exploiting the fur trade. The meat from the buffalo, also sustained the tribe.

Now, the tribe will go long periods of time between hunting for their sustenance. The tribe must survive on berries and dried meat for long durations of time. The railroad was killing the native's way of life. The railroad was beating a warpath through the West, with the fur trappers, cattle ranchers, gold miners, and frontier farmers. Rob,

did not want to fight the natives on the subject of the railroad, he want to make peace more than anything. However, some situations call for quick and precise actions to stay alive.

Rob held Robin close as he felt the warmth of her trembling frail female flesh in his rough masculine hands. Robin was almost at the point of tears when she listened to Rob whisper in her ear. "Stay down Robin. Be as silent as the grave until the natives have pillaged and taken all they desire from the passengers. We will rise with the sun tomorrow as slowly as a snail comes out of its shell, said Robert." He kissed Robin on the forehead. He reached over and pulled Robbie Jr. tight. He wanted to keep his child safe, but Robbie Jr. was weeping quietly. His eyes were filling with tears that flowed like tributaries from a mighty river of emotion. The feeling of fear was quelled and thwarted within the tiny child's heart.

As the sun rose slow and somber across the horizon, the sky was streaked with blood red and bright orange. The darkness was pierced with penetrating rays of light. As the day dawned. The natives were not holding the train captive any longer. However, the tribe was still present riding beside the train the entire journey through the Wyoming Territory. When the train reached Nevada the warriors' presence seemed to wane and vanish as swiftly as the wind rustles through the trees.

## **“Wolves Attack Howard, Wyoming and Virginia in the Wild West”**

Gail stood amidst the lavender lantern light as she spoke. “Robin, I shall tell you again of the runaway slave couple that made it to freedom. The married couple jumped the broom in slavery, and then ran to liberty. They worked as servants in the Manhattan mansion of one of my dear friends. Howard and Wyoming have had their first child since they fled the South. Wyoming miscarried several children in her struggle to be free in the North. They almost decided to go to Canada, but now they want to follow frontier trails to freedom in the West. Manifest Destiny was an idea of western expansion and free land. To them free land symbolized freedom more than working as servants in Manhattan, said Gail.”

Gail nodded as she continued to speak in a resounding voice. “Wyoming was named after a territory in the western frontier because her mother knew about the free land. The Homestead Act was giving this land to everyone. Forty acres and a mule were promised to the freed slaves. Somehow, Howard and Wyoming hope to start a farm of their own out West. They have their child with them. She is a growing healthy baby girl named Virginia. Although Virginia was a Confederate state during the war, it was the state of the past that should not be forgotten.

Wyoming and Howard were making their way across the frontier on the California and Oregon trail in a covered wagon. They were pioneers traveling in the Wild West. Howard was holding the reins of the horse while the sun beat down on him like the hot flashes from an overseer’s whip. Howard looked up into the blinding sun as he furrowed his brow. Wyoming emerged from inside the covered wagon to dab the sweat from his forehead as his skin glistened in the gleaming cascades of sunshine. She spoke to her husband as if they were still newlyweds that had just jumped over the broom.

Their friends called them Wy and How. Wy was a nickname for Wyoming and How was a nickname for Howard. Howard was guiding the old bedraggled horses across the pioneer trail through

the Wyoming Territory as he spoke to his wife. "Wy, we should stop here beside this creek to water the horses and build a fire. Get the cooking kettle and cast-iron skillet ready to make me some corncakes, ham hawks, baked beans, and neck bones, because I am hungry as a fieldhand at quitting time, said Howard." Wy was eager to stop. The bumpy trail was giving her motion sickness. It seemed like the exodus from the Bible when they had wandered for forty years in the wilderness.

Wy sighed and breathed a deep gasp of relief as she spoke. "I sure am glad that you decide to hold those horses. I need me some water and will make you some coffee to go with these beans and cornbread. I feel so fancy drinking the black coffee, as if I am wearing those white gloves and serving coffee and pastries for our bosses back in Manhattan. Well, even if we don't live in a mansion anymore. We can still strive toward having our own place, said Wyoming."

Howard stepped down from driving the horses. He grabbed his back in pain as he stretched his arms. When he spoke, he had a bit of humor in his words. "Woman, you remind me of a chore I forgot to do. Go on over to the wagon and unhitch the horse and donkey to give them a drink by the creek, said Howard.

While Wy was being the obedient wife Howard struck up a conversation with another traveler on the frontier trail. "You know there's safety in numbers. That is why we travel together along this trail in a long line of wagons instead of going alone on the trail, said the fellow pioneer. Howard spoke as laughter blended into his voice like spices mix with chili in a boiling hot pot. "We had entered into this great land of Wyoming. This land is a lady, my lady. I come inside Wyoming, as I penetrate the border entering her. Wyoming is wide open. This land is free and ready to be taken by a man willing to lay down his boots for her and hang his hat. I reckon, Wyoming is like a woman waiting to greet her man after a long day of hard work. This land of Wyoming is a woman ready to give birth to a free child of fortune and liberty. I have wanted to enter Wyoming as long as I have heard her name! I have desired to dig deep into her and plant my seed all my days and nights, said Howard."

The pioneer removed his hat and dried his forehead with a tattered handkerchief. "Yep, they tell us that the freed slaves get the forty acres and a mule to plow the fertile land. Here in the West, there is so much more land than forty acres to make a man profitable, said the fellow pioneer." Howard glanced over his shoulder at his wife Wyoming as he nodded in agreement. Howard's deep heavy voice seemed to echo into the endless oblivion of the open prairies. "I intend to make the most out of those land races offering free land to anyone who can run in the horse race and stake a claim. I reckon, that Homestead Act will give me a lot more land than forty acres. Plus, the land here is filled with gold and silver as common as fish in a river, said Howard."

The fire was built and burning bright as the beans simmered in the pot like a cauldron of comfort food. Howard and Wyoming sat beside the fire with Virginia nestled up in a large patchwork quilt beside her mother and father. Virginia was now about the same age as Robbie Jr. The two of them had grown up in vastly converse roles in society. Virginia was the child of freed slaves who became the servants of the Northern rich. Virginia was born in a Manhattan mansion, but as the daughter of a servant. Meanwhile, Robbie was born into complete privilege and luxury. Soon the two paths would cross, and Virginia would meet Robbie.

Sparks began to fly from the fire as the half-moon glowed shining moonlight down on the boundless expanse of land below. There was suddenly a howl that echoed an eerie and frightening refrain. It was the howl of a wolf! There was a wolf pack gathering nearby in the wilderness as the wind rustled across the prairie. The wind was like the top row of letters on a typewriter keyboard. Quiet wind ever rustles the young underbrush in open prairies.

There was a ferocious howl that resonated throughout the wilderness. The howl was getting closer and closer. The wind stirred through the fields as the dim light of the campfire flickered in the darkness. The pack of wolves was running fiercely toward the campfire. The leader of the pack growled and bared his fangs. His wolf eyes shimmered in the firelight as he leapt forward swatting at the pot of simmering beans. The other members of the wolf pack surrounded the campfire following the leader toward their conquest.

Howard stood up attentively and looked in every direction. Howard's eyes panned the plane of the horizon as his pupils pierced the dark abyss of night. The horses whinnied crying nearby, in fear of the wolves. Howard spoke, still trying to be steadfast and strong. His voice did not falter because he wanted to remain calm. "Get behind me Wyoming and Virginia. I do believe a pack of hungry wolves is attacking us. They must have caught wind of your cooking (with all the smoked turkey necks, oxtails, fatback, lard, and hog mows) Wyoming, said Howard." Swiftly, Howard grabbed a fiery log from the campfire and began to wave it around like a torch. The wolves were surrounding them now. The leader was baring his fangs and charging toward Howard!

The wolves circled the camp and growled. The pack of wolves was turning over pots and pans looking for food! Howard waved the burning log of wood at them to try and frighten them away. His revolver was strapped at his waist in a gun holster and ready to use. Howard reached for his gun with a trembling hand. He suddenly knew that he had to calm down. Howard mustered his strength, as he spoke. "We are in wolves' territory here in this wilderness. These wolves need to know that this Wyoming Territory is going to be mine! This here land is for me and my wife Wyoming, said Howard." Howard fired his pistol at the wolves.

The wolves seem to evade the gunshots! The leader growled and ran around the campfire. The pack did not stop their attack. The leader of the pack circled back around and led the other wolves toward a counter attack! The pack of wolves hunt as a family, all lead by the oldest or most dominant male in the wolf pack. The buffalo and bison herds had started to dwindle as a result of the settlers and their greedy hunting habits. The campfire provided an easy target for food. Most wolves make a fresh kill instead of eating things that are already dead. If the wolves were to eat something that they did not kill themselves, they might be eating a rotten and diseased animal.

However, the coyote is a slightly different breed. The coyote will follow wolf packs around hoping to steal the wolves' fresh kill. The coyote will let the wolves do all the dirty work of killing the prey then just steal or scavenge the remains of any wolf pack killing. Where ever there were wolves coyotes were sure to follow! The distinctive

howl of the coyote echoed across the open prairie. The hungry pack of coyotes were rallying behind the pack of wolves ready to converge upon the campfire. The familiar and foreboding sound of gunfire rattled through the midnight air. The camp was under fire, and under attack from the wolves and the coyotes.

The leader of the wolf pack would become a recognizable creature to Howard. He had learned how to identify wolves from his hunting days alongside one of his masters. The leader of the wolf pack had one broken fang. The broken fang would mean that the wolf might have trouble killing and eating his own prey in the wild. Once the leader of the pack loses his dominance and authority, he becomes second place compared to the other stronger healthier males in his family. This hunting pack had only one male and many females. Soon a dominant she-wolf would take control of the hunting pack, but that is only if the weakened male steps down. The weakened male with the broken fang will relinquish his reign as leader. This will happen as soon as the other wolves stop following his commands. The other wolves would have to begin to look for their meals with the dominant female in the pack instead.

Howard spoke with certainty in his voice that only quivered slightly with anxiousness. "That large she-wolf will become the lead lady of the pack as soon as that old broken fang male wolf dies off. I reckon he can barely chew his food with that busted set of teeth that he has for a ferocious smile, said Howard." Howard looked for more bullets to reload his gun. He had already fired one shot at the attacking lead wolf. The pack leader had reattacked lunging at the pot of food like a desperate and devastated creature!

These wolves were predators that wanted to devour any large hoof animal that they could. The large animals with hooves were abundant at one time on the open prairies of Wyoming Territory. The wolves used to have their own territory to hunt where no other competition could prevent them from getting a good meal. Now the moose herds, bison, buffalo, and other large prey had been run away from their territory as the frontier pioneers entered Wyoming with rifles. Too many buffalo died in one hunting excursion so the herds fled and split up to get away from the pioneer poachers.

Howard had the fortitude and agility to find his rifle inside the wagon. He groped for the rifle in the dim flickering light of the campfire until he found it. It was loaded but he only had two rounds of ammunition left in the rifle. The Smith and Wesson revolver had been loaded with six bullets. One bullet had already been used. Luckily, Howard had a box of six more bullets to fend off the pack of wolves and coyotes. He aimed his revolver at the head of the pack leader as the moon and the flames illuminated the abyss of night. Howard positioned his trigger finger to squeeze the trigger. He aimed at the spot right between the eyes of the wolf.

The pack leader bared his broken bloody fangs. It seems that the weakened male wolf had just taken a big bite of flesh. Had the pack leader just bitten a pioneer, or had he just bitten one of the coyotes? The pack leader snarled and howled as he charged forward toward Virginia. Howard's daughter was all but ten years old when the wolf had decided to make an attempt on her life. Howard pointed the revolver and fire a shot. Howard was an expert marksman! The bullet grazed the forehead of the pack leader. It was only a nick or cut, and did not penetrate the pack leader's skull. The weakened male wolf whimpered and retreated as a wounded animal. The other wolf pack members followed the old broken wolf's commands.

Virginia let out a tiny frightened scream as she dodged the attack of the wolf. Howard motioned for Wyoming and Virginia as he spoke. "Get inside the wagon girls! Get inside the covered wagon and seal it up as tight as can be, said Howard." Then without a second thought Howard lifted the revolver to take aim at one of the female wolves. He fired his revolver and hit the side of the she-wolf's abdomen. The she-wolf howled and whimpered as she fell wounded to the ground. The she-wolf was once noted in Roman history as the wolf that took care of Romulus and Remus in the wilderness during the formation of the city of Rome. The female wolves cared for the twin boy and let them drink their milk. Those she-wolves were kind and motherly, while these she-wolves are under the command of a pack leader that rules his wolf pack like Caesar.

Howard spoke as Virginia and Wyoming hurried toward the covered wagon to close themselves up inside. "Go inside the covered wagon and search for bullets for the rifle. When you find the



box of bullets, open a small opening just big enough to drop the small box of bullets to the ground in front of the fire so that I can see them, said Howard.” Virginia was the first to rush to the wagon to search for the bullets. The brass rifle casing cartridge was the ammunition that Howard needed to make a fatal shot at the wolves and coyotes. The coyotes had not made themselves visible yet but, Howard recognized a difference between coyote cries and wolf howls.

Howard took aim at another wolf as the dark shadows danced in the dim moonlight. The pistol positioned the bullet into the hindleg of the woman wolf. Howard had aimed for the broadside of the wolf’s stomach. Although the female wolf evaded the initial bullet target, the bullet still hit the wolf injuring her. The wolf limped away crying in agony! Howard fired another shot at an able-bodied wolf that was patrolling the perimeter of the campfire. Howard positioned his Smith and Wesson to kill the wolf. He tried to shot the animal in the neck, but instead the wolf jumped over the campfire and disappeared into the darkness. The simmering food was still wafting into the wilderness. So, there was no doubt that the wolves would keep coming back. The coyotes most likely would not dissipate and disappear into oblivion if there was easy access to food for them to eat.

Virginia was only ten years old, but she knew what brass casing bullets looked like. Virginia found the small wooden box that was filled with brass bullets for the rifle. Virginia opened the box to see if there were brass casings shining in the dim light, but she could only touch them to feel the brass casing in the palm of her hand. Virginia opened her hand to try and show the casing to her mother as she spoke in soft whispered tones. “Is this the brass casing, here in the palm of my opened hand, mother? I think I would close the box back up so that you can throw it toward papa, said Virginia.”

Wyoming confirmed that the box was exactly what they were looking for as she spoke to Virginia. “Yes, that is the box that we were looking for, dear. Give me the box filled with cartridges so that I can throw them over to your father, said Wyoming.” Then as bold as a bandit, Wyoming opened the covered wagon enough for her to pitch the closed box of bullets over to her husband. She yelled to tell

Howard that she was tossing the box of bullets toward him. "Howard, look over yonder! Catch, I am throwing this box of ammunition to you, said Wyoming."

Howard looked over at the covered wagon and prepared to catch the box of ammunition. The throwing of the small box alerted the pack of wolves. One of the wolves swatted the small wooden box out of the air when Wyoming threw the box toward Howard. The small wooden box of ammunition spilled open and the brass casings scattered all over the ground vanishing into the darkness!

The other wolves seemed oblivious to the impetus of their trouble. The other wolves and coyotes yet to come were impervious to the danger ahead. Howard was the trouble and the danger. Howard was the hazard that would be the thorn in the side of the predators. Howard would take no prisoners and would not hold back on his attempt to kill the wolf pack.

He had two more bullets left in his Smith and Wesson revolver. Howard had to hit another howling wolf to prevent himself from becoming a meal. Another wolf appeared from the shadows as Howard aimed his gun. He shot at the main part of the wolf's backside. The bullet lodged into the side of the wolf as the creature shrieked in misery. The animal fell to the cold hard ground as the campfire began to smolder. The wounded wolf staggered and caught his tail in the fire. The wolf caught on fire!

For an instant, Howard got an idea. He would waste a bottle of beer on the wolves and then try to set them on fire! Ah, but the difficulty would be to throw the bottle of beer at the wolves and break the bottle. If he stuffed a rag down inside the beer bottle and then lit the rag at the other end with fire; he might be able to throw it at the wolves. Oh, but this was a problematic idea because the wolf would most likely get out of the way of the bottle seeing it coming in the air. The bottle bomb would land on the ground and cause a brush fire! A brushfire was exactly what was going to happen if that wolf that was on fire did not put herself out. Soon the young female wolf had rolled on the ground smothering the fire enough to put herself out as she died. However, the grass and small bushes on the ground began to catch fire! Luckily the fire dwindled without enough grass to keep it burning.

As the wolf was fuming from the extinguished fire, Howard walked over to the wolf, and shot her at close range until he was sure she was dead. Howard shot another wolf, and then another, until he ran out of bullets in his revolver. The ammunition for the rifle was on the ground. The moonlight was so dim. The fire was just smoldering now. There was not enough light to see the ammunition scattered on the ground.

Hopefully, the wolves would run away and never return. The coyotes still howled screaming in the distance as the sun was beginning to rise over the Wyoming Territory. After daybreak Howard would make traps for the coyotes to get caught in. Then they would all have them for supper! There was always that old saying that a coyote would chew its own leg off to escape a trap. Then at least Howard and his family would dine on a coyote leg, which would be better than nothing.

The dawn had arrived on a new day. The next morning Virginia and Wyoming appeared from inside the covered Conestoga wagon. The camp was in shambles. Pots were thrown here and there in the ramshackle campsite. The group of frontier pioneers would simply forage forward toward their destination further down the California Oregon Trail. Howard spoke as Wyoming was picking up the pieces left behind after the wolf attack. "Oh, my darling Wyoming, conquering you is the most difficult and exciting adventure of my young life so far! Once we get through traveling in this Wyoming Territory, we might as well be ready for anything to happen, said Howard."

Wyoming ran over to Howard and wrapped her arms around him covering him in her huge knit blanket as she kissed her husband. Wyoming could feel the warmth of Howard body. She placed her hand over his heart to feel it beating fast beneath his clothes. She spoke with a huge white smile across her face. Her teeth were as straight as a picket fence. "Howard, your heart is beating like a warrior's drum, so fast and so hard! But don't you worry a bit, Howard we are going to get to California if it is the last thing we do. This Wyoming Territory may be named for me, but I choose a territory named for gold like California, said Wyoming Jefferson."

The pioneers picked up the pieces and continued on the trail. Howard Jefferson took his seat at the reins of the horse. Virginia Jefferson rode the small mule beside the wagon as the Jefferson family continued on the bumpy road that led closer and closer to their promised land. Wyoming had decided to sit beside Howard to see the panoramic view of the Wyoming, as she spoke. "This land is named after me Howard. I know you are going to say that, it ain't true. Now everyone will say that I am named after this land called Wyoming. No, I tell them all that argument. There is an oracle somewhere that saw in the stream of time that this land called Wyoming would become famous because I have the very same name. The powers that be must have known that I would ride through this land. I would conquer this land. I would explore this land! This land is my land, even if I do not want it any more than an old pair of worn-out shoes, said Wyoming."

Wyoming continued her sardonic speech as Howard looked over at his wife and smiled. Wyoming emoted as if she was a dervish. "I was taught to be wise when I was just a wee little girl. My mother was a mule, made when the master's son came to the slave quarters. My father was mule made when an overseer visited the slave quarters. But I do not identify myself as a beast of burden, a mule. No, I am a burden to any beast that dare come for me! We sure did get rid of those wolves last night didn't we Howard? I thought that the coyotes would come too. I heard from the other pioneers that the coyotes were just waiting for the wolves to find all the food for them. The coyotes attacked some of the families for their beef bits. I think we should eat just beans and bread from now on, and wait to boil our dried beef later. Otherwise, the wolves and coyotes will just keep coming out of the darkness for us, said Wyoming."

Howard leaned over toward Wyoming and laughed at the idea as he spoke. "Yep, we can stop boiling beef, but our fellow frontier families will never agree to that rationing of their beloved beef, said Howard."

He shook his head and let out a chuckle as he adjusted his wide-brim hat on his head as Wyoming spoke to him. "They told me I needed to learn how to read when I was a child. The subject of

learning to read the written word was only whispered about in the darkness of the woods at night or in the early morning. The other slaves that could read said that I could tell no one that I was learning, or I could be whipped to death for trying. I told them that I would not tell a soul, and that I want to learn to read the scriptures of the Bible just as other slaved had learned. The Bible was the only book we had to learn from. So, one day I started to learn the shape of the letters in the alphabet. The letters were carved in a tree with a sharp knife. Those letters were carved in the tree as if they were branded into my skin and into my heart. I learned each letter. Then I began to put the letters together into words. Next, I learned sentences. Well, I already knew the meaning of those phrases in the Bible from all of the church they forced us to attend. I knew that I had to obey or die, or I would go to the flames of hell for all of eternity, said Wyoming.”

Howard lost the happy expression on his face as he spoke. “Well, I never learned to read, but was told to memorized that whole gospel page after page. I finally asked what the holy spirit had given. They say the gift of healing and understanding different languages. Then there were the gifts of love, joy, peace, and longsuffering. That longsuffering is surviving something that took a long time to get through. The race is not won by the swift or strong, but the one who endured to the end. We just have to keep going toward the land race and get the fastest horse we can find to get to the plot of land first, said Howard.”

Wyoming had to remember the things she was taught as she spoke. “I somehow found the value of learning the little things that I was taught. My teachers told me these things were important, and I just believed them all along. Others would ask me why I try to remember those lessons that I was taught. I always tell them that the basic skills will be necessary someday to help me get by. The more familiar I am with reading and writing the easier life’s many tasks will be. When I learned counting, I kept practicing for the day I would have land and money to keep track of. Everyone ask me, why do I keep trying to do arithmetic with all that adding and subtracting. I would tell them, someday I will need to use it, said Wyoming.” The

couple was called How and Wy because they were always asking questions and getting the answers.

Soon the long line of covered wagons came close to a town near a creek. Some of the pioneers wanted to stop and go to the town to get more supplies. How and Wy had pondered the idea of watering the horses at a pond nearby. Howard Jefferson spoke reminiscing about tall tales that he had heard about the Wild West. "I drifted through Deadwood Dakota Territory before. The town was called deadwood because the first frontier travelers found driftwood and old dead trees in the water there. Because of the gold and silver rush, towns like Deadwood got a lively reputation for wine, women, and song in the saloons. Folks liked to gamble in the Old West. Poker was a game that many gunslingers liked to play. If they win, they can draw their pistol and demand their winnings. If they lose then they can still pull their gun and run from their debts. Oh, but those debts will most likely be paid in pistol fights and bloody nights, said Howard."

Wyoming seemed to be interested in going to the town as she spoke. Her voice seemed to be optimistic and energetic as a sly grin widened mouth. "That town over yonder looks like someplace to get more beans and cornmeal. The wolves spilled most of our supplies last night in the attack. I just hope that we don't come across anyone having a gunfight in town and catch a stray bullet, said Wyoming." Howard had decided to go to the town alone as he nodded his head, he looked at Wyoming with certainty in his voice. "I think we should set up camp here for a few hours. Then I will unhitch one of the horses and ride to town alone. You keep the rifle and pick up as many of the brass casing that you can find for ammunition. I think you picked up most of them before we left the campsite where the wolves had attacked us. Not only will I get food supplies; I will also pick up some more ammunition for the guns. A man can't be unarmed in the Wild West. The gun is how the West was won! They don't call it wild for no reason, said Howard."

The sun had fully risen now. It was high noon in the Old West town. Howard was sitting atop his steed as he sauntered into the town. The town had seen its fair share of silver and gold bullion as well as some gold dust. The dusky layer of soot covered every

surface in the town as if a giant tumble weed had just blown down the main street. The center of town had several saloons with dancing girls and taverns filled with drunk gamblers. The eateries were smoldering with food being cooked in the hearth. The blacksmith shops hammered away at horseshoes and bridles for the stallions that rode through the town looking for luck. There were several little general stores lining the main thoroughfare. Many cowboys had stopped off to have some grub. Their spurs dug deep into the sides of their mare's hide as they rode high. There were wary travelers looking for haciendas to rest. Flophouses were full of felons and outlaws loitering around the entrance of every place.

Howard focused his eyes on a general store that seemed to have both food and bullets. He dismounted his horse and tied it up in front of the store. As Howard felt his feet fall flat on the ground he looked around and saw a poster for two wanted men. The outlaws were wanted dead or alive with a bounty on their heads of \$10,000! Howard did not liken himself to a bounty hunter. He thought it seemed like slavecatchers to him. But if he could get \$10,000, that would help his family build a nice homestead and farm. There were no segregated signs on the outside of the store so, Howard entered the general store with his hands on his hips and his gun holstered. The tobacco was just a couple of cents per cut. Howard craved a big chunk of tobacco to chew on, but the peppermint stick called to him like a child in a candy store. Virginia and Wyoming would much prefer those peppermint sticks over tobacco. Howard was delighted to see an array of goods displayed in the store. He approached the counter to ask for ammo, which was behind the store counter.

The storeowners were a husband and wife. They were also freed slaves that had been in the West for more than ten years now. Howard seemed optimistic when he spoke with a sort of smile in his voice. "Well, howdy there! I reckon I have heard about y'all. Since freedom came, there have been so many opportunities for us all! Y'all are doing well out here in the Old West. You seem settled more than most settlers. Well, I reckon I need some ammunition for my rifle. That looks about the right caliber for my rifle cartridges. I also need some bullets for my .45 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver. My wife learned to shoot the rifle and pistol out right, and she can sit a

horse as good as any circus stunt rider. Our next stunt and show pony trick might be to own a store like you folks, said Howard.”

The storeowners seemed flattered as they rallied together to think of a reply to such obsequious flattery. “Yes, and we have dresses from San Francisco that look like a catalogue dream. We also have some new rifles that might also interest you wife, said the wife of the shop owner.” The husband reached for the ammunition for the rifle that Howard had pointed at as he spoke. “What did you say your name was? We get so many pioneers in our store each day, said the husband of the storeowner.” Howard took a step back and removed his hat as he introduced himself. “Well, howdy, my name is Howard Jefferson. My wife’s name is Wyoming just like the Territory. She is a gunslinging terror that is full of stories. They call us How and Wy, just like the question and the answer. We might stay put in Wyoming if the weather permits, and the natives don’t give us any trouble, said Howard.”

The shop owner gave Howard his ammunition for both his rifle and his revolver. Then looked askance at him wondering what else he wanted. Howard was ready for a list of supplies. “I will need some beans a pound of each: pintos, red beans, black-eyed peas, black beans, white beans, and four pounds of cornmeal please, said Howard.” The storeowners weighed and filled each request for Howard. He was ready to pay. “I think I have just enough. I hope this gets my family to California! I only, wish I had enough for three peppermint sticks, one for each of us, my wife, myself and my little daughter Virginia, said Howard.”

The husband-and-wife storeowners smiled in unison. “Well, if that is what y’all want, we would be happy to oblige you. Here dear. You can have three big old thick peppermint sticks. If your family does decide to settle here, then we have some stories to tell. We can chew the fat and find lots of plots of land close to town, said the husband of storeowner.” Howard took the burlap sack of supplies with a pleasant smile. He was glad to see that the storeowners had finally found freedom.

Howard’s voice seemed curious as he asked his questions. “I have heard stories about these frontier towns out here. Do y’all have any warning for us. Are there places we should not go, and paths we



should not cross? Me and my wife are just looking for a little piece of peace and quiet, oh and freedom, of course, freedom, said Howard.” Howard tipped his hat as he looked toward the storeowners. Howard could not resist biting into his thick peppermint stick even though most folks would have used it to flavor some tea instead.

The store owners had many stories to tell about the Wild West and many warnings. “We are from Chicago. The biggest city in Illinois. Chicago is close to the Wild West and an urban landscape as well. Chicago is where the wilderness meets civilization. There was a town called Deadwood in Illinois. Boy, did a lot of dead gunfighters and gamblers drift out of there in wooden boxes. There was a tiny pine coffin for so many freed slaves. I dare say that the war caused as much destruction among us, said the wife of the storeowner.” Howard leaned in closer toward the counter as he bit down on the delicious peppermint. He questioned the storeowners in reply. “What do you reckon caused so much destruction in Illinois? I heard the Old West was a land of opportunity, said Howard.”

## “Wild Bill Hickok, Billy the Kid, Jesse James & Buffalo Soldiers in the Wild West”

The couple seemed knowledgeable about the tall tales and folklore of the Wild West. “Well. You know our story is different from the history of the other frontier people. We are the freed slaves. So, lynching or poverty is never far from our thoughts. We heard that some lawmen have tried to civilize the towns in the West. But the towns in the West are like a buck that has not been broken yet. The lawmen are outnumbered. There are so many outlaws, and so few men willing to step in front of a bullet for the sake of the law. Some of these lawmen are just as crooked as a crook. They pretend to wear a badge so that they can bend the rules, and rob as many businesses as they can with their authority, said the husband storeowner.”

Howard was captivated as he asked for more. The wife storeowner seemed to know the story well. “Well, you know both two of the most famous folks in the Wild West were from Chicago and Deadwood Illinois. The two folk heroes are Wyatt Earp (the lawman) and Wild Bill (the gunslinger and war hero). Wild Bill was called a wild man because he was an expert about the wilderness. He was a scout during the Civil War for the Union army. The federal government trusted him to help the military. Any military man is good with a gun. Wild Bill learned to shoot when he was young. He was a great marksman who could shoot a man from long range and hit his target. Billy the Kid and Jesse James were two outlaws that we heard of. They were really sharp gunslingers that would do anything to get rich, said the wife storeowner.”

Howard seemed captivated as the storeowners continued to tell the folktale. “Billy the Kid was famous for being an outlaw that had a price on his head. Billy the Kid had killed a lot of men when he was shot down in the streets before he was even twenty-one years old. That is why they call him, the Kid. If you live by the sword, you die by

the sword. In his case you live by the gun, you die by the gun. They say the pen is mightier than the sword. So, lawmen who write laws are more powerful than the gunfighter.

Bounty hunters hunted Jesse James. Jesse James was a bank robber who also tried to rob stagecoaches. People like Wild Bill were once paid to protect Wells Fargo stagecoaches. Wild Bill Hickok would put on a show in a theater and sell tickets to see him. He was a sharpshooter and a showman! First, he was an outlaw and fugitive. You know, a criminal convicted of some crime that ran away from authorities. Wild Bill Hickok had all kinds of odd jobs, such as driving a stagecoach. Stagecoach drivers have to know how to shoot in case the stagecoach gets robbed or held up by bandits. That Wild Bill was always carrying a gun. They say you live by the sword; you die by the sword. In this case, if you live by the gun, you die by the gun, said the wife storeowner.”

Howard was still ever curious about this Wild Bill Hickok as the storeowners continued their tale. “Well, you know a fugitive can be exonerated and given a lawman’s label later on. That is what happened when Wild Bill moved to a different territory. He became a law enforcement Deputy U.S. Marshal in Kansas. Some say he was a lawman in Nebraska although he may have been wanted in other territories. Wild Bill was such a sharpshooter that whatever crime he did may have been forgiven if he promised to help the lawmen catch criminals instead. I reckon the bounty may have persuaded him to turncoat and become a lawman. If he could collect the bounty on another man’s head. Perhaps Wild Bill could avoid suspicion of being a criminal himself, by becoming a lawman, said the storeowner.”

Howard was still interested in more of the story as he swallowed a sweet chunk of peppermint. “They say, Buffalo Bill was Wild Bill Hickok’s friend. Wild Bill had killed several men famously while doing his job defending himself. Wild Bill was a rider for the Pony Express. The Pony Express used to deliver mail parcels and packages to distant locations in the West. Wild Bill Hickok came face-to-face with a bear. He was riding through the woods with a team of freight delivery men, said the storeowner as he repeated the folktale.”

The storeowner continued and was emphatically interested in telling the tall tale. "The wind was rustling through the trees in Missouri as if a twister cyclone was about to approach. The sun was beaming through the trees as a strange noise echoed through the woods. The team men stopped when a large bear appeared in the middle of the road. The bear was as large as four full-gown men! The male bear was prowling his territory. No one was going to enter this bear's hunting ground without permission! The huge bear was growling and gargantuan. He looked toward Wild Bill as he blocked his path on the road. They could not go around the bear. The bear bared his teeth. There was no avoiding it. The bear meant business! Wild Bill was breathing hard, and his heart was beating fast! The sight of the bear made Wild Bill's pulse quicken. He had to think fast. He wrangled his rifle to fire a round. The shot hit the bear only partially. The bear was not wounded enough to flee. The fight would continue with fear and anxiety! The bear was enraged as the bullet merely braised his forehead. If only the shot had fully penetrated the bear's head, Wild Bill could have fled. The hot steel and fast lead of the bullet only fed the fiery anger of the bear making it see red. The bear wanted the impending danger eliminated and the shoot, Wild Bill, dead, said the storeowner."

"The bear retaliated when the bear lunged at Wild Bill. Wild Bill tried to fire another shot to injure the irate creature. The beast was only more angered and infuriated by the flesh wound. The huge bear could still muster enough strength to counter attack! The bear used the weight of its ferocious frame to land on top of the frail figure of a man. Wild Bill tussled with the wild bear in the wilderness. The bear crushed his body beneath its massive weight. The bear mauled Wild Bill sinking its teeth into Wild Bill's flesh. The bear's fangs dug deep enough into Wild Bill to make him shriek with agony. The animal would not be subdued. The insatiable beast wanted blood! Finally, Wild Bill used his hunting knife to slice into the monster with vengeance. Wild Bill slit the bear's throat. Wild Bill went for the jugular vein until the mighty mammoth bear bled out on the ground. The bear whimpered and sighed breathing its last breath. There would be bear meat for supper at the campfire that night. Wild Bill was beaten and batter, but the bear was killed! Wild Bill was barely

breathing after the bear attack. Now, he would need much time to recuperate from the bear attack, said the storeowner.”

The storeowner had heard the story of Wild Bill surviving a bear attack in Missouri, and Nebraska, and in Chicago Illinois also. The legend of Wild Bill was growing day by day as the story was being retold with oral tradition. This story of the bear attack was just like homer, the poet telling the story of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The hero was a warrior who was brave and courageous. The hero would always be the protagonist, and the good guy that wins in the end. Howard and the storeowners now felt like good old friends. The sun was almost setting now. Howard would have to think about heading back to camp.

Before he was ready to leave. There were a few more stories tell. Another pioneer man came into the general store. The nosy and curious pioneer man had been listening as he interrupted. “Oh, Wild Bill Hickok, I read an article about him in the paper. I saw a show where he acted out the old folktales that you speak of. Imagine a man acting in a show about his own life just to make a few extra coins? Well, I saw the part of the show where he talked about all of the famous gunfights, he was in. Why, I once read in the paper about each gunfight. That Wild Bill could not decide if we was an outlaw, an honorable soldier, a coachman, or a deputy lawman. I guess he changed hats and pretended to be whatever he felt in the mood for that given day. I’m going to join the Oregon California trail today. If you don’t mind leading me toward the trail of wagons going further West, I want to ride along with you. I have more stories to tell of course, said the stranger pioneer man.”

The stranger pioneer man rode alongside Howard as they mounted their horse and headed back to camp. The stranger spoke telling more stories about Wild Bill. “Yep, Wild Bill was a buddy of mine, but he decided to marry up to a circus woman right here in the Wyoming Territory. I guess he got tired of being a wild man and wanted a wife. Are you married and did you settle down with some children yet? I would guess that there was a lady somewhere in your life because of the little ribbons that you have purchased from the store for a girl to wear, said the pioneer stranger.”

Howard adjusted his hat and settled into his saddle as he rode back toward his covered wagon. "Yes, I have a wife named Wyoming and a daughter named Virginia. They are waiting for me to bring back supplies for the rest of the journey West. We are planning to stop in California. Even though my wife is named after this territory of Wyoming, we are not staying here. We hear California is paved with gold bricks and silver bullion, said Howard." Howard could still taste the sweet flavor of peppermint stick in his mouth as he pointed his stallion toward the covered wagon where his wife awaited his return. Howard spoke again. His words were winding along the long weary path leading back to his loved ones. The sun slipped slowly down beneath the horizon to rest. "So, tell me more about this Wild Bill Hickok. I need to know the real rules of survival in the Wild West, not just what is written in the law, but what is lived in real life or death, said Howard."

The pioneer stranger continued his tale about Wild Bill. "The old legend talks about Wild Bill's first gunfight when he became famous for killing a man. Wild Bill just happened to be standing around in the station when an upset man did not want to pay his dues. Now you see, Wild Bill was a landowner with more than a hundred acres to his name. Wild Bill had driven a stagecoach and been a part of the Pony Express so he was used to being responsible for valuables. This angry man entered the station and did not want to pay his debt. So, the man pulled his pistol. Well, you know Wild Bill ain't called wild for nothing. Wild Bill's not gonna stand by and let some gunslinger shoot around him. Wild Bill shot back. He killed the man dead to defend himself. Wild Bill was tried for his crime and a judge decided it was self-defense. They call the shootout, one of his first. The man he killed was a well-known outlaw and gang member, a dangerous man. Wild Bill killed a famous outlaw and became notorious for it. The gang members were known for their crimes of cattle stealing, robbing coaches and banks. Wild Bill had been robbed of a horse, and robbed as a coachman before. So, killing an outlaw that is famous for such crimes was like payback, said the pioneer stranger."

Suddenly the sky opened up and the clouded screamed down thunder. Howard invited the pioneer stranger to take shelter inside the covered wagon. There was a quick introduction to Wyoming and

Virginia as the stranger got inside the Conestoga wagon. Wyoming and Virginia seemed impervious and oblivious to the rapid downpour outside because they were sheltered inside the wagon. The rain was so heavy that it sounded like an angry man pounding on the wagon with his fist in rage. There was heavy rain then just as suddenly as it began it subsided. The thunder kept rolling and bringing more and more torrents, but none were as furious as the first downpour.

The pioneer stranger was a cowboy who used to perform in a show about Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill and Wyatt Earp. The show sold tickets to tourist and journalist wrote stories about the stage play or circus display. "Well, they call me a cowboy in most towns. I used to be a soldier until I met Wild Bill while I was getting drunk in a bar. I was supposed to be clearing the trees from a road for the army to go through on horseback. I took a break and got some grub at a saloon, and that is where I met Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill. Those two were legends along with Wyatt Earp and the outlaws that they fought with. I told Wild Bill that he can tell the army that I am good with a gun so that is why I enlisted. I don't clear trees with expertise because I ain't a lumberjack. So, if they want someone handy with a hatchet, they should have gone and found an Indian brave. Those braves earned their names from being courageous enough to fight for the land that is rightfully theirs to begin with. I'm a cowboy and you can call me nothing but Cowboy from now on, said Cowboy."

The storm subsided. The sun broke through the clouds and quelled the swelling tempest. Cowboy had been inadvertently permitted to join the family temporarily. "I recall apart of the show where Wild Bill re-enacted a shootout. After the military stopped paying enough, Wild Bill went back to gambling in the saloons all across the Wild West. Wild Bill Hickok would fight over girls and gambling faster than a rooster chasing a hen in a hen house. He came across a frequent gambling buddy. After having a gambling dispute, they both challenged each other to a fast draw shootout, a duel. They stood side-by-side and dared to see who could draw their gun first. Wild Bill Hickok was angry at the gambler and shot hit him dead on the fast draw. Wild Bill drew his Smith and Wesson revolver and pulled the trigger faster than the gambler and dropped his wounded body to the ground faster than a Civil War soldier in the

front lines of battle! This gunfight became the standard for fast draw shooters, to see who could unholster their gun and aim a shot faster, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy was so excited to tell the rest of the story. “I participated in the infamous Niagara Falls show when the buffalo stampeded injured the audience. The buffalos chased women and children through the crowd. Nobody would pay because they could see the show from far away without buying a ticket. I told Wild Bill to let Buffalo Bill handle everything, but he shot his gun into the air anyways and startled the animal performers. Wild Bill’s show was full of real native Indians from surrounding tribes that had agreed to join the show for the townspeople. Even still, Wild Bill gets a bad reputation of killing any Indian that he set eyes on. Well, not all Indians are the same! Some braves are bad because they killed some of the men from our town. There are different tribes. Some have a bone to pick with us, and cause trouble, while others Indians are our allies. Yes, Wild Bill killed his share of Indians, especially when he was scouting for Lieutenant Colonel Custer. Wild Bill was telling his calvary soldiers where the Indian tribes were likely to attack them in the wilderness, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy tipped his hat as some Buffalo Soldiers rode by on horseback on their way back to their camp. Cowboy had plenty to say about the Buffalo Soldiers. “You know what the news is about the Indian Wars. Well, they want us freed slaves to fight the Indians and get all the land and give it to the federal government. Then the feds say they will give us some nice huge chunks of land here out West. Matter of fact, the Buffalo Soldiers are the ones freeing up the land for the Homestead Act. The government is giving land away for free to the freed slaves. But, the land ain’t even belong to the federal government to give in the first place. They are gonna make us fight the Indians for this here, so-called free land, said Cowboy.”

Howard opened the covering on the Conestoga wagon to let in some sunlight. Virginia and Wyoming had been listening to the rest of the story about the Buffalo Soldiers and the restless wilderness. Wyoming was so intrigued that she wanted to know more. She asked Cowboy about the Buffalo Soldiers as she put away the supplies from the general store. “I overheard you say something



about Buffalo Soldiers. I have seen some of the freed men in uniform over yonder. They seem so busy going here and there doing something for the country. Now that we are free, we fight for the federal government. The Union wants us to fight the Indians for land that ain't ours to rightfully fight for. This land is so big and wide as the sky. We don't need to take all of it from the natives, do we? I have been reading about the tribal treaties that the government is making with the natives. Every time they make a promise not to go any further into the tribal territory, they break it. More settlers (like us) move further and further into tribal lands. The tribals claim that the settlers hunt too many buffalo and cause the herds to run away, said Wyoming."

Virginia wrapped the huge patchwork quilt around her tiny feminine shoulders. Her face was like a doll with painted lips and cheeks. Her hair was carefully fixed with shiny pressed ringlets and a pigtail on either side of her head. Her gleaming white teeth glistened a snaggle-tooth grin when she smiled and laughed like a babbling brook full of life and vitality. Her small energetic voice was juvenile but enlightened, as she asked intelligent questions. "Are we going to break the treaty if we go any further father? They say this land does not belong to anyone, but the Indians sure don't agree with that, said Virginia."

Howard looked over at Virginia. He wanted to keep her safe from any danger as he replied. "Don't worry darling, this land is free as long as the freed slaves kill enough Indians to make it free from braves and warriors that will scalp any federal soldier or settler. But, they only have bows and arrow and tomahawks and spears, while we (modern men) have rifles. I am telling you what is real, little girl. Even though you are only ten years old, you need to know the truth. Now, don't be scared my daughter, just keep your eyes looking out at the horizon for the sign of a tribe or battle cry. If they come, we will run the other way, but if we have bullets, we will fight. If a bear or a wolf comes and wants to bite, we will shoot, and fight, fight, fight, said Howard."

Cowboy continued his story now the tall tale included the battles of the Buffalo Soldiers. "I am about to join the Buffalo Soldiers. I already had experience fighting for the federal government during

the Civil War. Now that we won the war for freedom from slavery, we can win us some good land out here in the West. I want my new uniform. I'm turning in these buckskin chaps, and big brim hat for a sharp crisp new Buffalo Soldier uniform. I'm gonna have to fight the Indians anyhow. I might as well get a grant from Ulysses Grant, and get paid for being in the military. I am freed and not free; somebody needs to pay me! I need me some new boots and grub every day. I reckon soldiering will take me further in the calvary on horseback. I probably couldn't go as far by myself. There is safety in numbers, you know, said Cowboy."

Howard looked up at the sky watching the sunset slip past his reach, as she spoke. "I heard some stories about the Buffalo Soldiers already. The regiment has freed men officers that command the men. What an honor! They pay like you said. However, I would rather see us live in a freed slave town, with freed slave storeowners. There are even freed slave mayors and lawmen too to keep everything civilized and safe. Well, it's the Wild West, we can't expect a safe and quiet place, unless we want to live in the middle of nowhere without the trade routes and stores for convenience. Being close to clusters of people and civilization means disease, sickness, noise, and thieves as well as the threat of native attacks, said Howard."

Cowboy looked at the trees and shadows as sundials. She spoke about time. "It's about time we had something valuable of our own. They say, Wild Bill fought a man over a gold watch that he lost in a poker game. The hands of time are squeezing around every man's throat, as the days turn into long and sinful nights. The gambler took Wild Bill's watch and wore it to woo a wild woman of the West. She was a saloon girl that used to sit on Wild Bill's lap while he played poker. Luck was a lady that would lay down for him. He used to like to poke her a bit, and I ain't talking about billiards and card games. She was the queen of his heart. Her lips were as red as cherries and her cheeks were rogue like apples in autumn. She wore a corset and bustle to show her curvy frame. She laughed like a barmaid filled with wine. When she wanted something from Wild Bill, she whined like a teenaged schoolgirl in a candy store. Her dress was satin and red velvet. She lifted her skirt to reveal a garter that held a pistol just

dainty enough for her small female hands. **Her painted nails could pull the trigger and put any gambler or drunken soldier in their place. She would laugh behind his back and smile in his face. To be seen with her was less of an honor and more of a disgrace.** That saloon gal was not worth the bullet. Oh, but these two gambling men wanted her more than brandy and liquor. They were maybe willing to lay down and die for her. Together, they offered this girl gifts for a moment of her time. Some say she was an actress, while others say she was a harlot who lived in the bordello. The brothel was full of lonely desperate frontier girls with no man to call their own, said Cowboy.”

Howard was putting the ammunition away in a sealed wooden box that would not fall open when tossed around in the wagon, as he spoke. “Yep, I heard that Wild Bill was a scout that helped the 10<sup>th</sup> calvary navigate through the wilderness. There would be several calvary regiments. The 24<sup>th</sup> infantry was on foot with rifles. The soldiers had bayonets fixed like spears if they needed to fight the braves in battle. Some people would think that the freed men would run from battle in fear, but no the Buffalo Soldiers got their nickname from being brave like the male buffalos. All the Buffalo Soldier calvary soldiers rode horseback like gentlemen and wore uniforms with brass buttons. They say that the Indians first started calling the freed slaves Buffalo Soldiers because they thought that our hair looked like buffalo bison hair. The natives worship the buffalo as a source of food and wear the buffalo hides to keep them warm in the winter. Without the buffalo herds the native way of life would change. They are hunters who live off the land. The Indians depend on the buffalo meat for most of their food. When the settlers started hunting on the same sacred ground (and killing too many buffalos) the herds started to scatter. The buffalo were harder to find after a while. The tribes did not want to throw nature out of balance and kill more buffalo meat than they could eat. The pioneers often just killed for sport instead of for survival, which violated the belief system of the native tribes, said Howard.”

Cowboy smiled as his gleaming white teeth shimmered in the sunset. His teeth were as white as precious pearls from the bottom of the deepest ocean. He waved as he saw the Buffalo Soldiers go

by in the far distance. He imagined himself in the uniform. Cowboy had strong broad shoulders. Cowboy had a muscular back from rustling cattle and long hours of field slave work on a plantation. His stalwart frame was sturdy and brutish. He was taller than most men standing well over six feet tall. His square jaw and high cheek bones glistened like satin due to his close shave, all except for a thick mustache and carefully groomed sideburns. His deep brown eyes were as dark and endless as midnight. His large hands were rough from working with a pistol. He wore his gun in a holster on his hip. His huge big brim cowboy hat hung over his face adding a bit of mystery to block the sun from his keen eyes.

Cowboy spoke in a deep voice that seemed to be a bit raspy from smoking pipe tobacco and drinking whisky. His voice seemed to clear up when he swigged a swallow of hot coffee. "Wild Bill told me himself that he helped the slaves escape on the underground railroad. The house where he grew up was used as a station on the underground railroad where runaway slaves would hide out on their way North to freedom. Most of the western territories did not want slaves but if the war had continued maybe some of the territories would have joined the Confederacy just like Texas had done. Wild Bill was an anti-slavery soldiers who wanted to help end slavery, said Cowboy."

Howard reached over and got under the huge wool knit blanket that was wrapped around Wyoming as he held his wife tight. They would keep each other warm all through the cold Wild West night. Howard looked over at his wife Wyoming as he spoke with clarity in his voice. "Yes sir, I recall it was said that period of time was called Bleeding Kansas. As a matter of fact, those Kansas folks did not want any slavery in their state! They were willing to fight bloody battles to prevent the plague of slavery and all of its greed from taking a grip on their home state. Those folks fought slavery so hard and were willing to die because they knew just how evil slavery was. Why, do you think the folks in Kansas rejected slavery so much, Cowboy? They were going to wind up dying regardless, said Howard."

Cowboy was filling his mouth with some beans and cornbread as he leaned close to the fire. The wagon was camped out for the night

as the sun had already set. The darkness of the cool night cast shadows down upon the Wyoming Territory wilderness. The sky was filled with sparkling stars. The rain had stopped long enough for the underbrush on the ground to dry out.

The family was sitting around the campfire listening to the stories about the Old West as Cowboy spoke. "I think those poor people in Kansas thought that they could stay out of the Civil War that the Confederacy was going to cause. The Confederate states that wanted the war were mostly spurred on by wealthy plantation owners who stood to make a huge profit from slavery. Kansas was not a big cotton plantation state. So, most people in Kansas would not have a reason to start a war over slavery. Kansas was new frontier state with very few settlers. Anyhow, those pioneers wanted a free way of life. Slavery was not necessary for the type of work they wanted to do. There were very few cotton and tobacco farmers in Kansas because of the climate. They saw the Civil War as a rich man's war waged for wealthy cotton farmers. Cotton requires a long growing season with very hot weather. Cotton is harvested in high temperatures. The hot weather states of the Confederacy grow a lot of cotton. Colder weather states like Kansas can grow wheat. Wheat does not require really hot weather and a long warm weather growing season; so African slaves are not required in Kansas. The wheat farmers would have smaller farms, harvest their own wheat, and depend less on slaves. The African slaves were used because the cotton plantation owners wanted free labor from people who do not get heatstroke, and can work long hours in hot temperatures. The anti-slavery people in Kansas would rather fight a few bloody battles to prevent slavery than to join a long war that could last many years, said Howard."

Wyoming put her head on Howard's shoulder and smiled glancing up at him as she spoke. "I think we should try and open a general store, run for mayor, start a farm, and help the Buffalo Soldiers fight Indians if we want a place in the Wild West, said Wyoming." Howard looked over at his wife lovingly as his voice echoed into the moonlit night. "That seems like a plan, but how? I am the How in Howard and you are the Why in Wyoming. We just need to grow enough food to feed our family and stay out of trouble as

much as we can. We don't want to fight the Indians or the outlaws either. I wouldn't reckon I would be any kind of lawman either, said Howard."

Cowboy swallowed another mouthful of beans and ham hawks as he made a statement. "Well, y'all can't hardly help but fight the Indians, if they are gonna attack. Attack they will. Attack is a fact. The settlers made a breakable pact. The pioneers are always wanting more land until they take it all with greed and not need. I saw Wild Bill kill several men as a deputy given the lawman's badge. Even the lawmen have to shoot to kill. After killing a lot of Indians, Wild Bill became the sheriff in Kansas where he arrested deserters who ran away from military duty, said Cowboy."

Cowboy couldn't stop talking about Wild Bill. "Sometimes lawmen are just as trigger happy and deadly dangerous as outlaws! If someone was acting a fool and going crazy in town, Wild Bill would shoot at them. He even killed two men in town for acting up. This made people fear the law, but also made him a bad man for some people. Wild bill shot that wild acting cattle wrangler through the forehead. Wild Bill spilled is brains on the ground to make an example of him. Wild Bill said he killed the unruly man to restore order. He killed to defend himself and the town. These killing were excused as keeping the peace. The lawmen could kill anyone they wanted to. It is nothing but legal murder with a sheriff badge. Before he was a lawman, Wild Bill was acquitted of murder for his fast draw gunfight. He paid his way out of jail. Then he was elected to be a lawman in another territory. He was a criminal in one town, and a hero in the other. Some folks admired Wild Bill, while other admonished him. Wild Bill had an unforgiving aim, said Cowboy."

Cowboy had to continue talking even if he did have a mouthful of black-eyed peas and skillet cornbread in his mouth. "He could hit a man with a shot between the eyes at fifty paces. This ability to kill was used to shoot criminals as the elected Sheriff. One dark night, Wild Bill was shooting at a criminal. He accidentally shot one of the deputies and killed him also. This was friendly fire! Wild Bill shot his own lawman by mistake. **The bullet knows no loyalty. The bullet protects and defects. The bullet does not discriminate or tell the difference between lawman and outlaw; the bullet kills all men**

**the same**, said Cowboy. That Wild Bill died as he lived (playing poker and shooting his pistol). They call it the dead man's hand of poker, and it lives in infamy to this day. I reckon Wild Bill is buried in Illinois well after the fire in Chicago. So, the flames didn't get him on this earth. But for all that killing he did, maybe the fires of hell will get him in the end, said Cowboy."

The family would let the fire burn low until there was nothing left but glowing embers. The crescent moon was hanging over the covered wagon as the family climbed inside. One by one they found rest falling deep asleep. Sleep was the only escape from the unrelenting hard work riding across the frontier. The weather was harsh and stark. Wyoming was famous for ferocious climate and conditions. Wyoming had nestled herself next to Howard beneath the huge wool blanket. Virginia was warm beneath the colorful patchwork quilt. Cowboy used his hat to cover his face to block out the light from the moon as he dozed off. Cowboy was like a watch dog that would wake up if the slightest sound aroused his hearing.

There was a howl that echoed through the night. Cowboy was startled as he jumped up and opened his huge curious eyes. Cowboy looked in every direction. Cowboy tapped Howard on the shoulder to wake him up quickly. Howard looked out into the prairie to recognize a limping lone wolf coming closer and closer toward the campfire. When the old male wolf got close enough, Howard was able to see that it was a familiar creature. This wolf was the weakened male wolf with the broken fang that had attacked the wagon train earlier. The weakened wolf had been cast out of the wolf pack, and replaced with a dominant younger male or a large female. The old male wolf was left on his own to hunt with a broken fang. Cooked food was a welcome alternative. The old male wolf seemed so docile now that he was wounded.

Howard came closer and offered the weakened wolf some left over neck bones and pot licker drippings. The wolf was willing to come closer. The wolf welcomed the warm taste of cooked food to his palate. Soon Howard was petting the wolf like a family dog. Howard was giving the wolf more food, as he spoke. "This here wolf has a broken tooth and several wounds. He can't much fend for himself or even hunt. He ain't got long for this world if we don't fix

him up and feed him. Now, I reckon if we do feed this wolf and heal him up good, he would make a hell of a guard dog. This wolf could become an attack dog to protect this family from other animals. He can be our gargoye, or our dog guarding the gates of hades. Any way to look at it this here old wolf can help us hunt and scare off just about anybody in the Wild West, said Howard.”

Wyoming would always flinch when she came close to the wounded wolf. The wolf had been the leader of the pack with the broken fang. This wounded wolf with a broken tooth had tried to attack the campfire. The wolf had knocked over the cooking pot in desperation and starvation. Now, that very same wolf was willing to be warmed by the fire. The wolf ate food given to him from his former prey. The predatory impulse was fading away. The weakened wolf realized that his best chance at a meal would be from people. People were not the feared enemy or the prey anymore. Now people would become the wounded weakened wolf’s friends.



## “Buffalo Bill, Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley & Buffalo Soldiers”

The Buffalo Soldiers were stationed in a territory in the Wild West. Cowboy would soon join the Buffalo Soldiers. Cowboy wanted to persuade Howard to become a Buffalo Soldier, and carve out a place in the wilderness with a uniform and rifle. Howard and Wyoming were going to hold tight to each other. Their love was as inseparable as the sand is from the sea in an ocean of eternity. Howard and Wyoming were truly meant to be. The weakened wolf was being nursed back to health. The old male wolf would be called Wolf. The family welcomed Wolf into their circle of warmth around the campfire. Their covered wagon would continue toward California as the family trudged through Wyoming Territory.

Cowboy continued his stories of the Wild West as he talked about Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. "I was also an actor in the Buffalo Bill Wild West. I do not pride myself on my acting skills but more on my cattle wrangling and horse tricks. I can ride a horse backwards and forwards standing up on the saddle or standing on my head on horseback! Buffalo Bill was a real buffalo hunter. He learned to hunt and butcher a buffalo from spending time with the native tribes in the wilderness. He dressed in buffalo hide and fringe. Buffalo Bill had a huge hunting knife stuck under his belt and a pistol at his waist. Wild Bill was the sharpest shooter between the two. Nonetheless, the two men were as thick as thieves. They met when they were both young boys about twelve years old. Both were scouts and experts and finding their way across the wilderness. They even tried to marry the same girl, Calamity Jane (another performer in the show), said Cowboy."

Cowboy could not stop talking about Buffalo Bill as he was shaving his scruffy beard in his shaving mirror. "Buffalo Bill was best friends with the sharp shooter Wild Bill. One day they were out hunting buffalo together. Buffalo Bill aimed his rifle as the sunlight pierced his eyes. Buffalo Bill set his sight on a bull that was galloping across the prairie. The bull had horns that were parted down the

middle looking a lot like a huge woman with pigtails on either side of her head. The horns are turned up at the tip looking like the letter 'J' hook shape on either side of the bull's head. The herd was grazing on the grassy pasture in Wyoming. Buffalo Bill had to be careful not to startle the buffalo herd. If the buffalo felt somehow in danger, Buffalo Bill could start a stampede that could get both himself and Wild Bill trampled to death. Buffalo Bill trained his rifle on the bison bull with the biggest horns, said Cowboy."

Cowboy had finished shaving as he continued his story. "The prey Buffalo Bill wanted was the largest bull with the most meat on his bones. Buffalo Bill squinted his eye and focused on the bull. His hand was steady as he lifted the rifle. He squeezed the trigger slowly and precisely. It was a bulls-eye! Buffalo Bill earned his name that day as a buffalo hunter as he hit his target dead on. The humongous bull was hit in the eye. The bull fell down on his knees and shrieked in pain as the bullet ruptured the bull's body. The herd was disturbed. The other bison began to scatter. The sound of the gunshot echoed through the pasture disrupting the pastoral serenity of the wilderness. Soon the wounded bull was collapsed on his side in the middle of the field. The second bullet hit the bull on its side. Blood streamed from the bull's side gushing in red rivers of aguish. Buffalo Bill crept closer. Buffalo Bill got out of the way of the fleeing bison in order to deliver a point-blank shot right below the massive horns. Buffalo Bill shot the fatal gunshot to the bull's forehead. The buffalo bull slowly closed his eyes as the life drifted out of his body, said Cowboy."

Cowboy seemed to smile when he talked about the love affair that had unraveled between Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill. "Now, Buffalo Bill was world renowned because of Buffalo Bill's Wild West touring show. Calamity Jane was a woman who had braved adventures in the Wild West, and lived to tell the tale. She was a storyteller in the show that captured the heart of Buffalo Bill. Calamity Jane told stories of Indians attacking stagecoaches, frontier homesteads, and transcontinental trains. Calamity Jane had some packages delivered in the Wild West. The Pony Express rode across the West risking life and limb to deliver a letter or supplies to pioneer

families. Buffalo Bill was a Pony Express Rough Rider riding into the rugged untamed frontier, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy was now feeding his horse as he walked beside the covered wagon. Cowboy’s voice seemed jovial and happy as he talked about his days with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. “Buffalo Bill had spent many years in the frontier territories scouting. Buffalo Bill learned to chart a path through the woods and open prairies. He was a scout and explored that navigated along rivers and mountain passes across the landscape. Buffalo Bill was an expert horseback rider. As an equestrian he could handle himself on a horse very well. I remember seeing Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill riding the stallion together across the prairie. Calamity Jane was in the front and Buffalo Bill was holding her tight from the back. The couple was straddling the horse together galloping across the land. If Buffalo Bill ever fell off the horse he would get back in the saddle and try again. This is the same way he was in love. There was a rumor that Buffalo Bill had proposed to Calamity Jane, but Wild Bill was also interested in her for his wife. So, the story goes that neither man married her, and sought the love of other women instead, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy seemed to be polishing his cowboy boots and spurs as he began another story about Buffalo Bill. “Annie Oakley was a sharpshooter that caught Buffalo Bill’s eye. She had a great aim. Her eagle eyes could shoot the fly off of a bison’s back from fifty feet. Annie was married. She toured with Buffalo Bill Wild West show for several years. Annie was no shrinking violet or a pious type woman. She would shoot the petals off the violet. Annie would throw a hot pie in the face of foes for laughs backstage. When Annie Oakley was getting long in the tooth, she did not act her age. She memorized stories. Annie didn’t read from a page, said Cowboy.”

Howard had thought about joining the Buffalo Soldiers; but he heard rumors of the coughing sickness choking the life out of the men at the military camp. Howard furrowed his brow and cleared his throat as he asked Cowboy questions. “Cowboy, was Buffalo Bill really in love with Calamity Jane? It sounds like a love triangle between Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, and Calamity Jane. What about that Annie Oakley slipping between the sheets with Buffalo Bill. I bet Annie Oakley’s husband could look the other way if his wife woos the

boss because she gets paid to be in show business, said Howard with a grin.”

Cowboy squinted as his eyes looked into the sun. He continued his tale of Buffalo Bill. “That Calamity Jane was a rough and tough woman but could be feminine when she had to. She could get all gussied up and girly. She was a sturdy thick girl with some weight to her. She was not all frail and fine like a porcelain doll, but she could look like a saloon girl or brothel girl. In fact, she used to be one to earn her keep from time to time before she joined Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. She was sometimes dressed in a corset and bustle. She would wear the big ruffled skirt woven with fine fabric from San Francisco. Sometimes she would have her hair done up in curls, just like the other women in the brothel. She would wear rouge on her lips and cheeks. It is so hard for a woman in the West to escape the clutches of a bordello. The houses of ill repute are around every corner, tempting cowboys and outlaws as well as lawmen to indulge in the sins of the flesh. The mind is willing but the flesh is weak. So, any gambling man or cattle wranglers would wonder into a brothel in pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure is the favorite pastime of the pioneer when he is not alone on the frontier prairies, said Cowboy.”

Howard bit off a huge piece of peppermint stick candy cane as he listened to Cowboy go on about his days as a rough rider in the Buffalo Bill Wild West tour. “Well, you know that Buffalo Bill dressed in buck skins and buffalo skins with fringe for the performances. He wore his hair long and curly to his shoulders. His beard was trimmed, but his huge mustache was groomed with wax. His wide brim hat was more like a frontier man than a cowboy. He was tall enough, but not a muscle man. He was not big enough to make all other men feel small. Buffalo Bill was a tough guy and a fun boss, said Cowboy.”

Howard was changing the horseshoe on one of his mares. Cowboy dapped the sweat off of his brow as his voice echoed his story across the Wyoming prairie. “You know, they named a town in Wyoming after Buffalo Bill. They call the town Cody. Buffalo Bill founded the town out here in the Wild West. Buffalo Bill played out the attack of a stagecoach because he used to ride for the Pony Express. On the stage sometimes Sitting Bull and some of his young braves would come and perform an Indian attack for the audience.

Expert horseback riders performed some of the most amazing horse tricks. The loud war cry of the brave would blare across the stage. The braves would ride into the spotlight with their smooth bare chests and bison skin clothes. The chief Sitting Bull was crowned with his headdress of colorful feathers and war paint. He led the braves to ride against the stagecoach or the pioneer cabin to attack. The fear of being scalped was a legend and a real-life threat. The Indians performers wanted the audience to fear them, then admire the tribal people that once had total rule of this land, said Cowboy.”

Howard nodded as Cowboy helped him change the horse shoe on his stallion. Cowboy continued his story of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. “Buffalo Bill became so famous that Queen Victoria saw the show over in London. A British promotor wanted to see a Yank from the Wild West perform. All the classic legends of the Wild West frontier were army scouts. Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were both military scouts during the Civil War. Buffalo Bill was an expert at finding his way through the wilderness in the western territories. The land was so untamed and unexplored that scouts were needed to guide the military soldiers through the forests and prairies of the West. Buffalo Bill performed his show for Queen Victoria. She sat there wearing her tiny diamond crown in her blue silk satin dress. She was the lady that made the corset fashionable, as she held together her stout rotund figure. That Queen Victoria was well-fed and carefully groomed as she sat in a private booth above the rest of the audience. Queen Victoria of England rather enjoyed the show and was fascinated. The Old West was in deed a new frontier, and an unexplored realm of interest for her, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy cleared his throat and tried to speak in a mock British accent as a joke. “The Queen Victoria met Buffalo Bill. He curtsied and bowed to the Queen politely as he was advised to do. Buffalo Bill shared a few words with Queen Victoria, and he was honored by her remarks. Just yesterday we were fighting the war for independence from England. Now, we are all being invited back to England to keep civil relations up with the old country. We are supposed to be friends with England. However, we maintain our own culture and heritage separated from theirs. The Wild West is a piece of America that makes us our own unique country. The Atlantic

Ocean separates us from England, but our language still binds us together. I reckon the native Indians here in the frontier can claim their own culture and life, but they will die for it someday, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy patted the horse on the back and continued his story as the sun was rising high above. “That Annie Oakley was the queen of our production. Boy she was the stinky, stout, proud and sturdy type of girl. She told stories about what a sharpshooter she was. She could ride side saddle or straddle and shoot while riding across the open prairies. She would wear the buffalo skin dress with long fringe. A huge hunting knife was tucked under her belt as part of her costume. She would demonstrate her marksmanship for any audience. She had large piercing eyes and a strong brow. She wore her hair long and tussled like Buffalo Bill. Some would call her a tomboy that was masculine and tough. Well, any gal in the West had to be wild in bed or awake, standing up or laying down. That Annie Oakley saw her share of saloons and brothels, but stuck to sharpshooting as her way to earn her keep, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy was so excited about the women he met in the West as he spoke about the Buffalo Bill Wild West tour. “Man, I tell you women would come out of the woodwork for any man riding a horse in the show! Annie Oakley got her fair share of attention from men, even though she was married. Buffalo Bill spent some time with her and Calamity Jane. That Calamity Jane seemed to be in love with Buffalo Bill. But she was just his road chick. He proposed and asked her to marry him. The excuse was that Wild Bill wanted to marry Calamity Jane instead. They were quite a threesome. I would see the three of them at the same hotel many times in the same hotel room. They claim the three of them were playing poker. They were up all night just practicing poker tricks. Some trick huh, I’ll bet, said Cowboy.”

Howard was feeding the horses as Cowboy stood beside him in the glare of the cascading sunlight. “Buffalo Bill liked to pretend to be commanding officer Custer. You maybe heard of Custer’s Last Stand. The soldiers were trying to fight the Indians in a huge battle. The men were mounted on horseback and some on foot. The regiment was marching toward the territory. The native tribe would

not back down. On that day they were in for a fight for the storybooks I tell you! The conflict was called the Battle of Little Big Horn! The Indian braves were in a big number, out numbering the soldiers of commanding officer Custer 's regiment (who were little and fewer in number). The Plains Indians wore their blood red feather headdress into battle. The tribal warriors rode their courageous horses into the battle with braves brazen and bold, said Cowboy.”

The sun was riding across the sky like a triumphant conqueror as high noon approached. Cowboy continued his tale about Buffalo Bill's Wild West. “The Plains Indians were known for hunting the buffalo and living off the land. After all, the territory was their tribal land for hundreds of years before the settlers came. Custer wanted to conquer the territory for Manifest Destiny. So many people in New York and on the East Coast believed that there was some divine right given from God to rule and explore the entire continent all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Manifest Destiny is similar to folks thinking that the Queen or the royalty of Europe has the right to rule the land with some God-given ability or privilege given from God. I reckon that the idea is hogwash, bull hocky. Custer marched his men across that battlefield surely outnumbered. The wind whistled across the battlefield as the sun cut rays of sharp daggers down upon the doomed soldiers. They rode with their horses high and mighty. The braves stampeded like buffalo who had been startled, but not with fear, with vengeance instead. The braves drew their bow and arrow. The braves hit their targets with a deafening battle cry that echoed across the plains! The calvary and infantry fired their rifles repeating round after round. The bugle call said advance across the battlefield. The braves in their war paint and bison skins slaughtered the calvary on horseback dressed in their blue uniforms and brass buttons. There were just too many of those Indian warriors to be defeated by Custard. Buffalo Bill always played commanding officer Custer in stage performance. Although Custer made his last stand, Custer fell to defeat by the native tribes said Cowboy.”

Cowboy stretched his arms toward the sun and smiled, as he spoke of his next exciting adventure. “I don't know if seeing Custer lose to the Plains Indians made the American audience angrier at the native tribes, or if it made everyone feel sorry for the Indians. You

know because they will lose their land someday. Even if they won that one battle, they will lose the Indians Wars. This Indian War could go on for a hundred years if we are not careful to end it soon. That is why I am joining the Buffalo Soldiers to help the government end this Indian War right now, said Cowboy.”

Howard put his hand above his brow to block the sun as if he was saluting. Howard listened to Cowboy talk about his glory days as the unrelenting sun beat down on them like a snare drum in a battlefield. “Now, I imagine the training that I would have to endure to join the Buffalo Soldiers. I will have to fight the Indian braves of the Plains Indians to truly win my freedom. When I win my freedom, I will be given honor on the battlefield. Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill both got the medal of honor when they were military men. Buffalo Bill was a wilderness guide and army scout who hunted buffalo in the untamed territory. Wild Bill was a military scout that got the medal of honor for his courageous acts. I want to get me some medals, shiny brass buttons, blue uniform, and maybe even some stripes on my shoulder. I won’t enjoy spilling blood as much as most. But I will kill me some of anybody (Indian or anyone) that the White man says to kill to get my land and money. Free will runs this world, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy continued his stories. “I have heard stories about training to become a Buffalo Soldier. At the Little Big Horn River, the battle raged. The Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians destroyed the 7<sup>th</sup> regiment with Custer as their commanding officer. Custer was killed in battle and Crazy Horse rose to fame as a tribal warrior. That famous war hero Custer died fighting to get free land. He and his regiment paid with their lives. **Ain’t nothing free. Somebody died for it to be called free. Somebody will have to claim victory if this territory is for you and me. When we build our towns and settle, we will see victory! I plan to get me a huge plot of land. Not just for me as a man, but for my woman, wife to be and family. I believe that America should continue from sea to sea as far as the eye can see,** said Cowboy.”

Cowboy had heard the story about how Buffalo Soldiers are trained. “I was not born a slave but my pappa and mamma were. They were born in Mississippi. Texas was a place to raise cattle for



beef even when the state had just turned Confederate. I reckon they ran away to Kansas right at the time called Bleeding Kansas. Kansas hated slavery and the folks in the state were bleeding slavery out like bloodletting with blood leach. Buffalo Bill used to tell us that his father was an anti-slavery fighter that even died while fighting in a Bleeding Kansas battle. He had gone to get more anti-slavery families to fight with him, and that was when Buffalo Bill's father was killed in battle. The government didn't organize the anti-slavery fighters in Kansas. Folks decided on their own that they would fight to the bleeding death to stop slavery in their state, said Cowboy."

Howard seemed to be interested in what Cowboy was saying. Howard dipped the ladle down into the bucket of water to take a drink in the oppressive heat. Cowboy spoke, as the sun was dipping lower in the sky, slinking toward the horizon. "The first thing they do is train you to march. They have all the Buffalo Soldiers out there in their own camp. The government puts the Buffalo Soldiers in their own place separate from the other soldiers. The Buffalo Soldiers are former slaves used to being separated from the rest of the soldiers. They used to put the black navy men in the same barracks and living quarters as the other soldiers, but the government changed their minds after the Civil War ended. First thing they do is give the Buffalo Soldiers boots to march in. They line all the men up and tell everyone to obey orders. Everyone must march in a straight line all across the camp. Marching to the beat of the snare drum. They have that bugle call the Buffalo Soldiers to wake up at the same time every day. They have a ceremony for everything. One of the first fancy things they do is raise the flag in the morning. There is a wakeup call on the bugle horn and there is a call to march on the drum. Each little tune they play on the horn or on the drums has a special meaning. I reckon the call to go to the mess hall is music to their ears! The Buffalo Soldiers get three square meals a day, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. For their meals the Buffalo Soldiers get the prime buffalo meat, fresh kills from the plains of course. They have chicken coop for eggs and chicken, said Cowboy."

Howard noticed that Wolf was approaching still walking with a limb. The covered wagon was behind them in the distance as they walked back toward Wyoming and Virginia. The sun was setting now

as Wolf welcomed a pat on the head from Howard. Cowboy continued his stories about the Buffalo Soldiers. "After the Buffalo Soldiers rise in the morning they march in the rain, in the cold, in the summer heat, and in the winter snow. Then the men take orders. They learn when to retreat and when to advance. They say that the coughing sickness set in there at the Buffalo Soldier training camp. Everyone suspects the yellow fever to be the cause. I say it's the coughing sickness, the same coughing sickness that choked the life out of so many men during the war, said Cowboy."

Howard was petting Wolf and feeding him pieces of dried buffalo meat for a treat as he walked back toward the wagon with Cowboy. Cowboy went on about the Buffalo Soldiers. "That coughing sickness took over the camp faster than an Indian attack. The coughing sickness killed more Buffalo Soldiers than the braves with their bow and arrow. That coughing sickness is more fatal than a whole tribe of Indian warriors. I hope there is a way to avoid such a plague. I heard there was an elixir that can protect a man's throat from the illness, said Cowboy."

Wolf walked in between Howard and Cowboy until they made it back to the wagon. The sun was slipping below the horizon to rest by the time they got back to the wagon. Cowboy spoke with a tremble in his voice as he cleared his throat. "They tell this story of a new soldier in training. He was told to run through the rain at night as punishment for being late. The training officer looked at the private with a stern eye. The officer stared into the face of the enlisted man. The officer saw years of slavery and suffering looking back at him through his deep dark pools of pain. The rain was pouring down his cheeks like teardrops. The new soldier refused to give up no matter how harsh the punishment was. The training officer told him to go fetch water from the well and run back to the barracks. The new Buffalo Soldier ran back to the well again and again hauling water in a hug bucket on top of his head. The new soldier held his head up and kept going until he was tired. Soon after many hours, the new Buffalo Soldier fell to his knees in fatigue. The day was dawning by the time he had lost all of his strength. The new Buffalo Soldier was breathing hard and panting in the darkness of the new day. He closed his eyes and fell to the muddy ground. The officer yelled and

commanded for him to get up and get more water until he was told to stop. The new Buffalo Soldier struggled to his feet with a smile on his face. He opened his eyes to a new sunrise as a Buffalo Soldier, said Cowboy”

Wolf limbed back to the wagon and sat down beside the Wyoming and Virginia. Both girls glared at Wolf. The girls shied away from the new member of their wagon train. Wolf would just follow beside the wagon and accept food from the bottom of the pot. Wolf licked his wounds, and he lapped up the pot liquor after each meal Wyoming prepared for the family. Wyoming still seemed uneasy around Wolf, as she spoke. “I still look at Wolf funny. Afterall, he used to be a wild animal attacking our camp for food. Now how do we know he won’t bite us? I see that he is limping, but what happens when he heals, and he is strong enough to run away? I wonder if Wolf is a wild creature or our pet? I reckon that the wild will become tame. Freedom has set us free to run away. Or maybe we’ll be content with what we have and stay put, said Wyoming.”

## “Buffalo Soldiers, Wyatt Earp, Howard & Wyoming”

The sun had finally set upon the prairies of Wyoming. Wolf sat watch beside the covered wagon. Wolf glared across the plains keeping vigil of the landscape while the family slept. The moon was rising high, just to illuminate the sky as the stars twinkled. Cowboy settled into his sleeping bag under his tiny tent beside the fire. Wolf curled up into a ball beside him and gazed out into the oblivion of night. Cowboy talked to Howard as he added more brush to the fire to keep it burning all night. “I tell people what happened in the past, so that they can understand the present and plan for the future. I once met Wyatt Earp as well as one of his brothers. The Buffalo Soldiers are here to keep order and peace, but if something happens, well then Wyatt will pull his piece of metal pistol to settle it! The Buffalo Soldiers are more likely my choice, because a freedman is not left with many choices. If they would offer to make me a deputy, I would have to think about it. I reckon that a wise man would not risk his neck to save settlers that might hang him from his neck on a tree. The lesser of two evils is my choice. I’m gonna choose the devil I know, and not the devil I don’t know, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy shifted around in his tent as he spoke to Howard. The flickering firelight from the campfire glistened in his eyes, and glowed amber upon his brow as his voice resounded. “Deadwood was the place where the famous outlaws and lawmen lived and died. There was a shootout at the O.K. Corral in the Wild West town of Tombstone. The day of the gunfight the famous lawman Wyatt Earp killed at least two cowboys that were notorious members of a gang of troublemakers! Wyatt pulled his gun to return fire. The cowboys were being rowdy, and making a mess out of the horse stable in town at the O.K. Corral. The law was called in to stop the outlaw cowboys from busting up the place. There was tension between the meanspirited cowboy gang of brothers. The cowboys were not supposed to carry guns in town because of a new town law. Wyatt and his brothers wanted to keep the peace and not kill anyone, but

the unruly outlaws were too onery to obey the law! The sun was shining in the sky as the shootout began. The wind kicked up tumbleweed that swept across the busy streets of the town of Tombstone, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy watched Wolf pounce on a field mouse, as he talked to Howard by the campfire. “I call myself Cowboy, but I ain’t never been no outlaw. In fact, I reckon I would help the Earp brothers keep the town safe for good folks to live in. I wonder if the cowboy outlaws were stealing horses out of the corral or something unlawful. Those outlaw cowboy brothers give cattle wrangling cowboys a bad name. Most cowboys carry guns for self-defense, to fight off wolves, coyotes, Indians, and cattle thieves when they are on cattle drives across country. The outlaw cowboys were stealing cattle and horses. So, Wyatt Earp had to do something to stop them. The leader of the cowboy gang pulled his pistol and fired the first shot at Wyatt. The sound of the bullets hitting the horses echoed through the corral as the stallions whinnied in agony. That was a destruction of property when the horses were injured, so Wyatt Earp had to step in and defend the townspeople and their horses, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy was no coward, but Wolf still made him jumpy as he spoke to Howard in the dim firelight. “The older brother was the one that got Wyatt Earp into upholding the law. The older brother Virgil was made a deputy after the first deputy of Tombstone was found to be as cooked as a question mark, a thieving crook! The townspeople found out that their Deputy elect was actually stealing thousands of dollars of the town’s money to use for personal pleasure. The elected Deputy (named Sippy) liked his drink. Wine, women, and song came calling to him. He got caught with his pants down, and his hands in the till! Wyatt Earp wanted to replace this man who got caught stealing with his hands in the cookie jar. The townspeople brushed him off like cookie crumbs. The people of Tombstone spit Sippy out like wine turned to vinegar. The folks of Tombstone tossed Sippy out with the spittoon, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy continued to talk about the Wild West legends. “There was a friend of Wyatt Earp called Doc. Holiday. The doctor was a dentist that was handy with a revolver. Doc. Holiday was a fast-draw sharpshooter with a deadly reputation for killing! Doc. Could inflict

pain as a dentist, or ease pain with his medicines of opium and morphine. He could give his patients a shot in the arm, or a shot in the head (to either kill them or keep them alive). Either way, Doc. Holliday was a lethal combination of medical brains and bold Wild West wisdom. Doc. Holliday had the will to kill. The doctor was a gambler in Tombstone where the miners brought their gold and silver to flitter away at games of chance like poker. Doc. Holliday was a drinker of liquor and a lover of lively ladies. Loud laughter and relaxed legs followed him from saloon to tavern. The ladies did not shy away from Doc. Holliday. He was a dapper man, dressed in finery from San Francisco. Doc. Holliday met Wyatt Earp. They became fast friends. They could fight fast and fatal in the gun duel of the Wild West. The doctor would often join Wyatt Earp in defending the town of Tombstone in many gunfights. Doc. Holliday had Wyatt Earp's back in a shootout to keep the outlaws from killing the lawman in a gun battle, said Cowboy."

Cowboy started to feel more comfortable around Wolf. As Cowboy spoke, he stroked Wolf's scruffy fur to comfort his wounded paw. "Wyatt Earp used to be a shotgun coachman guard for Wells Fargo, a company that transported valuable goods. Thieves would try to rob the Wells Fargo wagon because it was full of expensive loot. There were times when Wyatt had to fire his shotgun into some wild outlaw's flesh to stop an armed robbery. The rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was not supposed to lead to taking a life for a life or killing. Wyatt Earp did not want to become a killer. He wanted to become a protector of good folks, women and children that lived in the town of Tombstone. Soon Wyatt Earp earned a reputation as a lawman, who is not to be reckoned with, said Cowboy."

Howard fed Wolf some tasty treats of dried out bone marrow that had fallen on the ground near the campfire. Cowboy spoke and patted wolf on his wound to sooth Wolf's pain. "The two cowboy brothers were killed at the shootout at the O.K. Corral. The death of the brother caused an uproar when murder charges were made against Wyatt and his friends. The lawman Deputy Wyatt Earp was painted as a killer. He was caught red-handed. The famous gunfight covered Tombstone in blood red scandal. Folks didn't feel safe in

town, especially not with the deputies and cowboy gang around. Wyatt Earp was accused of murder. After a trial, Wyatt was acquitted. The judge said, Wyatt had killed in self-defense. The lawman Wyatt Earp, his brother Virgil Earp, and Doc Holliday had acted as law enforcement officials in office trying to uphold the law, said the judge that day. Therefore, Wyatt Earp would not really go on trial for murder. The cowboy brothers had such bad reputations as thieves and killers that no one truly believe that the gang of cowboy brothers were unarmed. No one believed that the cowboy gang was without their guns on the day of the shooting at the O.K. Corral, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy gazed up at the starry sky as he continued his story. “Wyatt Earp and the elected Deputy of Tombstone fell in love with the same woman. There was a love triangle, just like Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane. The gossip says that the woman’s name was Josephine. She was a mysterious and fancy type woman who dazzled the folks in Tombstone. Some people said that Wyatt Earp always traveled wearing a long duster coat so that he could conceal a shotgun. Wyatt carried the shotgun in order to protect Josephine from the cowboy bandits that set their sights on his gal, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy grimaced when he heard the howl of a wayward coyote carry through the midnight air. Wolf stood up, and perked up his ears as Cowboy spoke holding the rifle. “That Wyatt Earp kept a revolver and a shotgun ready under his floor length duster coat. He was always ready to shoot a deadly shot at any unruly rebel in town. The judge ruled that Wyatt Earp and Doc. Holliday were acting as deputies in service when they killed the cowboy bandits in town. Wyatt Earp claimed that he was only trying to disarm the men according to the law against firearms in town. Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill would have been ordered to turn in those huge hunting knives that they display stuck enter their belts in order to enter a saloon in town. Wyatt Earp had so many gunfights to defend the Wells Fargo stagecoach against the same gang of cowboy bandits from that same cattle ranch. That cattle ranch was the origin of so many mean men. Wicked women feared the worst outcome when the band of bandit brothers came around, said Cowboy.”

Howard suddenly looked over his shoulder to see a coyote approach. Cowboy stood up with the family rifle and took aim. Before he could fire off a single shot, Wolf leapt up and began to howl. Wolf pranced around the perimeter of the covered wagon to scare off the coyotes. One of the elder male coyotes scampered close enough to the fire to be illuminated in the light of the flames. Then the incorrigible coyote would not give up, until he caught sight of Wolf. The coyote seemed cowardice as he turned tail and ran off into the darkness of night. Cowboy yelled and fired the rifle up into the air to frighten off the other coyotes. Cowboy spoke as the coyotes scurried away. "That was a close call. That was too close for comfort. Those coyotes go wherever they think wolves will hunt to eat the wolves' scraps. I reckon Wolf attracted that pack of coyotes that have always followed him and his pack looking for a free meal ticket, said Cowboy."

Cowboy took out his pistol and loaded it with bullets. He sat down under his tent with his pistol in his lap as he continued his story about the Wild West. "The Sheriff thought that the ranchers who raised cattle on their own land were more important than the smalltime folks that lived around the towns in the territory. The name Tombstone suggests that people go to town to die, so why try to make order in such a deadly place. The ranchers were seen as wealthy landowners who made beef, a very important and profitable business. The shop owners in town were not as powerful. Therefore, the Sheriff took the word of the ranchers over the townspeople. The Sheriff did not much care for Wyatt Earp. The Sheriff saw Wyatt Earp and Doc. Holliday as troublemakers disrupting business for important cattle ranchers. The Sheriff favored the ranchers even if they were armed because they needed guns to protect their cattle and themselves, said Cowboy."

Cowboy cocked his pistol and scanned the dark prairie as he continued his oratory. "I would argue that the cowboys were granted anything they wanted and the Sheriff would look the other way. Doc. Holiday was seen as a gambler, and a troublesome drunk as far as the Sheriff was concerned. Doc. Holiday had saved Wyatt Earp's life in a gunfight in a saloon. Doc. Holliday had to pull his pistol to shoot a loud onery gambler as they both fought over a woman. The woman



was a saloon girl that had caught two men in her trance of temptation. To settle the dispute Doc. Holliday killed a man shooting him before he could draw his revolver to fire at the doctor. The army scout had wanted to go with the pretty saloon temptress as she danced for him. The army scout argued. Doc. Holliday got caught up in the loud disagreement. In the end, the army scout unholstered his gun. Then as fast as a fly could jump off a horse's tail, Doc. Holliday sent that army scout on a permanent vacation, said Cowboy."

Cowboy seemed more at ease as he spoke with a sly grin. "You know that Wyatt Earp stole the Deputy's girlfriend. A woman named Josephine used to live with the elected Deputy of Tombstone. The elected Deputy had replaced Wyatt Earp in Tombstone just before the shootout. Josephine had a thing for bad boys with wild reputations. The more folks talked about a man, the more she wanted him. She left the Deputy, and ran off with Wyatt Earp. They both left Tombstone to mine for gold in California. I reckon, that is why you are going to California Howard, said Cowboy."

Howard nodded his head as he polished the rifle loading it with ammunition. Cowboy emoted more words. "Yes sir, you just keep that rifle ready Howard. You're gonna need it more and more as we get closer to California. As soon as this wagon trains get close enough to the Buffalo Soldier camp. I am certain I will enlist. I am ready to woo women, chase tail, hunt buffalo, and earn my stripes in the Wild West. Wyatt Earp had to leave town to get revenge on the cowboy outlaws for killing his brother. He found love when he stole the heart of Josephine from the elected Deputy. Wyatt Earp was a man who loved to get back at folks for doing him wrong, said Cowboy."

Cowboy put his pistol beside him and relaxed more as he spoke. "Wyatt Earp was so in love with Josephine partly because she left the Deputy for him, which made him feel like he was really the better man even though he lost the election in Tombstone. In California Josephine could be close to her family in San Francisco and Los Angeles. They opened several saloons where gold miners drank, gambled, sinned, and went with women. Josephine helped run the saloon as a barmaid. The liquor license made Wyatt Earp rich along with the prize fights that used to take place in the saloons. Gamblers

would bet on the fights. Wyatt Earp would be the referee. All Wyatt Earp ever wanted was to get by, and make some money for himself. Being a lawman was not his first choice of occupation, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy continued to talk about the stories of the Old West. “There was a gunfight at the California saloon too. A man entered drunk and refused to be quiet. Before he could pull his pistol, Wyatt Earp took out that famous shotgun that he used to use to defend stagecoaches and pointed at the drunkard. That sloppy drunk man stumbled out of the saloon asking for forgiveness. Wyatt Earp put the shotgun back hidden under his long coat, and reached for his revolver instead. He checked to see if he had all six bullets loaded. He saw that he had already killed a man that morning and used two bullets. He searched for the box of bullets to fully load his gun. The box of bullets was tucked away behind the bar a short distance from the till in case someone wanted to rob the cashbox. After loading the gun Wyatt Earp continued after the man. The drunk man was a famous sharpshooter who had always pretended to leave peacefully. Then the drunk would turn around to sneak attack to shoot his enemy. Sure enough, true to his reputation the drunk man was not as drunken and clumsy as he seemed. The drunkard sharpshooter pulled his pistol from his boot. He was only pretending to be passed out drunk in front of Wyatt Earp’s saloon. The drunk man shot at Wyatt with the aim of an expert gunfighter. Wyatt took cover behind the bar. The bullet shot open some of the liquor bottles causing a fire that quickly spread to the rest of the saloon. The fire was not too out of control, so Wyatt kept his attention on killing the drunk sharpshooter. Wyatt aimed at his head and fired his gun. The drunk gunfighter ducked behind another man in the saloon, and the bullet hit the other man instead, said Cowboy”

Cowboy still felt as if the coyotes would circle back around and try to look for food, but he continued to talk as Wolf rested nestled beside him guarding the family. “Wyatt Earp was a tall man (at least six feet tall). He had strong broad shoulders. His sandy brown hair fringed his broad weather-beaten forehead. At the height of his sharpshooting gunfighting reputation, Wyatt Earp’s narrow squinted eyes were light in hue and keen of sight. Wyatt Earp had strong arms, and rough large hands made tough from pulling the trigger of

his revolver. His fingernails were gritty with gunpowder but ready to serve a drink. Josephine was the love of Wyatt Earp's life. She was an elegant woman who impressed men with her San Francisco style dresses and matching hats. Her face was painted like a porcelain doll when she worked beside Wyatt Earp in the saloon. Her lips were rouge red. Her face was blushed on the apple of her cheeks. Her large oval eyes were always shaded with the brim of her fancy matching hat. Her waist was cinched with a corset pulled tight in the back. Her hips were made big with padding, and a bustle enhanced her backside. Josephine's dresses were made just for her in a dress shop in San Francisco. She used to go shopping with her sister. Wyatt Earp and Josephine made a fine couple. When people saw the threesome of them (Josephine, her sister and Wyatt Earp) in the streets they looked just like a painting from the walls of a fancy saloon, said Cowboy."

The moon was only half full, as the scattered pattern of stars sparkled across the sky. As Cowboy looked up at the stars, he spoke. "The North Star was used to lead the runaway slaves toward freedom. There are so many other stars in the sky in the Wild West. I reckon, I like that I followed the stars that led me further West, instead of going to New York or Canada. Wyatt Earp and Josephine went all the way to California to find riches. I have been to California and back. I found nothing but more problems and battles to fight. I guess I might as well be a Buffalo Soldier. I served drinks at Wyatt Earp's saloon and helped hitch horses outside the saloons. I don't think I will ever feel alive unless I am wrangling cattle with my lasso or trick riding a stallion as fast as the horse can run. I live for adventure. I am not a gunslinger or a lawman like Wyatt Earp, but the cheap thrills and exploding things make my heart beat fast. I tip my big brim cowboy hat to Wyatt Earp for standing up for the townspeople and for being a common-law husband with Josephine. I don't think I could ever settle down, even to steal my enemy's girlfriend for revenge. I think I am a better man if I am free to do as I please. Other men like Wyatt Earp seem to believe that they prove they are a better man by wearing a badge. Wyatt believes in obeying the law even when it hurts him. He obeys the law even when it takes away freedom. We all have the right to bear arms by the law. So,

how could Tombstone make another law that is calling the federal law a lie. I think that the ranchers needed guns, and the cowboys had the right to carry their guns. The outlaw cowboy brothers, just did not have the right to use their guns to shoot innocent people in town! Death and murder can be prevented without taking away folk's freedom. Folks have the right to live any way they choose, said Cowboy."

Cowboy went on about his midnight tale of the Wild West. "Wyatt Earp and Doc. Holliday were friends that saved each other's lives. Doc. Holliday got very sick with the coughing sickness. Doc. went on to follow Wyatt Earp out to California. They said that the dry air would slow down the coughing sickness and give Doc. Holliday a few more years to live. Doc. Holliday did live a few more years in California before the coughing sickness ate up his lungs. Doc. Holliday would take a bullet in the lungs for Wyatt and Wyatt would stand in front of a battlefield of gunfighters for Doc. Holliday. They shared their affection for the same girl many times but no woman ever really came between them. Doc. Holliday fancied Josephine's sister, so the folks used to say. Sometimes when Doc. Holliday was well enough to walk the three of them would be seen eating supper in the Wyatt Earp's saloon, said Cowboy."

Cowboy was grinning from ear to ear with his pearly white teeth as he recalled the good times he had in Wyatt Earp's California saloon. "Some downright famous folks came into the saloon in California. Some actors and singers besides Buffalo Bill and his rough riders. Davey Crockett, the king of the wild frontier himself came to Wyatt Earp's saloon to gamble and have dinner. I talked to Davey Crockett about hunting buffalo in the open prairies and showed him some of the horse tricks and lasso tricks I used in the Buffalo Bill Wild West tour. Davy Crockett was impressed with my showmanship. The crowd in Wyatt Earp's saloon clapped loud and heavy when I showed them my magic lasso and playing card tricks, said Cowboy."

Cowboy had more stories to tell about his days in the California saloon. "I could cheat at poker so well that Wyatt Earp and Josephine didn't want to play in the saloon. Wyatt was afraid that if I cheated someone and got caught that I would start a gunfight and

someone could get shot or killed somehow. So, I made a deal with Wyatt that I would only cheat the gamblers at poker if we did not want them to come back. There were some sore losers at poker and Black Jack. I used to count cards and beat the dealer every time! Wyatt had some telling expressions about him when he played poker. Whenever he had a good hand, he would rub his mustache. When Wyatt Earp had a bad hand at poker, he would lean forward and suck his teeth loudly. I told him, that he had an expected expression for every type of poker hand that he had. I told him he should be careful not to be so predictable while gambling. Oh, that Wyatt Earp was not a good gambler! He was also not a particularly good bartender. Wyatt always put too much liquor in the mixed drinks. Wyatt drank all the good wine before it was ready to be opened, said Cowboy.”

Cowboy wanted to reveal more about what life was really like in the Wild West. “Wyatt Earp’s saloon in California was full of gunfighters who wanted to see if they could draw their pistol faster than Wyatt Earp the famous gunslinger. Some folks would come in there and pick a fight with Wyatt to see if they could shoot faster or aim better than him. Wyatt had to keep folks scared of him. He had to get the law to help him keep the peace in his saloon. His main problem was with losing gamblers, drunks, sinners, and miners who have not had much luck finding gold. I had to help throw men out of the saloon when things got too rough. I didn’t like to fight, but had to stand between two men to break up fights all the time. I reckon, I’ll just go on and be a real tough sort of cowboy. Then I will go join the Buffalo Soldiers. I think that the Buffalo Soldiers’ fighting is for a good cause, land and freedom, said Cowboy.”

The midnight turned to early dawn as soon as the sun began to make its climb up the Wyoming sky. Suddenly, in the distance there was stirring sound of wind. Wolf leapt to his feet in alert. Wolf knew that something fearful was coming. The cloth on the covered wagon began to blow hard. Virginia and Wyoming stuck their heads outside the Conestoga wagon to see what the ruckus was about! Wyoming looked around frantically searching the plain of the horizon. The sunrise was accompanied with a huge cloud of wind. Wyoming

cringed grimacing with fear as she looked at the pillar of clouds looming of in the near distance.

Wyoming looked to find Howard. Howard spoke with a stern strong voice that outyelled the sound of the wind. "Wyoming and Virginia, I do believe that that big cloud over yonder is a twister! Now we need to know if that cyclone funnel cloud is coming toward us or if it is moving away from us! Sit tight womenfolk! Get inside the wagon, while I unhitch the horse, said Howard."

Howard looked over at Cowboy for advice because Cowboy had been in the Wild West for some years more than Howard. Howard looked at Cowboy Wide-eyes and frightened as he spoke. "Cowboy, how do we know which way to go to get away from the twister cloud? I suppose, you have your compass in your satchel to tell us which way to go don't you now Cowboy? Go on get out that compass. Look at the fading stars or something to tell us which way to go to get to safety, said Howard." Cowboy responded quickly. "Yes, Howard the cluster of stars over yonder can tell us the direction. but they are almost completely faded, so I will use my compass to point us away from the twister. Funnel clouds always travel in a certain direction by nature. So, we will just go the opposite direction to get away from danger! The direction we go is the path toward life and freedom, said Cowboy."

## “Howard, Wyoming, Virginia, Robert Jr. and the Wild West”

The sunrise was casting radiant light down during the dawn! The danger of the tornado seemed to be gone! The Jefferson family (Howard, his wife Wyoming, his daughter Virginia, and Wolf) followed the California Oregon Trail out of Wyoming. The Jefferson family went straight toward the gold rush. The tornado has nearly torn the family apart in Wyoming. The twister was blowing their minds, blowing them away toward California. The wind blew, but the family was not sad and blue.

Cowboy thought about wearing that blue uniform of the Buffalo Soldier more and more as he neared the military training camp. Soon Cowboy would leave the wagon train for Buffalo Soldier training. There were Buffalo Soldiers in Kansas, but Cowboy was on his way back to his former home in Texas to join the Buffalo Soldiers defending the border between Mexico and Texas. The wind from the tornado had howled louder than a pack of wild wolves. The wagon train rode away from the twister.

The family had decided to go through the Utah Territory, and then onward to Nevada Territory until they would finally reach California! The Utah Territory was a realm of intrigue and mystery. Utah was a surreal world where the Great Salt Lake awaited the family. The Nevada Territory was a bastion of gambling, risk, ruckus, rowdy, revelry, and rough riders. The Wild West whispered winsome whistles in the wind as the Jefferson family swept through the winding wagon trail.

The covered wagon reached Utah first. The rusty orange sandstone rock formations were standing in the desert like statues. The land was dry and hot. The sun beat down on the Jefferson family like an overseer in a field. Gone were the bountiful creeks and rivers that provided water for the family. The wagon would wonder near the Bear River near the Great Salt Lake. The water of the Great Salt Lake would only make a man thirstier because of the salt. The Great Salt Lake was where a religious group rested and built towns.

The family would follow Bear River and Webber River until they reached a town where they could replenish their rations of food and ammunition.

Soon the Jefferson family could see the town looming in the distance of the morning sunrise. The sun painted the land golden and burnished beige. The crimson color of blood seemed to stain the velvet satin sky with ribbons of radiance. The family camped outside the Mormon town. The Morons were a religious gathering. The Mormons believed that a new prophet had led them to a promised land in the desert where they would be prosperous. Howard would leave Virginia and Wyoming near the covered wagon. Howard Jefferson would enter the town on horseback alone.

Howard sauntered into the town sitting high on his steady steed. The town was filled with religious folks. The storefronts were there to serve the people. Howard would find the closest general store and get supplies for his family to last at least a month. The largest general store in town looked like it would have everything he needed. Howard dismounted his horse and tied the reins tight to the post in front of the store. Howard entered the general store. Howard tipped his big brim hat at the storeowners. A tall Mormon man stood on a raised platform above the store where the cashbox till was. He looked sternly across the entire store with a watchful eye. Some townspeople were doing their shopping in the general store. The shelves were lined with canned food, jars of preserved fruit and vegetables as well as dried grains and potatoes. The delicious display of food was mouth-watering. Howard wanted to buy enough to make a sumptuous meal for Wyoming and Virginia.

Howard approached the counter to pay for his selections. The counter was full of every variety of preserved food fit for the covered wagon. The store manager seemed friendly, so Howard attempted to start a conversation. "Nice town you got here. I have heard many stories about the Great Salt Lake and the miraculous things that have happened in these parts, said Howard." The store manager raised his eyebrows in surprise as he responded. "Yes, we believe that miracles still happen just like in the ancient days of the scriptures. Not only that, there will be a good harvest and plenty of food for everyone, said the store manager."



Howard nodded his head and smiled showing his great white teeth as beaming and bright as the sun as he spoke. "I only hope that the native tribes in the area are not angry at the settlers here. I hope that the tribes will allow my family to travel through the land. My wife and daughter can shoot as well as any man with a rifle or pistol! I just hope that my girls have no need to fire a shot at all. Anyhow, I will need bullets for my Peacemaker Colt pistol and my Smith and Wesson as well as my rifle, said Howard."

Howard paid proudly for the food supplies and rations on the counter and exited the general store with a huge sack of goods slung over one shoulder. Howard packed the food and ammunition onto the horse, mounted his steed slowly, and rode out of town. The sun was high in the sky at noon as the rays pierced Howards glinting eyes. He arrived at the covered Conestoga wagon while the noonday sun was still relentlessly pummeling all people below. Howard found Virginia and Wyoming reading a bundle of letters that they had just found serendipitously. They discovered the parcel of letters even though they weren't even looking for them.

Wyoming spoke to Howard as she read the passages aloud. "These letters were hidden buried in one of the trunks. The Pony Express had delivered them to our post office with your name on them Howard Jefferson. These letters are from New York! Do you know that Robin had written to us about coming out West. Robin used to visit the Manhattan mansion for dinner parties. Robin stayed for many months in the mansion on many occasions. She remembered us servants well enough to write a letter to us all friendly and cordial, said Wyoming!" The letters were written in careful calligraphy that showed some education and skill that was surprising for a tavern and saloon showgirl from Chicago.

*Dear Wyoming,*

*I have heard that you were going to California on the wagon trail. You will finally get to see the Wyoming Territory for which you were named after. The territory that is your namesake is Wyoming. What a great name and a great place for you to start your journey further toward freedom. Here, in New York, I had been allowed to hear Fredrick Douglas speak at the Manhattan mansion where you worked as loyal servants. You and your husband took care of me*

*when I had the coughing sickness. You nursed me back to health. I owe you my life. You saved my life with your gentle care and compassion. You told me that you were going to go to the Wild West to find land, gold, happiness, and liberty! I believe in Manifest Destiny and fate. We will meet again!*

*Sincerely,*

*Robin Nightingale*

Howard hitched the horses to the covered wagon and unloaded the supplies as he spoke. "Well then that settles it, we are still servants of the rich folks we left in New York. You mean to tell me that Robin Nightingale has followed us out West. How will she find us in the vast wilderness? I reckon we will welcome her with open arms if we do meet again. You think she has some extra money laying around to help us poor freed slaves build a cabin on our new land? I hope Robin feels generous (when or if) we do see her again. I heard Robert returned from Chicago. Like a ghost, he didn't perish in the flames of the fire in Chicago. I heard also, that the son Robbie, Robert Jr. is a sickly boy. They think Robbie's sickness is from those fumes and chemicals and such things he breathed in while being raised around that leather shoe factory, said Howard."

The covered wagon traveled across the land until it reached the Nevada Territory. The desert was dry and hot. The arid stark land displayed a cracked pale pallid pallet upon the ground. The earth ached for water, for rain. Nevada had interminable heat and inexorable darkness at night. The sun was punishing in the daylight. The darkness was an impenetrable abyss of nothingness at night. The oblivion of silence was like a tomb. The desert was a mausoleum of solitude.

Nevada was famous for its deadly desert that was a no-man's-land. Soon the Jefferson family would make camp outside the town of Las Vegas. Howard would go to town to try some gambling for gold dust in the saloon. Howard was quite good at Black Jack Twenty-One. Black Jack was not a game of chance for Howard. Twenty-one Black Jack was the simple act of keeping track of how many cards are left in the deck after the dealer had laid down certain cards.

Soon the family's covered wagon arrived in Nevada Territory. The moon was hanging high in the sinister sky. The dim light of the moon lit the path to Las Vegas like an oasis in the desert. Howard drove the horses all night until he could see the glimmer of light from the lanterns of Las Vegas. The sun was about to rise breaking the stoic darkness of the night. The cool wind chilled the family in the darkness of dawn. The brutal heat would soon sear the skin like a branding iron if they did not stop to seek shade from the daylight sun. There was not much water in the Nevada Territory except a few small springs. The family would soon be thirsty. The Nevada desert was deadly because of the unrelenting heat and lack of trees for shade. The covered Conestoga wagon would have to go to the springs of water while Howard ventured to gamble in Las Vegas.

Howard spoke while he prepared the horses. Cowboy fed Wolf patting his wounded paw. "I will try to win some extra money in Las Vegas at cards. I will not spend more than a small amount of gold dust because gambling is a bad habit. Cowboy, you said you were a great cheat at poker. I want you to come along and act as if you don't know me so that you can see how much you can win as a cheater, said Howard." Cowboy tipped his huge brimmed hat at Howard and smiled slyly as he replied. "Alright Howard. If I win big, I will count my blessing. I won't press my luck. If I lose or get caught cheating then I will pretend that we ain't riding together so that I won't make you look bad also, said Cowboy."

Cowboy rode ahead of Howard leading the way because he had been to Las Vegas before. Vegas was a town full of saloons, filled with miners gambling. Soon Howard and Cowboy chose a saloon that looked peaceful and promising. Cowboy had two guns on his hip under a long coat to conceal them. One gun was a Colt Peacemaker and the other was a Smith and Wesson pistol in his holster. They corralled the horses, and headed inside the saloon. The sound of blaring music boomed from inside the saloon. The sounds of wine, whisky, women and song spilled out into the sandy desert streets of Las Vegas. Cowboy entered first. Howard entered later. The duo hoped that folks would not think that they were associated with each other.

The first gambling game Howard would try would be Black Jack. The dealer laid down an ace of spades, which could stand for the number one or the number eleven. Then the dealer dealt Howard the queen of hearts, (which represents the number ten). Howard said, "hit me!" As the dealer placed the card (two of spades) on the saloon table. The smoke hovered thick and suffocating in the hazy lantern lit air of the saloon as Howard stared down at the card. Howard's voice echoed a raspy command after the dealer dealt himself a three of hearts. Howard said, "Hit me again!" The dealer put down a nine of diamonds, twenty-one! Howard won a great deal of money! Howard tossed back a swig of whisky at the bar. Now Howard laughed with delight.

Cowboy was at the other end of the saloon trying to swindle a table full of skilled poker players. These men were hardened gamblers with several days of bristle on their chins from gambling all day and all night. The poker players swallowed several shots of liquor, to keep their cool. The plumes of cigar smoke billowed across the crowded saloon. Howard stared across the room keeping an eye on the poker table. Howard to see the other players hands. Some of the more experienced poker players kept their hand of cards close to the breast. They were careful that no one would see what card they had in their hands. Cowboy, seemed to have a content expression on his face. The other gamblers kept a poker face that was stoic and expressionless. The skilled poker player would keep a poker face that did not display emotions to hide what kind of cards he had in his hand. A poker face would not tell if the poker player had a royal flush or a very poor selection of cards in his losing hand.

Suddenly Cowboy spoke when it was time to lay down his hand of cards. "I regret to tell you gentlemen that you will go home losers today. I have a royal flush, which beats every hand of cards laid down on the table today, said Cowboy." He tipped his big brim hat at the other poker players and smiled with a smile a broad as the Grand Canyon. The other poker players were amazed and very upset at the outcome. The royal flush was incredible luck. There was a bit of suspicion surrounding Cowboy's, winning hand of poker. However, it was the first time anyone had played with him so Cowboy had no reputation for cheating. One of the saloon managers

commented on the lucky win. "Well, sir you sure do have some good luck. I guess we have to believe that you had a royal flush until we can prove otherwise. We will give you your winnings. But don't you ever come back to this saloon again. You are much to lucky, winning four pounds of gold dust in your first try at poker. That is some beginner's luck there, said the saloon manager!" The saloon manager's voice was loud and angry, but he was a man of his word when he gave Cowboy his winnings.

One of the losing poker players stood up abruptly as Cowboy tried to leave the saloon with his gold dust bags. "Go around the back boys! Let's get this cheater before he leaves with all of our money, said the gambler. The gambler who had lost to Cowboy was a gargantuan giant man as tall as an ancient oak tree, and as broad as the Colorado River. The other poker players met Cowboy outside the saloon when he went to mount his horse. "Where do you think you're going you cheating chap. We will take back our gold and take that horse of yours, said the huge scruffy bearded man. Cowboy turned around to defend himself from the gambler, as he spoke. "Now, I don't won't no trouble here. I won at poker, fair and square. You are a sore loser, sir, said Cowboy."

The huge man swung his fist at Cowboy, a left hook. Cowboy ducked and dodged the crushing fist of the gambler. Cowboy ducked and jabbed the man below the belt. Cowboy's punch impacted the gambler in his massive stomach that hung over his belt so much that his protruding gut was casting a huge shadow on the ground. The shadowy images of Cowboy fighting the gambler looked like David and Goliath. The gambler was even bigger than slender tall Cowboy. The gambler dwarfed Cowboy in his black shadow so gigantic that the shadow nearly blocked out the sun. Instead of throwing another punch Cowboy decided to fall down and fake an injury. While down on the ground, Cowboy picked up a handful of dusty sand from the ground and then threw it into the angry gambler's eyes. While the mad man rubbed his eyes in anguish, Cowboy swiftly mounted his horse and rode away as fast as he could!

Cowboy would head toward Texas to join the Buffalo Soldiers in defending the border between Mexico and Texas. Cowboy did not want to lead the perturbed gambler back to the covered wagon

where Wyoming and Virginia were sitting ducks. Cowboy rode far enough away from Las Vegas until he met up with Howard again. Cowboy would have to say goodbye to Howard. "Well, old buddy I guess this is it. I have to skedaddle before those gamblers catch up with me. I hope I never see them again. The sun is about to start making it unbearable out here. I am going to make my way South toward Texas with this gold dust I can afford a lot of food for my journey. When I reach the Buffalo Soldier camp, I will finally be free to fight for a land to call my own. Maybe I'll see y'all again someday, said Cowboy."

Howard Jefferson tipped his hat to Cowboy and waved until Cowboy disappeared into the distance. The sunset cloaked Cowboy in the abyss of night as he reached Texas. Cowboy enlisted in the Buffalo Soldiers 24<sup>th</sup> Calvary. Cowboy was already an expert at riding a horse and a sharpshooter. Cowboy was now given a military uniform and an official rank. One day, one of Cowboys training officers woke up the regiment when the wake-up call went out on the beagle horn. The flag was being raised as the soldiers saluted. For about a week Cowboy was drilled on the basics of assembling his weapon and loading his rifle. Cowboy was already familiar with the Colt Peacemaker gun that was issued during the Civil War. Cowboy was one of the best sharpshooters in the military camp.

On a certain day about two months into Cowboy's Buffalo Soldier training there was an attack from the Mexican resistance. The Mexicans wanted to take back Texas. The Buffalo Soldiers were trained to fight at the border to act as flesh and blood shields to stop invasions from Mexico. The Mexicans fired the first shot at the Buffalo Soldiers. The sound of gunfire ruptured the silence of the morning dawn. The sky was painted blood red to match the ground as blood was shed at the border. Cowboy followed the drum roll that told him and his fellow soldiers to advance on horseback. Cowboy used his spurs to urge his stallion forward into battle. He drew his Colt pistol and took aim at the rebel Mexicans that were riding relentlessly toward him.

The sound of the horses galloping blended like a melody with the sound of the bullets being fired. There was a symphony of shrill screams as men were hit with the bullets. The horses fell down on

the battlefield in midstride as they were hit with the gunfire. The men riding on the horse rolled to the ground and continued to fight when they stood. Cowboy aimed and struck many Mexican rebels as he fought to defend Texas. Cowboy was eventually awarded the medal of honor for his courage in battle. Cowboy became like the legends that he once told tall tales about.

The native tribes in Texas also attacked the Buffalo Soldier's camp. The camp was well armed with government issued ammunition and rifles. Many times, Cowboy and his fellow Buffalo Soldiers were outnumbered as the native tribes attacked. The battle cry of the warrior braves echoed across the untamed land in the pitch black of night. Suddenly, some kerosene lamps and torches were lit to prepare for the onslaught. As daybreak approached, the loud war drums beat louder and louder as the braves yelled their battle cries. The chief led the attack. The Indian chief sat high on his horse wearing his feather headdress of crimson red, turquoise blue, orange, and yellow. The warriors came on horseback to attack, but the Buffalo Soldiers were ready. The soldiers defended the camp in a rain of gunfire that lasted for two days until the tribal warriors retreated to try again another day.

Cowboy had been made an officer after several years. Now he could finally afford to claim any plot of land that he chose no matter how big or small. So much time was devoted to Cowboy's military career that he almost forgot to get married and have kids. One day a lucky lady found her way into Cowboy's arms, and he fell irreversibly in love. Cowboy loved as hard as he fought. Cowboy married and had four boys who would also become military men to continue the family tradition.

The family would finally arrive in California, the land of gold dust and dusty uncharted roads. The city of San Francisco was the destination. The family would settle in the outskirts far outside of San Francisco. They would only go to the city for supplies.

Wyoming spoke to Howard as she was holding the letters from Robin Nightingale. "These letters say an address in San Francisco. Robin and her husband Robert have an apartment in San Francisco. The couple also has a huge homestead in the wilderness of California. They harvest wine grapes and grow their own food. Robin

has invited us to come visit the apartment in the city and the homestead.

Robert even has an extra plot of land near theirs that is not claimed yet. They said that no one wanted it because of a superstitious tree that was planted on the land. They don't believe in curses and bad luck. The extra plot of land is huge and would yield a great crop of wheat or corn. Perhaps we would prefer to find our own land here in the vast land of plenty we call California. Robin and Robert also mine for gold. The married couple has made a fortune panning for gold and blasting in the mines that they purchased. Maybe California's gold rush will make the blue blood rush into our veins also, said Wyoming."

San Francisco was filled with electric light bulbs, telegraphs, and motion pictures by the time Wyoming and Howard reached town. The covered wagon made its way to the vast farm homestead in the outskirts of the California wilderness. Robin had given the precise location of the farmhouse. Howard was an expert traveler by the end of the family's sojourn to California. Howard stopped the horses right beside the large barn on Robin's estate. Howard helped Wyoming and Virginia step down out of the Conestoga wagon as they set foot on Californian soil for the first time. Howard Jefferson stopped as he held Wyoming firmly in his arms. "Didn't I promise I would get you to California Wyoming! Well honey darling, here we are! We made it! All we have to do now is find some land to build us a home. We're gonna make a life for ourselves here in freedom's bosom, said Howard!"

Wolf was still the loyal companion. Wolf was barely limping now, for his leg had heal quite a bit. Robin emerged from the large house. Robin stood on the huge wraparound porch as the trio family of three approached. Robin outstretched her arms to welcome the familiar friends with open arms. Little Robbie was more than twelve years old now as he emerged from the house. Robert Jr. caught sight of twelve-year-old Virginia as he gazed down upon her. Virginia smiled as if her teeth were white pearls shining in the sun.

Robin spoke filled with enthusiasm. "Welcome Wyoming and Howard. I see this s your daughter Virginia! Come in and make yourselves comfortable. The servants have prepared supper for us



all and we have been waiting for your arrival, said Robin.” Wyoming smiled and looked over at Howard and then glanced at Robin as she spoke. “Well, thank you much! It has been such a long time since we have seen each other. We have to catch up on old times. Come in and bring your things. I will show you to your rooms, said Robin.”

Wyoming walked regally behind Robin as she eagerly led the way. Howard walked beside Wyoming wondering what this pathway would lead to. Virginia walked in between her father Howard and her mother Wyoming.

Virginia was growing to be a tall slender feminine figure with an elegant silhouette. Her large round eyes and arched eyebrow were trained on Robbie, Robert Junior. He had a slim fit physique and a large curious eye. His broad shoulders were beginning to look muscular and strong even though he was only a boy of twelve years. Virginia and Robbie were the same age. Their birthdays were only about two months apart. Robbie was born in the summer and Virginia was born in the fall. Robbie tried to smile at Virginia as she was escorted to her room.

Robbie spoke with an eloquent precocious voice that belied his age. “Welcome Virginia! My mother told me all about you. Did you really travel in a covered wagon on the California Oregon trail with a wagon train of pioneers? I have read so many books about the Oregon Trail and the California trail, how exciting. My family and I took the train all the way out here in a huge luxury sleeper car. We were attacked by Indians and nearly killed by robbers. Outlaws held up the train, and tried to steal every valuable thing that we had, said Robert Junior.”

Robert Jr. was so enamored with Virginia. His heart seemed to flutter when he gazed at her. Her smile lit her satin smooth face glistening in the dim light as straight as a white picket fence.

Virginia spoke with wisdom winsome in her voice. Virginia personified perspicacity as she spoke. “Yes, and you would never guess that our little companion called Wolf was once a leader of a pack of wolves that attacked our wagon one night. When we were eating our dinner, the wolves wanted some of our food. Where the wolves went the coyotes followed. Wolf scared them all away like our

protector, said Virginia. Her eyes sparkled with glee as she shared the story filled with elation like a jubilee.

The dinner was ready in the main dining room. Virginia's mouth was beginning to water as she thought about such delicious foods as Virginia ham and cornbread. Wyoming and Virginia would go get ready for dinner while Howard put the essentials from the covered wagon inside the barn. Wolf waited watchfully while the Jefferson family got settled into Robin's California homestead.

## “Robert Nightingale Junior and Virginia Fall in Love”

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Robert Nightingale's son was called Robbie or Robert Nightingale II. In a just a split second he knew he was infatuated with Virginia. Although Virginia was the daughter of former freed slaves, Robert Junior knew that he would spend the rest of his life with her the second he met her. Robert Nightingale II would not choose the second choice for his true love. Instead, he would choose the first woman he fell in love with. The age of consent and child brides was twelve in many cultures across the world. Robert would conceal his feeling for Virginia until they were of an acceptable age. Then, he would reveal how enamored and infatuated he was with her.

The California gold rush had made a place where the streets were paved with gold. Virginia and Robert Jr. met when they were just twelve years old. Many years past during the gilded age of splendor and decadence. Everything seemed to be gilded in gold and silver from the East coast all the way to the West coast.

There would be many dinners where Virginia and Robert Jr. would dine together keeping their forbidden love hidden. At first, Robert Jr. was forlorn. When he thought that Virginia did not foster the same mutual feelings for him in her heart. Robert Jr. feared that he would linger languishing in unrequited love for Virginia forever. The first dinner they had together would stay in his memory for many years to come.

Wyoming helped Virginia get dressed for dinner as she spoke to her. “Virginia, wash your hands and face in the basin there in front of the window. Then put on your best dress. You know the yellow plaid dress with the satin bow around the waist. Then place the bow in your hair. This yellow plaid dress was purchased with some of the first earnings that I had when we left slavery in the South.

When we arrived in the New York and started working for the wealthy factory owner, I paid to have a dress made in a dress shop

for ladies. This very dress was designed for me as a seamstress took my measurements. The dress did fit well, until I became pregnant with you my darling Virginia. I had planned to wear this dress to formal occasions for freed slaves, abolitionist meetings, and dinner parties. I did once, wear this dress to meet Fredrick Douglas, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth and W.E.B. Dubois, said Wyoming.”

Virginia grinned with her straight white teeth gleaming with pride as she put on the dress. Wyoming continued to tell her story. “I will lend you the amber stone, gold earrings, ring and necklace that my mother gave me. She was given these earrings made of amber that is the hard golden sap of an ancient tree. The wife of the plantation owner had been given these amber earrings from a pioneer that had gone West and found ancient amber. There is a butterfly trapped inside the clear golden amber that was never set free for hundreds of years. The pendant of the necklace displays this trapped butterfly, that will never fly away to freedom. The chain of the necklace is made of gold that was mined in California when the gold rush first started even before he Civil War. The earrings are two ants trapped inside the amber that were not able to run away to liberty. These trapped creatures will remind you of how you want to be free and not ever be trapped inside someplace even if it is a beautiful plantation mansion. Virginia, you will be the freed butterfly. You will be the butterfly that has been broken from her chains and confinement! Virginia, you will be the ant, who is the aunt of free nieces and nephews. Someday Virginia, you will break these chains, and shatter this amber leaving nothing but the gold setting, which will be remade into a single gold band for your wedding ring. Or, perhaps the single gold ring will be the signet ring that will display the power and ownership of property and authority equal to any man or master, said Wyoming.”

While Wyoming was helping Virginia get dressed, the raspy asthmatic cough echoed down the hallowed hall of the California farmhouse. The cough was emanating from Robert Jr. as he languished in anguish. The theory was that the fumes from the leather factory had caused a birth defect that afflicted Robbie with trouble breathing and a heart condition. Gail Nightingale had

appeared to Robin many times to give her advice about Robbie. Gail had given the recipe for the healing balm and curing tea for Robbie. The coughing sickness had been cured many times with tea and elixirs. Gail would continue to try different ingredients to heal Robbie for many years to come.

Wyoming spoke as she lit a kerosene lamp that glowed lavender light. "This is Gail, she only likes to talk to people when there is a purple light in the room. She believes that the lavender or lilac light corona forms a protective barrier around her to keep out all sickness and evil. To see her you must cast some powder into the fire or put the powder into the oil lamp to make the violet light shine in the room, said Wyoming."

Gail appeared to Virginia in the violet light, as she stood glowing in the gorgeous golden plaid gown. Gail spoke with wisdom about Robbie. "I have seen this kind of sickness before. Some believe that Robert Jr. has taken ill with the plague of coughing sickness that is spreading everywhere. However, truly Robbie has an inborn defect that causes him to have trouble breathing. We can help sooth his symptoms with a mixture of herbs, minerals, elements, and tree bark. We can rub ointments on his chest and serve him some hot tea elixir every morning, said Gail."

Virginia continued down the stairs to the dinner table as the echo of the raspy cough resounded through the air. The dining room was simple and austere compared to the grand dining hall that the Nightingale's former estate in New York. The New York mansion in the countryside was being kept filled with furniture covered in canvas and white sheets in case the Nightingale family decides to return to the East coast. Wyoming spoke once Howard and Virginia were settled into their chairs. "The journey out to California sure was trying us. We hit a few bumps along the way. The Oregon California trail has a long wagon train of pioneers all searching for freedom, fortune, and fate. We had some fearsome challenges, but we made it through, said Wyoming."

Robin looked over at Wyoming and Howard sitting side-by-side. Gail and Williamson sat beside the dinner table seeming to wait while the family and friends finished eating. Now Gail spoke in a calming voice as the violet light illuminated the room from the

fireplace. “Wyoming what happened to you while on the wagon train? I see you have brought a wolf with you as a companion. Aren’t you scared that such a creature would harm you, said Gail?”

Williamson seemed to be sitting beside Gail holding her hand as the lilac light from the oil lantern glowed in the room.

Howard spoke as he took a sip of orange juice to swallow the roasted chicken, mashed potatoes, and wild maize corn dinner. “Yes, we certainly did run into some trouble, not with none of the townsfolks, but with nature and the weather. The townspeople out West were not as wild as I expected. We met a man that went by the name Cowboy, who wanted to be a Buffalo Soldier. He told us about Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, and Wyatt Earp who were all gunfighters. Then we saw a huge twister cloud over yonder in the distance. Luckily, we went away from the cyclone cloud and escaped danger, said Howard.”

Virginia was sitting next to Robbie and feeling butterflies in her stomach. She clasped the butterfly amber necklace around her neck like a good luck charm as she spoke. “That twister was so towering and huge. The wind blew something awful. The cold chill of the wind made shivers go up my spine. I saw a covered wagon get it’s covering blown off as the wind whipped down on the pioneer wagon train. The cyclone wind was like a slave master whipping a fieldhand with a cat-and-nine-tails. The howl of that tornado wind was louder than any locomotive. The wretched sound of women screaming in terror rang in my ears. Each item that had once been inside the covered wagon was now spinning in the air. I saw a rifle being carried up into the twisting funnel cloud. I watched the rifle go up and up into the funnel cloud and spin around into the air. Then I heard the explosion of gunfire. I frowned and a felt a feeling of melancholy as any freed slave while I stood powerless before the power of nature. We were far enough away from the twister to escape death but we could see others being swept up right before our eyes. As we moved away, I watched through binoculars to see the wrath of Mother Nature with my own eyes. A child was swept up into the cyclone cloud. The mother was trying to hold tight to her son’s hand, but it was no use. All of the strength in her body could not prevent the twister cloud from taking her child in its firm grasp. The child

wailed a shrieking scream as the twister took hold of the child's body. The son could not escape the clutches of Mother Nature. I fear the child died as the mother felt the son's life slipping away into the cyclone cloud. I fear the day that such a situation may occur. My path was the trail leading away from death and destruction. We used the compass to move away from a fatal fate, said Virginia"

Virginia gently cut the roasted chicken with her dinner knife. She plunged her fork into the tender breast meat. Then she placed the succulent piece of meat into her mouth savoring each juicy morsel. She then tasted the wild maize corn that was multi-colored vibrant hues of orange, dark red, purple, and bright yellow. The smooth creamy mashed potatoes were smothered in rich brown gravy and butter. Virginia had yet to taste such an exotic and well-prepared meal in her young life.

The only other feast that she could remember was when her mother let her eat some of the leftover food from the plantation master's table. She dined on Virginia ham, glazed in brown sugar and pierced with cloves across its roasted skin. The side dish had been cornbread stuffing with gizzard gravy. Virginia could remember harvesting the celery, onions, potatoes, carrots, yellow corn, and yams from the garden, which were eventually used in that Thanksgiving feast. Most times her mother Wyoming does not get to the scraps from the table before the other house servants eat all of the leftovers and table scraps.

Robert Nightingale Sr. was sitting firmly at the head of the table. He was eating the dinner with a pleasant look on his face. Robert's statements were usually laconic and very brief. He did not want to seem surly or snippy with his guest as he spoke. "What a tribulation! you have experience so much turmoil. My goodness, you have been through so much, but you still made it to California, said Robert Sr."

Howard had to break the ice with some quizzical ideas, as he swallowed another tender morsel of delectable food. "I have been wanting to open a general store out here. Not just for our kind of folks but for any townsfolk that need some supplies. On the way out West, we stopped at a general town that was owned by freed slaves! In fact, the entire town was run by freed slaves. We were so impressed that they could maintain order and some calm civilized

manners about themselves. If they could do it, then by golly, I reckon, we could do the same, said Howard.” Howard smiled as he hungrily crammed more food into his mouth. He was trying to be polite but his cheeks got as full as a chipmunk filled with nuts as he devoured the spectacular meal.

Robert needed to clear his throat as he sipped California-made wine from a fluted glass. “Yes, that does seem like a good idea. Needless to say, I could help you start a general store in its fledgling stages. Then of course, you would have full run of the place from there on out. You would have ownership, and we could be partners. Your wife Wyoming and daughter could help you stock the shelves and handle the customers. You and I have only made each other’s acquaintance a few times at dinner parties at the Manhattan mansion where you once were servants. My wife Robin has been telling me plenty about your plight. The path of the freed slave has taken you here to California where there is an abundance of free land and gold to be mined for any man to become wealthy! What a grand idea Howard! I also might suggest that the town will needs a Deputy to control the peace and pleasantness of the place. If you don’t become deputized and wear a badge, then we might suggest some sympathetic sort of fellow to do so, who has our interest in mind of course. Also, I have some mining ventures that might also interest you Howard, said Robert.”

Howard grinned with jubilation as he cleared his throat and prepared to speak. “Well, I was hoping that you would help us start up the general store. Wow, you just out and out invited me to be your partner. Now is that fifty-fifty? Would we split all of the profits down the middle? My wife Wyoming would want to be a partner also. She will help me mind the till and keep track of the goods in the store, said Howard.”

Wyoming looked over at Howard and grasped his hand as she smiled sitting next to her husband. Wyoming seemed to have something to say with a very energetic voice. “I certainly will help Howard run the store and if there was ever a woman Deputy, I would volunteer to try that too. I am a mighty good shot, as a sharpshooter, said Wyoming.”



Soon the candles on the candelabra burned low in the middle of the table. The lavender light from the fireplace was only a lingering ember when the dinner guests had finally devoured every scrumptious tidbit of their supper. Howard and Wyoming were given a grand guest room down the hall from Virginia. The young girl Virginia stayed in her own room alone for the first time in her nubile life. Virginia entered the large spartan room with few furnishings. She then pulled back the thick quilted bed covering. She was about to blow out the candles and turn off the kerosene lamp, when she heard a raspy repetitious cough. The cough seemed to be like the person was gasping for breath. He was coughing as if he could not breathe. She knew who the suffering suffocating person was. It was Robbie.

Virginia was immediately compelled to get out of bed and go into the dimly lit cold hallway. As she entered the long dark corridor, she cast a long shadow upon the floor. She was holding the kerosene lamp as she crept down the hall searching for Robert Nightingale Jr. II. She kept staggering down the hall until she arrived at the source of the cough. Virginia slowly knocked on the door and introduced herself. "Hello, is that you Robbie? I mean, may I call you Robert II. I knew that I had to help you the second I heard your choking cough, said Virginia."

Robbie sat down on the bed and gazed over at Virginia with a wonton wondering as he spoke. "I will take any care that you would like to give. I have had this cumbersome cough my whole life since I was a baby. My mother worried that the fumes from the leather tanning factory were poisoning my lungs. She thought the dry southern California air would be of some help to me. We tried living in San Francisco but it got too cold and rainy, so we decided to build here. We grow grapes for wine. Now my mother thinks elixirs with tea, bark, herbs, and wine will cure everything. She thinks sunshine and seashores are a balm for every kind of ailment, said Robbie."

Robbie and Virginia grew closer and closer together as they fell deeply in love. Several years went by as Virginia and Robert Nightingale II came of age. They were soon adolescents in their teens. The two of them spent many days and nights together as Virginia cared for Robbie's persistent cough. Virginia tried many

ointments, chest rubs, teas, and elixirs to try and solve the problem of the bothersome cough that had afflicted Robbie since his birth in New York. Virginia was not Robbie's servant. She willingly wanted to cure him of his ailment. Gail appeared many times to aid Virginia in her search for a way to stop Robbie's cough.

Robert Nightingale II walked into the room dressed in a blue and green gentlemen's long coat that had been tailored for him in one of the finest shops in Los Angeles. He was growing his beard now that he had reached the age of eighteen. He looked over at Virginia while she was standing in front of the church building. The stained-glass windows cast prismatic light upon Virginia as her eyes twinkled. She smiled with her brilliant beaming white teeth when Robbie approached. The vaulted ceilings of the cathedral created a cavernous echo of laughter. Pleasant chatter surrounded them. Robert Nightingale II spoke to Virginia. "Someday I wish to walk with you down the aisle of this very church and proclaim my love for you to the entire town, and to the whole world if they want to listen. I love you more than anything I hold dear Virginia. I want to let you know that I have loved you since the moment I saw you, said Robert Nightingale II."

Virginia smiled filled with elation as she replied. "Yes, and I love you too. I am the daughter of freed slaves! I know that society does not think that we should marry. We grew up together. We will never be apart, said Virginia. Robert replied with a solemn voice. "I will go away to university soon, and then to Europe to explore the world. My father wants me to help run the family business of leather factories and cattle ranches. The vineyard has made us wealthy wine makers who are fruitful. The gold and silver mines have been profitable. I will return to California to claim you as my wife! The Old West is not as Wild and untamable as we all thought. I will change the way the West is won. I will win you for my wife Virginia, said Robert Nightingale II."

Many years of prosperity passed in California. Howard built a general store. Howard Jefferson helped establish a town where many freed slaves opened their own businesses. The town was located close to many of the land parcels allotted to the freed slaves through the Homestead Act. Some of the runaway slaves came to

claim their forty acres and a mule for slavery reparations. Howard was elected as the Deputy. The Sheriff was a former abolitionist who once fought for Bleeding Kansas.

One day the tribal chiefs approached Howard's General Store in the center of town. Dozens of tribal warriors surrounded the general store on horseback. The Indian braves rode down the streets of the freedman's town. The Buffalo Soldiers weren't in California to protect the settlers. Suddenly many warriors arched their bows, and aimed their arrows. Suddenly, the townspeople hesitated to emerge from their stores. The taverns seemed to dim their lights and shutter their windows. The piercing screams of warrior battle cries ruptured the silence of the Californian evening. The sun was setting over the horizon. The sky was painted crimson blood red like war paint on the cheeks of a brave.

The sound of gunfire resonated through the stagnant air, as the shop owners tried to wage war against the attacking Indian tribe. The braves attacked as the storeowners put up a valiant fight. Their trigger fingers did not falter, even as they trembled with fright. Soon jars of pickles were exploding on the shelves as the bullets began to fly through Howard's General Store! Virginia and Wyoming ducked down behind the counter to take cover. The counter had been plated with brass and wrought iron, not just for ornamental reasons, but just in case such a shoot-out did occur.

Virginia was searching for the rifle casings as she loaded the gun. Virginia whispered to her mother Wyoming as she prepared to aim. "We should stay behind the counter and try and shoot them in the legs. We don't want to kill the native tribe warriors, after all, we just want them to stop shooting at us, said Virginia." Wyoming got a stern sort of fortitude in her voice as she replied. "Yes, Virginia, but we should shoot the tribal warriors in the arms so that they can't aim their arrows at us or take aim with their guns, said Wyoming." Virginia's upper eyelid began to twitch as she closed one eye to focus on her target. Her fingers trembled just a little. Virginia grimaces when she pulled the trigger. She shot the first tribal warrior in the shoulder. She watched the blood spew from his body as he grasped his shoulder and fell to the ground. Virginia and Wyoming also aimed and fired round after round as each brave was hit.

The deafening war cry resounded across the general store! Several bottles of wine were shattered, and the alcohol immediately ignited! The general store was ablaze! The fire was spreading rapidly through Howard's General Store. The plumes of smoke billowed to the ceilings. The cracking wood planks were being incinerated. The glowing embers could not be completely extinguished. Suddenly, Wyoming's long purple plaid dress caught a flame! Virginia fought with the fire to smother the flames. The fire seared into her skin like a branding iron as she put out the fire on her mother's dress. The mother and daughter embraced. Tears of joy flowed from her eyes.

Virginia looked at her mother with fear pooling in her eyes, while tears flowed down her cheeks. Virginia spoke with gasps of smoke making her cough. "How are we going to get out of here? The warriors are surrounding the town, said Virginia." Wyoming looked to her daughter with a fearless fortitude as she knocked on the wooden door beneath the counter. Wyoming spoke in a raspy whisper of clandestine knowledge. "We will escape through the door beneath this counter used to stash gold, and other valuables, said Wyoming."

Howard was still shooting out of the window, using a barrel of goods for a shield. He kept reloading his rifle, but he could not hold out for much longer. The general store was where gunmen came to buy their ammunition. Howard had a huge arsenal of ammunition to defend the store. Pretty soon, the entire store was on fire. The gunfire went silent. The brave tribe of Indian warriors had retreated in a blaze of glory. The cacophony of gunfire ceased. The echo of battle cries faded into the background.

The catastrophe had created a conflagration. They would need a cataclysm flood to fill chasms of water in order to extinguish the fire. The fire was spreading. The family would need a rapid downpour of rain to make a flood to put out these flames. A deluge of danger would soon come to them. In that instant, the thunder rolled through the sky. Bolts of lightning exploded across the California horizon at sunset. Just before the sun slithered into darkness, the storm rained down torrents of rain upon the town. The endless sheets of rain seemed to be interminable. The rain put out the fires in the town as the Indian tribal warriors rode away, to fight another day.

Howard had climbed down into the hidden door in the floor with his wife and daughter. He was exasperated from fighting, and breathing in smoke. The flames had been put out. Now the family would have to rebuild. It would not stop raining for several hours. The family made their way out of the general store through an underground tunnel similar to a mine or a hiding place on the underground railroad. Howard drove the wagon through the rain until the family arrived at the house that had been built on the outskirts of town. Howard had built a house with many acres of land for growing food. The house had taken over a year to construct on higher ground.

Howard spoke as he looked up at the sky. "A flood would not be expected in this area of California, but it has happened before. In 1862, it rained for so many days that the streets of Sacramento were made into a river. The flooding stretched all the way into Utah and Idaho even. Rumor has it, that a hot air balloon that the government called a weather balloon was the reason. The hot air balloon went high into the clouds and sprinkled powder into the clouds. The clouds make a recipe for rain when special ingredients are added, just like baking a biscuit. Well, they went and added a dash of some element or mineral while up there in the weather balloon, and the rain came and came! The military figured out how to turn the clouds on and off like a spigot, said Howard."

The rain stopped and started intermittently. The house that Howard build was like a fortress, but only for so long. The sound of the perpetual rain beat down on the roof and slammed into the walls of the house. The rapid downpours of rain were unceasing! Soon the water began to come inside the house. Wyoming spoke in dismay as she felt the water soaking her feet. She was gritting her teeth, showing a grimace instead of a smile "Howard, the water just washed over my feet soaking my shoes. Now it is quickly rising to my ankles. The water is rising so fast Howard. What should we do? If we go up-stairs we might be trapped inside the house, said Wyoming."

Howard stomped through the rapidly rising water as it splashed up, wetting his clothes. Howard looked across the room. He watched the water breaching the cracks in the front door of the house. The

water was rushing inside the house making the front door look like a waterfall or a geyser. Howard spoke with an indomitable verve in his voice. "We should leave the house. The water is rising because of the rain and the river. We have to get away from the river to stay above the water. Our last retreat might only be the very rooftop if we stay in this house. I will get the horses! We will go on horseback without the wagon. The wagon wheels will only get stuck in the mud. We don't have time to hitch the wagon to the horse, because the water is rising so fast, said Howard"

Virginia spoke with consternation and bewilderment in her voice. "We should go, but I just have one more thing I will need to find in my room before we leave the house. I must find my butterfly pendant that has the butterfly trapped inside the amber. It is the necklace that I wore when I first met Robbie, said Virginia." Virginia rushed up the stairs. Soon Virginia was in her room rifling through her giant hope chest at the foot of her bed. She could not seem to find the butterfly amber necklace. She had once sworn to herself that she would never take it off again. Wyoming and Howard were filled with fright as they called telling Virginia to come down stairs. There was caution in their voices as well as fraught fear. "Virginia come down stairs now! We must go! The house is filling with water, said Wyoming." Virginia did not answer her mother. She was still looking for the amber butterfly necklace.

Suddenly the staircase was pulled away from the wall by the rushing rivers of water that were gushing into the house! Howard quickly tied a lasso rope, just the way Cowboy had showed him while on the wagon train. Howard was overwrought with concern as he called to Virginia. "Virginia come down to the end of the hall. The stairs are gone, but I can throw this rope to you and you can jump down into the water without being swept away. If you don't come now, your only chance of escape might be to go to the roof of the house, said Howard." Virginia did not reply. There were just horrific shrieks and anxious screams that echoed through the hollow halls of the house. Wyoming and Howard had to evacuate the house that they built in the countryside of the California wilderness. The water had risen too quickly.

The frustrated and frightened Jefferson family had to leave the fortress that had been the foundation of their fortitude. **Once outside the house the rain slapped their faces with spite. The storm was putting up a fight. The family fought back with all their might. The water was reaching an unprecedented height. Then a savior arrived right at the moment when there was no solution in sight. The family was relieved and their spirits took flight.**

Robert Nightingale Jr. and his father came from the high ground perched on top of a hill. The two men made a silhouette riding side by side. Their horses whinnied and stood up on their hind legs against the striking background of the full moon. The rain descended and the lightning bolts illuminated the midnight sky. The horses were unhitched from the Nightingale family's wagon. A small canoe was tied to one of the horses. The small canoe would come in handy. As Robbie descended the sloping hill the water would be too high for the horse to walk through without being carried away! The roadway leading to Howard's house had already turned into a rapidly flowing river. The nearby river had overrun its banks. The countryside was completely submerged. The flashflood inundated the land. Robbie paddled his way down the river road. His father was in the front of the canoe. Robbie was in the back of the canoe.

Gradually, the canoe was paddled across the watery chasm that was once the roadway leading to the house that Howard Jefferson built. Wyoming and Howard were standing at the edge of the porch holding on to the sturdy porch columns. The two of them only let go of the porch posts to hold each other's hands as they carefully stepped into the canoe. Once inside the canoe all they could think about was the safety of their daughter Virginia. Wyoming spoke with concern in her voice. "Virginia is still inside the house. She went up the stairs to search for her amber butterfly necklace! Then the stairs fell away. She may be trapped up there on the second floor, said Wyoming."

Virginia had exited the second floor of the house through an opened window that was above the porch. Virginia climbed down on to the roof of the porch. The canoe was right below her. She looked down as the rain wet her face like tears. The glimmering light of the full moon lit the amber butterfly necklace around her neck. Now,

Virginia looked down to see Robbie. Robert Nightingale II looked up toward Virginia as she climbed down into his loving embrace from the porch roof. Virginia had climbed down into the rushing flood water. The deluge had delivered Robbie to her. She fell into his arms! They had both fallen in love!

The canoe fought the current of the rushing river as they navigated away from the house that Howard built. Robbie embraced Virginia. He helped her safely inside the canoe. Then they paddled away from the grand country house with all of their strength. Soon they were back to the base of the hill. Everyone got out of the canoe and helped pull it up the hillside. The horses and wagon were waiting for them on high ground at the zenith of the hill. Robin appeared sticking her head outside of the covered wagon. She was waving her arms and calling to her husband, Robert Nightingale, and her son Robbie. When Robert Nightingale reached the summit of the hill, he hugged his wife as tight as he could.

Many days later the water receded. The river banks subsided. The house that Howard Jefferson built would need to be rebuilt. However, the house was still standing after the flood. The house would be a great fortress of familiar comfort. Virginia found comfort in the arms of Robert Nightingale II while the house was being rebuilt. Soon Virginia was with child. She was hiding a pregnancy. The child that was in her womb would be the love child of a freed slave girl and a former Civil War officer's son.

Robbie had plans to go to the university. Then Robbie would go to Europe with his parents. Virginia was invited to make the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to England. Robin and Robert had plans to visit business associates in Europe pertaining to the leather factory. A big shipment of shoes would be going to Europe if Robert Sr. could make a deal in England and France. Once in Europe, Virginia and Robbie could marry and raise their child without so much scrutiny and scandal.

The family made the long trip back to New York. Robin, Robert Jr., Virginia, and Robbie made their way back to their familiar haunts in Manhattan. The former bachelor pad in the city was awaiting their arrival. Robert Sr. met with Richard the manager of the leather shoe factory. The marriage of Virginia and Robbie was legal in Mexico,



because Mexico had no miscegenation laws against interracial marriages at the time. The marriage ceremony was not filled with the grandeur that the couple had first envisioned. Virginia was outfitted with a new wardrobe in New York to hide the protruding stomach. The two couples boarded a steamship in Manhattan Harbor. They all began the long transatlantic voyage to London.

Virginia and Robbie had their own first-class accommodations in the lap of luxury. The wood paneled room had lavish furnishing like a fine hotel. There was a chandelier made of crystal hanging from the ceiling of the cabin. The bed was adorned with fine linen as white as the first snow of winter. The duvet bed spread was blue silk satin.

The frigid seas of the North Atlantic were layered with ice around this time of year. However, the jet stream would keep the water warm enough to melt the icebergs. The wind would make the water choppy. The water would splash up against the icebergs and break them up into minute innocuous chips of ice. The two couples arrived in London after an uneventful transatlantic crossing. In the age of electricity and steam engines, transatlantic crossings on large passenger ships had become routine and hackneyed. For Virginia her first trip on a massive steamship could never be boring or banal.

Robbie and Virginia went shopping for flats in London together, but eventually decided on a trip to Paris. Robbie was fluent in French. Robbie had taken French as a second language since he was a small child. Virginia had an aunt who was born in Louisiana as a French Creole and Arachnidan descendant. Virginia also spoke French fluently and with the greatest of ease. The couple walked along the streets of Paris with parasols in pleasant surroundings. Robbie spoke to Virginia as they stood with the Eiffel Tower in the background. "This is the most exciting thing I have ever done. This is really the best thing that could have ever happened to me. I love you Virginia, said Robert Nightingale II."

The decision had already been made that Robin and Robert Sr. would be returning to California, whilst Virginia and Robbie would stay in Europe. Robbie would only visit the family in America on special occasions and holidays. Robin and Robert Sr. would be in London to conduct business with several business associates that Robert knew. The Nightingale family has lineage in London among

the aristocracy. Robert Nightingale's family had some grand country homes with impressionist oil portraits on the walls. The houses had halls of books reaching to the vaulted ceilings.

Robin and Robert had many conversations with Gail and Williamson in the parlors. They pondered their predicament as they ate in the dining halls of Europe. Gail would appear illuminated in the glow of the electric lightbulb now. However, when the fireplace was lit with a roaring fire, the powder was cast like magic into the hearth to create the purple pulsating presence of Gail.

Robin accompanied Robert to the dinner parties and balls of London as he made business connections. The twentieth century had dawned. The age of electricity and industry had long replaced the sailing ships that had once carried their predecessors to the Americas. Soon Robin and Robert would attempt to return to California on a modern steamship.

## [“Rob and Robin Journey on the Titanic”](#)

Robert Nightingale, his wife Robin, and their son Robbie Jr. would brave many adventures in the Wild West until they finally decided to return to New York. The electric lightbulb had illuminated the streets of New York. They would stay at grand hotels in San Francisco. The couple would build another large home in the countryside frontier. They would stand down a few more attacks from the native tribes. The settlers were constantly making and breaking treaties with the Indian chiefs. Another ten years would go by until they finally decided to take a family trip to England on a grand ocean liner.

The phonograph had made it possible to communicate long distances. The motion picture was amazing audience all over the world. Thomas Edison had revolutionized the world with electricity. Alternating current through General Electric was popular. Electricity had taken the world by storm at the World's Fair. Soon Robin would want to meet with the women of the Nightingale Society in London England. They would talk about Florence Nightingale's philosophy, and the resurgence of the coughing sickness. The Nightingale family

had planned to board a great new steam liner that would take them to London in style.

Ireland was a topic of interest for Robin and Robert. The second wave of immigrants had entered New York to Ellis Island, where the Statue of Liberty now stood. They called her 'Lady Liberty,' and she stood for freedom! The immigrants were coming from Ireland because there had been a poor potato harvest causing a famine. The starvation would continue in the slums of New York, where gangs, organized crime and disease were a plague of blight upon the population.

The Irish shipbuilder had been commissioned to build the largest ship that had yet been attempted in modern times. The name of the gigantic steamboat would be the Titanic. The name Titanic was a neologism combining the word titan and Atlantic. Titan referred to the massive size of the ship, which was the longest in yet in history at the time. The humongous steamer would sail through the bitter cold sub-zero temperatures of the North Atlantic Ocean during the calm winter season.

The unsinkable Molly Brown was a proponent of women's suffrage and workers' rights. Margaret was a philanthropist made wealthy from the Colorado gold rush. Margaret (Molly) Brown and her husband were anti-slavery abolitionists. They were concerned about the plight of the Irish Catholic factory workers, even those workers who were laboring in the boiler rooms of the Titanic. Minimum wages and eight-hour days were some of the mandates that coal miners were fighting for when Margaret was their advocate. John Jacob Astor was also on board the doomed Titanic as his fatal fate loomed in 1912 at the beginning of the Twentieth century.

The coughing sickness was of paramount interest to Robin. She wanted to have a meeting of the Nightingale Society with Gail on the other side of the ocean. The Nightingales had crossed the ocean on a steamship and arrived in London. The couple would also go to Paris. The Crimean War had caused so much turmoil and tribulation all those years ago. This was the war where the famous Florence Nightingale became known for her care of her patients. She was called the 'Lady with the Lamp' because she carried a kerosene lamp around to check on her patients at night. Florence Nightingale

also initiated the movement to get all of the nurses to wash their hands when they cared for each patient. Hand washing was started so that the nurses wouldn't spread disease from one patient to the next.

Disciples of Florence Nightingale are her fellow nurses vowed to treat their patient with a certain standard. The Nightingale Society has a particularly adamant group of women in London. They meet in the darkness of night in the forests of England. They gathered around a bonfire. They proclaimed the news about cures for such illnesses as the coughing sickness. Each part of England would gather in the woods.

Congregations of nurses and apothecaries would also have a meeting of women in Paris France. The ecclesia of women would gather from all parts of France. Women would come from Rome, Italy and Athens Greece to discuss the cure for the coughing sickness.

The women of the Nightingale Society in Ireland believe that the men that were working on the building of the Titanic had become plagued with the terrible choking sickness. The men who were employed to shovel the coal into the mighty furnaces of the Titanic were also said to have become sick with the coughing sickness as it spread through the crowded confines of European slums.

Robin and Robert Nightingale arrived in London many months previous to the sailing of the Titanic. The ship was almost completed and ready to sail the maiden voyage, while Robin was planning to attend a meeting of the Women of the Nightingale Society. Robin dressed in a heavy wool dress woven with green tartan fabric that was reminiscent of the Kilts of Scottish aristocracy. The new dress had been purchased in Edinboro Scotland. There had been clandestine meetings under the buried plague-ridden streets of Edinboro where thieve and dead men dare not go.

Robin would go to the bonfire under the cover of darkness. The London air was so chilling that her breath formed a cloud of haze that hovered in the air when she spoke. "Robert, I shall be going to a meeting of the Nightingale Society whilst you are having cigars and brandy in your business meetings today, said Robin." Robin stepped

outside the luxurious hotel in London and into the carriage that was waiting to carry her away into the wooded countryside.

**London was the epicenter of British metropolitan cities. London, with all of its royal pomp and circumstance was the urban epidemic of urbane sophistication. With London's booming population. Every new plague needed an explanation. The coughing sickness was an illness open for exploration. The coughing sickness was spreading fast without a proper dinner party invitation. Curing the choking sickness needed some innovation. The Women of the Nightingale Society would say some incantations. Horticulture and herbs would remedy the situation.**

Robin's carriage carried her passed the mammoth clock called Big Ben towering above the cityscape like a watchful guardian of the London. Robin was driven across London Bridge. she watched the moon rise over the Thames River. The moonlight glistened across the dark water below. The carriage careened carefully to the outskirts of London deep into the woods. She was hurrying toward the meeting in the woods as the wind rustled the leaves on the trees. Soon the carriage came into a clearing and a grand country house appeared in the rolling meadows of England. The grand British country house emerged from the shadows looming a far off in the distance. There were several hundred acres of sprawling gardens and fountains with a huge reflecting pool.

Robin was helped out of the carriage when the butler opened the door. The butler opened the large wooden door of the Georgian style English manor. A tall stately women cast her long silhouette across the carved plaster moulding ceilings. She was adorned in a blue jacquard silk satin gown with a dainty corseted waist. The mistress of the manor spoke in a poignant manner. "Welcome Robin. We have been waiting for your arrival, said the mistress of the manor." Several elegantly dressed women now began to descend the stairs. The doors of the parlor opened and ladies emerged from the alcoves of the Georgian mansion. The ladies walked with purple lit lanterns, torches, and candelabras in a long procession until they were out of the country mansion and in the garden. The ladies walked through the massive winding mazes in the garden until they reached a stone

courtyard. Instead of a fountain of water in the center of the stone courtyard, there was a giant roaring bonfire.

The woman from Rome stepped forward. She was dressed in a colorful burgundy and golden yellow striped dress made of fine fabric. She had large oval eyes and high arched eyebrows. Her plumb red lips parted as she spoke about the choking sickness in Rome. "In the ancient city of Rome, we have seen the coughing sickness take hold of the throats of the people and choke the breath out of them. We have tried many remedies. I have concocted an herb and honey elixir that is swallowed and rubbed on the chest. In Rome we have ruins from the ancient empire. Twin boys Romulus and Remus suckled from a she-wolf before they founded the city of Rome. The emperor Caesar wore a laurel wreath on his head like a crown. It is believed in the annals of legend that the mighty Caesar died on the ides of March. Now, the deadly disease suffocated the life out of mighty men marching across the city of Rome like a conquering hero., said the woman from Rome."

The bonfire was stoked with whining gusts of wind that howled down across the country courtyard. The moon was rising high, just to light the sky, just to be the twinkle in a woman's eye. The torches were burning bright illuminating the stoic faces of the Women of the Nightingale Society. Suddenly, the large foreboding presence of a hot air balloon was looming over the gathering of women. The moonlight displayed only a silhouette outlining the enormous shape of the hot air balloon as she came near to the stone courtyard. The ballasts were dropped. The hot air balloon would need to drop weight in order to come down to earth. The balloon slowly reduced its altitude as it neared the ground. The crowd of women looked up into the midnight sky as the hot air balloon descended. Finally, the mysterious woman stepped out of the hot air balloon as the bonfire glowed upon her face. It was the woman from Paris.

The woman from Paris had come wrapped in ornate brocade fabric that was like a flowing river of lace and satin. Her figure was shaped like an S-curve. Her corset thrust her hips into position, and emphasized her bustline. She was outfitted in bright purple and blue. Several attendants accompanied her carrying lavender lit lanterns. The violet hazy light lit her like a corona nimbus cloud around her

feminine form. Her hat was matching splendidly with her dress as she seemed to want the constant attention of the gathering of women. Her large oval eyes were framed with thick well-groomed eyebrows that an were auburn hue. Her tiny lips were painted with rouge as well as her high cheek bones. Her gloved hands matched her dress and hat while she held the glowing lavender lantern.

The woman from Paris spoke as if she had just come from the Eiffel Tower. She broadcast her message across the crowd as if it were a radio signal. "The people of Paris are plagued with the lung sickness. I have a café in Paris where I have implemented many cures to the people. The croissants I bake have been fortified with a blend of vitamins and minerals that have halted the coughing sickness before it can take hold, said the woman from Paris."

The woman from Athens Greece came into the center of the circle holding a lantern lit with oil. The Greek city of Athens is the land of ancient mythology and legend. The woman from Greece wore a pale blue dress trimmed in white. She had a very angular chin and a broad round forehead. Her eyes were close together, small and round. She cleared her throat and began to speak. "The choking sickness has devoured Athens like the wrath of an angry demigod from mythology. The Trojan war did not kill as many men as the choking sickness! There have been endless journeys abroad (like the odyssey of Odysseus) to search for the cure. The olive oil of the Greek oils is said to be the medicinal cure if mixed with herbs and bark, said the woman from Greece."

The woman from Berlin drove up the winding pathway that led to the stone courtyard in a Mercedes Benz automobile. Similar to the Henry Ford Model-T the Mercedes had mobilized women, putting a her firmly in the driver's seat. The woman in the car stepped into the glowing firelight of the bonfire. She was wearing sapphire blue dress embroidered with many flowers like a proper garden. She was short and stout. Her round face had small oval eyes framed with delicate eyebrows. She stood in the center of the circle of women as she spoke. "The people of Berlin have suffered long with the throat sickness. The factories are filled with sick men, women, and children. The clouds of dark smoke come from the chimneys and into the lungs of the factory workers. The heavy dark smoke only makes

the coughing sickness worse. Some of the city dwellers wear a mask across their nose and mouth. The people who wear the masks do not breathe in as much black smoke. They also do not pick up the choking sickness because the seeds of sickness do not enter their noses and mouths. The people of Germany were once shut away from the world. Germany was once cloistered away in the dark ages of the gothic era. The isolation and delay of progress may have been because they locked themselves away from a plague in those ancient times, said the woman from Berlin.”

The mistress of the manor spoke as the woman from London. “The people here in London have watched Big Ben chime, another person dies of the choking sickness every minute. London Bridge stretches across the Thames River. The Thames is a river of blood and sorrow since the choking sickness has come and carried off the dead, just like the mythological river Styx. The ancient River Styx is the boundary between the world of the living and the underworld of the dead. Soon there was some glimmer of hope as some sort of a cure began to become effective. The crowded cobblestone streets of London can be traversed while wearing a mask of cloth covering the nose and mouth. The cloths should be soaked in a potion that prevents the coughing sickness. The curing and preventing potion has several ingredients found in this very garden where we stand tonight. I have prepared several bottles of this potent potion to take back to the places where you live, said the woman from London.”

The woman from Venice stepped forward wearing a jeweled cloth mask. She spoke through the mask as if she was a mysterious character in some sort of stage play. “The floating palaces of Venice are all shut away because of fear of the coughing sickness. The frivolous festivals of Venice have displayed the veiled face of fear. Everyone is now wearing a mask of medicinal elements across their nose and mouth. The minerals and elements have blocked the spread of the coughing sickness. Even still, the gondola drivers have fallen ill. The Venetian canals have also come to resemble the river Styx carrying away countless festival followers. We now all see piles of corpses of dead men. Those who have fallen dead are buried six feet under. The graves fester at the feet of a feared and fatal fate, said the woman from Venice.”



The Georgian style English country house was set on many acres of land. The family had built the house more than three-hundred years ago. This ancestral home was built from limestone and had lime rendered plaster walls inside the hallowed halls. The portrait of the ancestors and predecessors hung on the wall reminiscent of the impressionist oil paintings of the era. The oldest part of the manor was constructed hundreds of years ago, in an age where prominence was displayed with a large mansion in the countryside.

The generations progressed toward the twentieth century. Soon the new generation of offspring could not manifest the amount of money it took to sustain such mammoth wealth. The new generation of the twentieth century would have to find another way to make enough money to keep living in the grand country house that their forefather had built as their legacy. There were rumors that the mansion was rented as a meeting place for wild, untamed, lascivious parties of reveling and pernicious debauchery.

The flowers in the garden were said to be aphrodisiacs that could increase fertility in impotent men and infertile sterile women. Many a lady that wanted to become pregnant would pay to go to the country house for a weekend in the garden. Tea parties were held in the garden for those women who wanted children and would try anything to conceive a child. There were rumors that if one paid a certain amount to journey through the gardens, they could receive a love potion and make people fall in love with them. There were so many stories of unrequited love. The new generation of the twentieth century had to be innovative and reinvent the concept of a country house, turning it into an inn, boarding house, or amusement park to keep themselves afloat financially.

The gardens surrounding the mansion had been carefully planted with medicinal herbs and flowers even before the era of the Crimean War when Florence Nightingale was wandering from patient to patient with her legendary lamp. She was called the 'Lady with the Lamp.' Florence Nightingale's lamp burned with a purple corona light that illuminated the hospitals where she would heal her patients. The lavender light allowed Gail to follow her and watch over her actions like a guardian of healing.

The gardens that surrounded the manor were given a magical reputation. As the crowd of women dissipated, the gardens went back to their usual enchanting echo. The women that had congregated there would soon seek passage on a routine voyage across the ocean. However, this particular journey would be on the famous unsinkable ship of fantasy and fanfare, called the Titanic. The Titanic was the largest ship ever built at the time. The luxurious legendary steam liner would carry the woman from Rome, the woman from Paris, the woman from Athens, the woman from London and Robin, the Woman from New York, back to America to meet the grand lady liberty (the statue of liberty) in New York Harbor.

The bonfire blazed for several hours as the Women of the Nightingale Society spoke. The woman from Paris lifted up into her hot air balloon. The servants in the hot air balloon extinguished the fire with buckets of water from overhead. As the flames were drenched with water the plumes of smoke rose from the glowing embers. The women slowly made their way back to the Georgian style English country house. Robin was carrying a lantern with a purple flame. Gail was walking beside her as she returned to her carriage.

The carriage carried Robin back to the luxurious London hotel. The Savoy Hotel was a popular and fashionable hotel to stay at in London. Several celebrities were staying at the Savoy while Robin was there. The carriage arrived at the Savoy Hotel and Robin was escorted back to her room. They formed a threesome. Robins stood with Gail and Williamson at her side. Soon Robin and Robert would get ready to board the fabled famous Titanic to return home to America.

John Jacob Astor was seeking a voyage on the Titanic to return home to New York City. He wanted to travel in grandeur and style, in the lap of luxury. Astor was considered one of the wealthiest men in New York at the time. The papers would report on his business achievements. The newspapers would write about his affluent lifestyle on the society pages in big cities like New York and London. Mr. Astor was dressed in a fine fabric long coat made for gentlemen of the era. The tailored herringbone suit was accompanied with a fine pocket watch made of gold.

He spoke to his business associate as he entered the parlor of the Savoy Hotel. "I supposed I should be getting ready to board the Titanic. She is quite a ship. She is enormous and avaricious for passengers, but no average travelers will do. Only the most wealthy and noteworthy men of stature onboard her first-class decks. Even the second-class and third-class accommodations are first rate. I tell you this is going to be a very memorable transatlantic trip, said John Jacob Astor."

The carriage carried John Jacob Astor to Southampton harbor where he would load his luggage and luxurious trappings onto the Titanic. Several of other prominent businessmen were ready to smoke cigars and drink brandy with Mr. Astor, while they talked about the pressing issues of the industry. Astor relished investing in various European fledgling companies. Mr. Astor acquired many companies and created what some people called monopolies and trusts. The captains of industry prided themselves on their ruthless and unrelenting progress of capitalism.

The captain that would navigate the Titanic through the North Atlantic would be going on his final journey at the end of an illustrious career. The White Star Line thought that a very experienced captain would take the helm of the world's largest ship and steer her in the wisest way. However, a cocky sense of experience may have led to a more relaxed attitude. If the captain had sailed so many voyages before and not lost a ship, then why would he sink on an unsinkable ship like Titanic.

Unfortunately, there was a strange weather phenomenon in 1912 that made icebergs stay floating because the water was not as warm and choppy as usual. The small waves and wind pushing up against the icebergs usually makes them break up into innocuous chunks of ice, but not this time!

The captain was dressed in a navy-blue captain's uniform with bright brass buttons. His captain's hat provided protection from the elements as his stark white hair stirred in the gentle breeze. The head engineer who designed the Titanic would also be onboard for the maiden first voyage. Both men took great pride and prestige as they boarded the ship, and prepared for the transatlantic crossing.

Most people onboard saw their ticket for the Titanic as a crowning achievement, and a feather in their cap of accomplishments.

The engineer who drew the blueprints for the Titanic was rather proud of his work. The head engineer and designer of the Titanic would be the toast of the town. The engineer would be the focal point of every dinner party onboard the ship on Titanic's maiden voyage. The head engineer was a slender stately looking gentlemen dressed in a tailored suit and top hat. He had designed the steamship to rival any other ship that had yet been achieved in technology and innovation. He had crafted six watertight compartments that were capable of pumping water out of each compartment if the ship should begin to leak and take on seawater.

The designer of the Titanic had now officially boarded the ship. As he spoke, he took a place of prestige and honor among the other wealthy passengers. "Yes, I will be at the gentlemen's parlor at six this evening. Tell the captain that I will also be at the dinner party and give a tour of the bridge afterward," said the designer of the Titanic Mr. Andrews."

Down in those watertight compartments men would be hard at work shoveling coal into the furnaces of the Titanic. The men called stokers were covered in coal dust, blood, sweat, and tears. There would be a man that shoveled the coal into the furnace. Another man would clear the burnt remains of the coal out of the other end of the furnace. The steam hydraulics and steam engineers that ran the ship would create electricity and horsepower that would sail the ship across the ocean.

One of the officers on the ship gave orders to the stokers. The Officer was named John. It just so happens that there were two brothers. One was a White Star Line Officer named John (in charge of stokers) and the other brother was a coal stoker named Kevin. The Officer John had gotten his poor unemployed brother (Kevin) a great new job on the big ship of dreams. Titanic was the ship of opportunity.

John, the White Star Line Officer spoke to his brother with a dignified sort of voice. "Kevin, it's hard to imagine that I am your superior now that you are in fact my older brother. Back home you were always the one that knew exactly what to do, and where to go

to get things done. I still trust your judgement, but for now you will have to take orders from me, said the Officer John.” The older brother replied with a wise and familiar tone. He realized that he was now a subordinate of his younger brother. “I was always so proud of you. Imagine your luck that you secured a great and promising job on this incredible ship. Now the future is looking so bright. After my first voyage on the Titanic, I will soon earn enough wages to provide for my four children and wife. They will be waiting for me in New York, said the stoker.”

Kevin, the stoker raised both eyebrows at his younger brother proud of his achievement as he spoke to him in a respectful tone of voice. “They could just burn rubbish or horse manure to fuel the steam engine. That was my idea that would kill two birds with one stone. The city could get rid of the garbage and animal waste and also fuel the steam engines solving two problems. I think the coal miners want so badly to make a profit from mining for coal. These wealthy businessmen want the industry to make coal the number one fuel of the age, said Kevin the stoker to his younger brother the Officer John.”

Officer John replied with a sort of smirk on his face. His voice was mater-of-fact and candid. “You know what, bro, you might be right. Maybe rubbish and manure would not be a suitable scent for a classy steamship, but perhaps a powerplant that powers a city with alternating current could burn garbage and other such crap to power the cities. That Thomas Edison says alternating current could kill a man in a device called an electric chair. So, that is how Thomas Edison proved that alternating current electricity existed and could be used as power, He also demonstrated an evil destructive and dangerous device that could kill a man. That Tesla said alternating current was not the way to make electricity. I think he was right. Anyhow, the lightbulbs on this modern marvel of a ship will use alternating current to light the night, said the Officer as he shrugged his shoulders and nodded.”

Kevin the stoker was the older brother, and he was enormous. The Stoker had massive shoulders and huge biceps. His back was strong enough to shovel coal all night long. The Stoker’s shoulders were broad enough to carry the weight of the world like Atlas from

the Greek mythology. The Stoker nodded as he spoke in a raspy deep voice. So many wealthy men had brought their horseless carriages, called automobiles to the ship. I saw them hoisting the automobiles on to the ship. Pretty soon, there will be no use for horses except for sports like horse racing and gambling, said the Kevin the stoker.”

Officer John nodded in agreement as he spoke to his older brother. “We had better start down toward the first furnace room at the hull of the ship where we will be stationed. I heard that there was a coal strike over wages and limited eight-hour days. The safety of the coal mines was brought to the attention of many politicians and activists. There is this loud mouth woman on ship called Margaret Brown. She is a social reformist in favor of the coal miners and coal workers. She wants the women to vote. Margaret is a woman’s suffragist. She also wants better working conditions for women and children. That Margaret Brown has such a big mouth that I heard her talking even as she was boarding the ship. I guess women’s suffrage is all right as long as the women don’t start to think that they are as powerful as the Queen of England or something, said the Officer John.”

Kevin the stoker was walking down the stairs beside his brother as they both descended lower and lower into the depths of the giant steamship. “Today, men will be powering this great ship through the Atlantic, with nothing but the sweat off of our brows, and the bending of our broken backs! The women will still have the privilege of being waited on hand and foot in the lap of luxury. The water on this ship is just like the running water and indoor plumbing that so many of the wealthy hotels have in London. The ladies will be in their bathrooms and sleeping in their plush white linen beds. Their rooms are lined with silk wallpaper and horsehair mattresses, said Kevin.”

Officer John clasped his hands together and looked his brother in the eye when he spoke in a covert and clandestine way. They climbed down the ladder that led to the furnace room. “My dear brother, I realize that those accommodations for the coal stokers are grander than any you have seen for a lad such as yourself. However, there is no need to make do with the meager food and hard mattress bunks of a coal stoker. I can sneak you some more sumptuous

delights from the dinners of an officer. Also, I can get you some extra pillows and blankets to make your bunk more comfortable down in that dungeon that you will call sleeping quarters. Oh, and here is an extra life jacket to keep in your quarters in case this godforsaken arrogant Titan of a ship does force us all overboard. My, what the industrial revolution has done to our way of life. Steam powers everything. We live in the Victorian era under the reign of the Queen of England, Queen Victoria. The Queen Victoria encouraged running clean water, indoor plumbing, electric lights, and bathrooms. I imagine it won't be so bad to let women have the vote, and help make more decisions. A female queen has done so well with the use of power to change society, said the Officer John."

Kevin bit down on a delicious piece of bread and butter as he walked beside his officer brother toward the furnace room. Kevin spoke. You are right about the women getting their rights. Perhaps the Queen of England also encouraged women's suffrage and better working conditions for women and children in factories and mines. I don't mind having my wife tell me what to have for dinner or when to go to bed. So, I guess women would do just fine in government. It makes sense if you think of the politically conscious woman as a wise mother or grandmother. A woman can be a matriarch of sorts with sovereign ruling power and authority over the family. I am going to give you the life jacket because of that wild life you are known for. Remember when you jumped overboard to get a pretty girl's parasol when she dropped it in the ocean? I dare say you would jump overboard in this freezing cold water on such a huge ship. You did that on a tugboat as I can recall. The girl was on a small sailboat, and you were a crewman on a small tugboat passing by. What a spontaneous wild man you were in your younger years. I will give you this lifejacket as a joke because we know this ship is unsinkable, and as lucky as the Irish four-leaf clover! Oh, and have as many fancy breads and biscuits as you like. I've got loads of them in my quarters taken from the three meals a day that they serve the officers, said the young brother Officer John."

Kevin reached his destination in the very depths of the ship. He would start shoveling coal for the early morning shift in the first compartment of the ship near the front of the hull. The coal that he

was shoveling was a lower grade cheaper quality coal that was one of the few compromises of the extravagant ship. Because of the coal miners strikes, the White Star Line used a coal supplier whose coal is more likely to catch on fire even when it is piled up in the coal room. The cheaper alternative coal had different chemical properties that might create a threat of fires in the coal piles. The Stoker began to shovel the coal into the blazing hot furnace as he dried the sweat from his brow. His strong shoulders heaped loads and loads of coal into the furnace as the Titanic lifted its anchor and pulled away from Southampton. The spectators stood on the docks waving goodbye to their loved ones as the fabled ship of dreams prepared to enter the open ocean.

Robin had made her way to her opulently decorated cabin on the first-class deck of the Titanic. Robert had already settled in and gone down to the gentlemen's parlor to be amongst the lavish fine marble and wood paneled walls of gentry. Robin had not brought any servants with her. She would have to unpack something from her luggage on her own. Robin would have to find something appropriate to wear to a ladies' lunch in a tea room. She would have to find something fabulous. After all she was onboard the Titanic, the most affluent and glamorous steamship in the world!

Robin threw the powder into the blazing fire in her fireplace, to make the cabin glow with purple light. Gail soon appeared in the dazzling splendor of the Titanic. Gail spoke as Williamson walked into the sitting room of the cabin to allow the two women to be alone. "Well, you are a sight for sore eyes Robin. Just look at that dress that you bought in London. I see that it was made in a London factory. What a marvel of modern times. It fits you so well you can barely believe it wasn't made for you! I can recall the time during the Civil War when Abraham Lincoln asked the factories in Manchester England to stop buying cotton because the slaves picked it. Once the British factories stopped buying cotton picked in the Confederate South the factories shut down, and the clothing industry was on its knees. The factory looms stood still, as England waited for the American Civil War to end, said Gail."

Robin was still unpacking her many factory-made London dresses as she spoke. "Yes, that's what happens when greedy



businessmen don't want to pay taxes and tariffs to the federal government. They also do not want to pay their workers. Today I am going to have lunch with Margaret Brown! She is an activist of sorts. She is interested in social work and the welfare of women and children. Her husband owned a silver mine, and had workers under him. The cause of her great wealth was from mining, but she still was an advocate of workers' rights. I suppose she felt some kind of guilt for the source of her wealth. Her riches came from other poor peoples' misery and mistreatment. However, she was not as ruthless as the cotton plantation owners with their slaves who were not paid at all, said Robin."

Gail stood beside the fire as the lavender light illuminated a corona around her. "The term underground railroad was rumored to be an American ingenuity that would surpass anything in Europe. The British heard clandestine conversations about conductors on the underground railroad all during the Civil War. You and I both know that the underground railroad was not an actual railroad that was built underground in tunnels, but a network of safe houses and stations where slaves can escape to the North. Well in London, the term underground railroad now refers to the subway trains that are in tunnels underneath the streets. The same impoverished Irish works who labored for less to build the canals and this very ship, were used to build that underground railroad. Now the people ride trains beneath the street in London and New York followed suit! We shall ride the urban underground railroad subway when we return to New York, said Gail."

Robin held a long light blue dress up to her curvy female frame as she spoke to Gail. "Yes Gail, and be sure to take Williamson along with you on the subway underground railroad. The city is not so safe. I reckon I will get me one of those Ford automobiles when I get to New York. Or, should we wait to get back to California on the transcontinental railroad to buy an automobile. That way we can race the automobile at in the city of Corona California. The automobile will make carriages and subway transport extinct. I should think that women would be allowed to vote, if so many are driving and working like men, said Robin."

Gail smoothed her long dress and looked up at the violet flames in the fireplace. "Yes, I hope so. The Queen of England and other authorities throughout Europe had already demonstrated that women have a head for politics and authority. I can recall the haunting tales about the Tower of London, where all of the beheadings took place. I recall from the history books that Mary Queen of Scots had been beheaded there in the Tower of London. She was such a staunch Catholic that she wanted to execute anyone who would not convert. Oh, but according to the history books that King Henry VIII was the inventor of the Anglican faith. The Anglicans believe that the king was the sovereign ruler of England, and should be made the head of the church instead of the Italian Pope in the Vatican. King Henry wanted a divorce from his wife. He wanted an annulment or something. Of course, divorce was not allowed in the Catholic church. Annulments were only allowed if the marriage was never consummated in the honeymoon bed. Do you believe that crowds of people from the King's court used to come into the bedroom and watch the King consummate his marriage with the Queen as part of their tradition. The Queen of course would have to become pregnant. She would have to produce a healthy male heir to the throne. King Henry VIII had several of his wives beheaded. It was not the wives' fault that Henry could not have a son, but he did not see it that way. I heard about that Margaret Brown and how she got an acrimonious divorce from her rich silver miner husband. Modern divorce is not as bad as it used to be back in Henry VIII's era. We will be dining with Margaret Brown tonight at the dinner party, said Gail."

Robin smoothed her hands across the satin bed covering inside the Titanic first-class cabin as she spoke. "I was told that the Tower of London was indeed haunted. The Crown Jewels would be locked up there and guarded. Most people would not go near the Tower of London at night because of the wraiths, specters, and ghost spirits that live there, said Robin." Her voice seemed to laugh a little, because she knew that she would never be afraid of restless spirits, or revenants from the world of the undead.

Gail looked over at Williamson as she went to sit down next to him and talk about the gossip on the ship. "Williamson, have you met the engineer that designed the Titanic? He is onboard and dining

with the captain, said Gail as she stared into Williamson's eyes. Gail stared into Williamson's beloved face starstruck. While onboard the White Star Line steamship Gail felt as if she was under a lucky star. Williamson spoke as he put his arm around Gail. "We will attend a dinner party tonight. Mr. Andrews was the engineer that designed ship. Mr. Andrews will tell us all about it. The captain, called Captain Smith, will also share some seamen stories. Several of the Women of the Nightingale Society would be at the dinner party. The woman from London England, (the mistress of the manor would attend), as well as the woman from Rome Italy. Others that would attend would be the woman from Paris France, the woman from Athens Greece, and the woman from Berlin Germany.

The Titanic spread her wings and began to fly from the nest as she stretched forward across the Atlantic Ocean. Robin headed to the dinner party where she would meet up with her husband Robert who had been having cigars and brandy in the gentlemen's parlor all evening. The sun has already set upon the satin smooth black onyx ocean. The crystal-clear glassy horizon kissed the surface of the dark water as the ship glided through the starry night. Robin caught a glimpse of Robert leaving the crowded parlor as he walked toward her. The couple met at the entrance to the dinner party. Robert offered Robin his arm and they entered the room together. The guests at the table were all familiar except for two. There was a man from Japan, and a man from France dining with his French wife. The captain (Captain Smith) and design engineer of the Titanic (Mr. Andrews) were both present.

Robin and Robert were seated lovingly beside each other at the grand dinner table. The servants waited on the guest at the table bringing the first course, which was a light and scrumptious green salad with iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and cucumbers served alongside warm buttered rolls. Robin plunged her fork into the luscious greenery of lettuce and vegetables. She was carefully deciding how much to allow on her fork. Robin spoke to the woman from Paris France who was sitting beside her. "I can recall hearing about the great Eiffel Tower and the technological marvels in Paris. What an engineering masterpiece. There is so much famous architecture in Paris, said Robin. The crisps night air of the open

Atlantic made goosepimples rise on Robin's forearm like a foreboding foresight of fear.

The woman from Paris replied to Robin's comment. "Yes, of course the Eiffel Tower is an example of how the technology of the modern world combines with the treasured buildings of the past. The limestone and marble structures were made of stone like ancient megalith monuments to an era of grandeur. The age of the kings such as Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> ended with the French Revolution. A modern world could not allow such extravagance in the face of object poverty and superfluous suffering. The era of palaces like Versailles made reform a necessity. Reform could not be ignored by the majority of the French population who dwelled in misery. The infamous Marie Antoinette said, 'let them eat cake.' Marie unleashed an avalanche of malice from the masses because she was callous and careless. The Queen of France had descended from such a cold Austrian climate that she seemed to be cold-blooded and uncompassionate toward the pain of the peasants. She gave the people no pleasantries or even peanuts unfit for pigeons. The poor were scoffed at and made fun of in their time of dyer need, said the woman from Paris."

The woman they called Margaret Brown looked up from her plate as she decided to comment. "Well, I call myself a proponent of workers' rights. That means I am also an advocate for the poor. That Marie Antoinette was something of a feminist if she was a queen at all. I take it that she was very powerful and outspoken, to a fault. Heck, she got her head cut off under the guillotine in front of a crowd of jeering spectators. With wealth comes responsibility. Many a philanthropist has said that. I aim to help people, and especially women and children in peril, said Margaret Brown."

The woman from France had brought a guest with her to the dinner party. The other dinner party attendants would guess who was coming to dinner with them tonight. The woman from France introduced her guest and his wife as she spoke to the other dinners at the table. "This is Mr. Laroche and his wife Juliette of France. Mr. Laroche is an engineer that has decided to try his luck in America, said the woman from France. The engineer Laroche and his brunette wife were welcomed to the table as the second course arrived. Mrs. Laroche spoke in a thick French accent. "We are hoping to go to

Haiti where the French speaking populace will provide a familiar tongue and abundant employment for an engineer. My burgeoning belly tells the tale of an expectant mother. Hopefully, we will catch another ship to the Caribbean and then to Haiti once the Titanic ports in New York, said Mrs. Laroche.”

The second course was French onion soup and the third course entrée was Chicken Versailles served with a delectable sauce. The baguette of French bread was handled with care. The hands of the woman from Paris were covered in baguette cut diamonds. “Mr. Laroche, may I introduce you to Captain Smith. Captain Smith will be at the helm of the Titanic to take her to port in New York. Mr. Andrews was the man who designed the Titanic from blueprints that he imagined. Mr. Andrews took his imagination and made it into a reality for the White Star Line, said the woman from Paris.”

Mrs. Laroche spoke as her thin lips parted and her small round eyes blinked nervously. “My husband is a descendant of freed men just like the people of Haiti. The people of Haiti fought for their freedom from the French who enslaved them in the sugar and tobacco fields. The sugar barons were wealthy uncompassionate men. The sugar barons were just like the factory managers. The men of industry oppress the poor in America and Europe. The factory worker is a new form of slave that is disguised as an employee. The coal stokers on this ship are part of the ‘Black Gang’ of hardworking and underpaid people, said Mrs. Laroche.”

The woman from Paris France spoke about the king of France as if she had known him. “Well, King Louis 16<sup>th</sup> was still very old when he died. He was not beheaded like his predecessor King Louis 14<sup>th</sup> because he was not as arrogant with his displays of wealth. Although he lived at Versailles, King Louis 16<sup>th</sup> was not the man who prompted the uproar among the people of France. Then that Napoleon, well he and his Josephine eventually ruled like emperor and empress. Napoleon initially came to power under the pretense that he would get rid of kings, dictators, and emperors. Then, once Napoleon was in power, he changed his mind. The nerve of him to get drunk on the wine of power just like the hereditary kings that he fought so hard to dethrone, said the woman from Paris France.” She raised both eyebrows and batted her long dark eyelashes as she

spoke. "They didn't name me Paris for nothing. I aim to be the toast of the town when I return in my hot air balloon, said Paris." The woman from Paris was named Paris and believed her unisex name did give her the confidence and power to be ebullient and talkative.

The dinner guest seemed to be enthralled with the enchanting conversation. The woman from London was the mistress of the manor as she spoke. "I spend most of my days in the cloistered serenity of the English countryside. My first name is London, although I rather prefer the tranquility of the country house. They say the Tower of London is haunted with the ghosts of beheaded queens. King Henry VIII cut off the head of his wives if they did not give him a son. Well, Ms. Margaret Brown, I dare ask if you are doing well, now that you are separated from your dear husband? You had said that the divorce was so public and in the papers that the subject was fine fodder for dinner conversation. This is quite delicious Chicken Versailles. It tastes just like something I ate in Paris France. Some butcher did a good job making this tender cut of meat. Speaking of butchers, that Jack the Ripper was never found in London. That White Chapel area is not a swanky or posh part of town. I would not venture there myself. I tend to shop in Chelsea or some more reputable part of town. Just can't imagine the horror of women being cut up like pieces of poultry. The nerve of that murderer. He left letters for the police investigators to find. They still did not find who killed all of those women, said London, the mistress of the manor."

Margaret Brown swallowed her small bite of food and replied to London. "All right, my divorce was as public as a state fair. It was like some sort of spectator sport or media event. My husband is not with me on this trip back to the states, because we have separated. He did leave me the mansion in my name and a lifestyle that I was accustomed to. I do remember the news reports about those poor women slaughtered in White Chapel London. I am an outspoken woman when it comes to protecting women and children from mistreatment. Women are sometimes treated like chattel, barnyard animals or beasts of burden. A man could beat his wife as long as he did not use a stick thicker than his thumb (the rule of thumb). The law condoned the physical assault of women by their husbands!

Well, just as you said the King of England beheaded his wives if they displeased him. The world looked the other way, saying he had the right to do so. I say that if the victims of Jack the Ripper had been men of high status in society someone would have been blamed and punished for the murders, said Margaret Brown.”

London (the mistress of the manor) finished sipping her white wine from a crystal fluted glass before she spoke in response to Margaret Brown. “You’re right, the crime of murder is not as much of a crime when the victim is a woman, and the killer is most likely a man. Men are valued more in society, and given a license to kill or do their wicked will. The women that Jack the Ripper killed were considered prostitutes. Their crime of sin seemed to be a sort of punishment for the evil deeds that they did in the night. Many people in society seem to think that the women of the evening were asking for trouble. Therefore, got what they deserved. These murdered women were inviting men into their beds after dark. Some people even said that Jack the Ripper was ridding the world of sinful women. These sinful women died because they walked the streets at night looking for lustful lessons to learn, said London, the mistress of the manor.”

The woman they called London from England sipped white wine as she made another statement. “The clock tower called Big Ben had to be a man also. Of course, because it is the biggest cockiest erection in London! The traffic in London has to speed up going across London Bridge and the Thames River because London Bridge just might be falling down. That is why so many people now take the London Underground train. I tell you; I’d prefer to go around town in my Aston Martin or Rolls Royce than to go down into some dark hole to get around, said London, the mistress of the manor.”

The woman they call London continued her speech in a genteel British accent. “They call it the Victorian era when Queen Victoria was ruling England. Many revolutionary things happened during her reign. Not only do we have a woman like Queen Victoria to thank for the popularity of the diamond wedding engagement ring and the corset figure type with whittled waist. She also encouraged the use of electricity, indoor plumbing, the steam engine factories, and the industrial revolution. Her successor King George may have been shy

to speak, but popularized radio broadcasting. King George encouraged the use of the telephone as well as the automobile in England. Oh, and I simply adore the symmetrical yet perfectly square style of architecture during the Georgian Era. The architecture revived the use of Greco-Roman column entrances with great pediments above the door. My own Georgian style English country house has massive murals that are reminiscent of the Sistine Chapel in Italy, said London the mistress of a great manor.”

The woman from Athens Greece was named Athena, She had appeared at the meeting with the Women of the Nightingale Society. The woman from Greece came from Athens. Athena was accustomed to the sight of ancient ruins. Her name was evocative of the Greek mythological goddess of war, Athena. While dining on the Titanic Athena wore a golden dress that resembled the body armor that Athena wore into battle.

Athena spoke as she sipped red wine from a dainty glass. This white wine goes well with this Chicken Versailles. In Greece we have an ancient god called Dionysus, the god of wine and reveling. To worship such a god, one must become drunk. The goddess Athena is of course, the female war harbinger (warrior of all battlefields). Greece has drenched everything in Greek olive oil and olives. We simply love the slow roasted lamb and mint, that was meant for kings and wealthy businessmen. I suppose the new Trojan Horse is a Greek cargo ship carrying wine and loose women from Greece! The face that launched a thousand ships was that of the famous beauty Helen of Troy. The Achilles heel of many men is a brazen woman full of wine! The ancient Greek King Odysseus went on the Odyssey to fight the war. Odysseus took many years trying to get home. War can be so confusing for men to recuperate from, said the woman they call Athena.”

Molly Brown made a statement toward the woman from Greece that they called Athena as she pushed her sumptuous meal around her plate. “Yes, Greece is also famous for great ancient ruins and myths. My fame is similar, because my husband made a ruin of his silver mines, and our marriage when we got a divorce. I hope that there is enough pita bread to go around in Greece to feed all of those impoverished Greek workers. I am told that the Greeks are



great at shipping in large cargo ships. I am told there is still slavery at sea, said Margaret Brown.”

Robin nodded and dabbed her mouth with a napkin. Robin Nightingale decided to reply to Margaret Brown. “Well Margaret, we had our Civil War to free the slaves in the states. The British factories during the industrial revolution had an insatiable desire for cotton to make clothes. That cotton came from the labor of slaves held captive in the American South. The Southern plantation owners simply did not want to pay taxes to the federal government in Washington D.C. They decided to make their capitol in Richmond. The South made a lot of money capital to break away from the Union. Their president Robert E. Lee led the Confederacy to fire on Fort Sumpter. This act begun the onslaught of the Civil War. I reckon that darn war nearly sucked the life out of me, even though I lived through it! I remember when president Abraham Lincoln was shot. The newspapers were stained with blood on that day. My heart raced when I first heard the news of the assassination attempt at Ford’s theater. Then my spirits quickly sank to the depths of sorrow when I discovered that our president had died of his gunshot wounds. Some say if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. Critics believe Lincoln caused the Civil War, where so many men died. The consequences and punishment for causing war and death, was of course to die himself. That John Wilks Booth wanted to retaliate because the South lost the war. Booth was a Confederate soldier on the losing side of the war. John Wilks Booth, met his death as any murderer should, said Robin.”

The woman from Italy had yet to speak at the dinner party. Now the woman they call Roma had been born and raised in Rome Italy spoke with a thick Italian accent. “I can recall hearing stories about how the Romans used slaves to build the colosseum. The mighty circular structure was like what Americans would call a baseball stadium nowadays. They had gladiator battles there. I would guess they were inspired by goddesses like Athena. The emperor of the ancient Roman empire had been the mighty Julius Caesar. That British playwright Williams Shakespeare had written about Caesar. The same man that wrote about Julius Caesar also helped King James translate the Bible from Greek into English. They say, that no

god could sink this ship! That I don't believe. Most modern steamships eventually meet folly and fate. Fate proves to be fatal. It never fails. Though, I don't think our dazzling dear Titanic will sink for some time now. Oh, at least she won't sink until she is old and worn out from crossing the Atlantic so many times, said Roma from Rome."

Roma raised both dark eyebrows as she expressed her speech to the dinner party. "The food in Italy is filled with tomato marinara sauce, basil, garlic, parmesan, romano, and mozzarella cheese. We dine on spaghetti, ravioli, tortellini, and Neapolitan gelato. Oh, and like Greece we drown it all in wine! I will never wine or complain about such frivolity, said Roma from Rome."

Roma was finishing her food when she spoke again. "The Vatican is my favorite place to visit because we see the Swiss Guards, protecting the Pope, the cardinals, and the bishops in their long red silk robes. The De Medici family ruled shipping there in Italy. The De Medici family was bringing the world to Italy, and Italy to the world. I have been in the house of De Medici many times for dinner parties in Florence Italy. The Renaissance paintings from Leonardo Da Vinci captured the Last Supper. The Mona Lisa was a Lady of an Italian Villa that stared stoic into the face of eternity. The masquerade festivals crowd the canals of Venice. I have terrible luck with boats, I once sank on a gondola in a canal in Venice during a festival. Oh, but of course I was full of wine and spirits, perhaps from Dionysus, like Athena was saying earlier, said the woman they called Roma from Rome Italy."

Robin nodded as she listened; then she paused before she spoke. "The slaves that built the Greek and Roman structures were allowed more rights than the slaves held captive in the American South. My husband Robert and I were both abolitionists, before and after the Civil War. We helped many slaves escape, and gain freedom in New York and California. In fact, our son Robert Jr. believes in the same philosophy as we did during the war. Although, Robbie had never known the strife and suffering of warfare, said Robin"

Robert cleared his throat and took a sip of wine before he spoke. "So, you say you are an engineer Mr. Laroche. That intrigues me

because as an abolitionist, I recall hearing many speeches from anti-slavery leaders. I met Fredrick Douglas, and he talked about jobs for freed slaves in the North. Oh, then there was a conflict about what types of jobs the freedmen should strive for. Booker T. Washington was a man who advised the president of the United States about various topics. Well, that Booker T. Washington went right to the nation's capital of Washington D.C. and advised the leader of the free world. Booker said that descendants of slaves should pursue basic survival skills. Booker insisted that industrial trades should be learned instead of hard science and philosophy types of professions. That was a big debate at the time, and still is to this day. His colleague W.E.B. Dubois disagreed with the idea that freedmen should just learn to work with their hands, and do manual labor jobs such as carpentry, or welding. W.E.B. Dubois wanted freed slaves to get advanced degrees at universities to become PhD doctors and lawyers that would help run the business world, said Robert."

The French engineer nodded and looked toward Robert as he spoke with a thick French accent. "Yes, indeed, I did have a hard time find steady employment in France as an engineer. My wife and I are on our way to Haiti. We think Haiti is a free nation ruled by former slaves that received their independence from France. The population there in Haiti can speak French. We would feel more comfortable there, than in most places in America because French is not spoken by most people, said Laroche."

Margaret Brown seemed to look over at the Mr. Laroche as she spoke. "I speak French Masseur LaRoche. I have spoken on behalf of the workers in Haiti many times. Machines have replaced the manual labor of slavery with factory labor. Operating machines is almost more brutal than doing everything by hand. Many people became maimed in factories while using factory machines. Engineers work with their minds, and not with their hands. However, someone still has to do the manual labor to use the machines that engineers make. This marvelous ship is an example. Mr. Andrews has designed Titanic very well. There are coal workers shoveling coal into blazing hot furnaces deep in the belly of the Titanic. We sit here high above them, in the lap of luxury, said Margaret Brown."

The woman from Berlin Germany was named Mercedes. She spoke with a thick German accent as she placed her napkin in her lap. "The weather in Berlin is freezing in the winter. So, I am accustomed to the cold temperatures that one may experience while crossing the icy North Atlantic. I have brought some beer and bratwurst with me to remind me of home. I shall enjoy driving my Mercedes Maybach when it arrives with me in America. I am told that the Ford cars made in America are quite fast on the circular race tracks. I am going to the salt flats in Utah. My husband and I are automobile enthusiasts. We also distill beer and traditional German spirits that we intended to bring to New York to start a business there, said Mercedes."

Robin looked over her shoulder at Robert before Robert spoke. "Sir, I have been told that you are a businessman that works with Mitsubishi and the Russian railroad. I am told you are from Japan. I have interests in the railroad. I also have concerns about Russia. They call it Seaward's Folly. The joke is that someone made a business deal to buy the territory of Alaska, but so many people don't see the point. They say, Alaska is nothing but ice and snow. I say, Alaska is rather close to Russia. Alaska would be a good place to build a railroad connecting Europe with North America. They blasted through some mountains to make the transcontinental railroad, and to find gold. I bet there is some gold or something in Alaska also. I heard that they have explosions in Alaska besides blasting for mining. I heard there are volcanic eruptions and earthquakes like what we get in California, said Robert."

The Japanese businessman looked over at Robert as he replied in a serious voice. "Yes, that is a good idea. In Japan we have some tall mountains, Mt. Fuji. Sometimes mountains erupt. There is volcanic activity in Japan. The island of Japan has earthquakes, just like what they have over in the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire is the area of the Pacific Ocean that has volcanic activity. The mountains and topography of the land is constantly changing in Alaska, and in Russia. The change is because of the melting of ice as well as earthquakes, said the Japanese businessman."

The Japanese businessman looked around the dinner table. The businessman saw elegantly dressed women sitting next to their

gentlemen. At that moment, the gentleman from Japan thought of geisha girls at a teahouse sitting in silk kimonos. The vibrant colorful patterns of the silk kimonos would contrast beside the statesmen in suits escorting the geisha around town. The trains in Japan would be filled with all sorts of travelers including men in uniform as well as Samurai warriors in their traditional battle regalia complete with Samurai swords instead of guns. The Japanese businessman was beginning to get homesick. The Titanic sped closer to New York.

Roma from Italy raised both eyebrows and spoke. "It is said in the annals of history that the great Roman city of Pompeii was destroyed when a giant sleeping volcano erupted. The ash cloud started a thunderstorm there. The ash cloud blanketed the air with searing hot ash. Any person or object that was beneath that rain of hot ash was encased in a cement-like coffin. The victims of the Pompeii eruption were frozen in time for centuries. The ghosts of those who died at Pompeii still stand where they died the day of the eruption thousands of years later. Mother Nature is like a woman scorned. It seems that hell hath no fury like Mother Nature. She is a woman scorned or mistreated. This ship is a great lady of the sea. Titanic is like no other vessel, dare we scorn her or do anything to upset Mother Nature, said Roma from Rome Italy."

Robert was intrigued, and continued the conversation. "Speaking of natural disasters, there are also many cataclysms as well as conflagrations in California. There is a very dry part of California that catches on fire when there has not been any rain for a long time. Forest fires called wild fires burn across the Wild West. Recently, we were caught in a conflagration where the forest was an inferno of burning trees. The fire created clouds of ash that rose high into the sky. The clouds of hot burning ash mixed into the clouds. As a result, it started to rain. A wild fire thunderstorm began as a direct result of the plumes of smoke from the burning trees. This sort of thunderstorm can cause a flash flood. I am told that this sort of wild fire induced thunderstorm happens during a volcanic eruption because of the volcanic ash that is spewed into the clouds. Such natural phenomenon is unusual, said Robert"

John Jacob Astor was present at the dinner table. He was just finishing his glass of wine when he leaned forward to speak to

Robert. "I see we meet again Robert Nightingale. I had heard that your wife Robin had stayed at the Astor House as a residence for many years. You were said to be missing the night of the Great Fire of Chicago. Then I see you reappear like a ghost, at a luncheon at the Astor House. We talked about a deal involving your leather factory. I myself, used to be in the fur trapping industry, which was quite lucrative. However, I ventured out into other industries. I made investments. In fact, I was in Europe making investments in smaller European companies that I might acquire for my conglomerate, said John Jacob Astor."

Robert glanced over at Mr. Astor as he raised both eyebrows in reply. "I was told that you were interested in acquiring my leather factory in my absence. It is true, I was missing for some time after the Great Fire of Chicago. Now that I am firmly in control of my leather goods factory, I should like for you to be a business partner. I want to acquire government contracts. I hear that a war is brimming in Europe. There will be a need for leather to make combat boots, belts, gun bags, holsters and such leather goods for the soldiers. I would want to be ahead of the competition for those contracts before other leather factories should find out. Such things are normally spoken about in the confines of covert and furtive privacy just between the two of us. However, like a ghost, Mr. Astor, you have seemed to disappear every time I try to talk to you, said Robert."

John Jacob Astor nodded winked as he spoke in reply. "Well, it seems both of us have a ghostly reputation. I would indeed be interested in talking about your contracts in my cabin tomorrow morning. In fact, what you are suggesting is a partnership that I had just had in mind all along. I hope that none of you ladies have been too bored, or tired of hearing about our business endeavors. Let us all finish our wine and desert. Then, let's turn in for the evening, said John Jacob Astor."

Captain Smith sipped some tea as he enjoyed his dessert with the rest of the dinner party. The Captain of the Titanic seemed to be at ease as one of his officers was at the helm of the great ship while he sat and spoke to guests at the table. "Yes, we are experiencing some strange and unusual weather phenomenon on this very crossing. Normally there would be no icebergs still left floating in

large pieces in this part of the North Atlantic because of the warm flow of air. This year is different. We will head further South to avoid any icebergs that we call growlers. These are icebergs that are closer to the surface of the water, and hard to spot at night. The strange weather phenomenon has created cold enough water to prevent icebergs from breaking up as they normally would. Hopefully, the lucky four-leaf clover that was used to build this innovative ship will hopefully provide us with some luck, said the Captain Smith.”

Mr. Andrews sat up in his seat, and he spoke as he finished off his sweet dessert. “This ship is an engineering miracle of sorts. I dreamed her up in my sleep and brought her to life with sheer ingenuity and hard work! Right now, there are coal stokers in the belly of the ship shoveling coal to keep us cruising at 21 nautical nots (about 780 yards a minute) as we force ourselves forward to New York. We don’t want to be late or have a set back because of this strange cold weather event. At first, we thought heading further South would slow us down, but not if we keep up this pace. The media will want us to be on time when we arrive in New York. We will not be a day, an hour, or a minute too late! Not only is this ship the biggest, it is fast as well, said Mr. Andrews.”

The dinner party was soon dispersed as the elegant guest returned to their spacious first-class cabins to go to bed for the night. Robin and Robert walked arm in arm down the long corridor that led back to their cabin. When Robert and Robin entered the room Gail and Williamson were still sitting in front of the fire languishing in the lavender light corona. Gail stood up as Robin entered the room. Robert was so tired that he headed straight for the bed chambers. However, Robin lingered beside the fire staring into the hypnotic flickering of the purple flames. Robert spoke as he undressed and got into his pajamas. “I am turning in tonight, Robin. Come to bed when you are ready. I am certain that I will be asleep by the time you are ready to come to bed, but give me a kiss on the cheek anyways my love, said Robert.”

Meanwhile, the two brothers were hard at work in the hull of the Titanic. The impenetrable darkness of night encased the Titanic like a coffin that was about to be buried. The coal stokers were busy

shoveling coal into the furnaces in the front compartment of the Titanic, when suddenly a spark ignited in the thick coal dust laden air. That spark exploded into a fire that began to blaze like an inferno! The eruption of flames ripped through the first watertight compartment of the Titanic in the very front of the ship. The men scurried around trying desperately to put out the fire. The flames roared through the first compartment weakening the steel sides of the ship!

The older brother who was an officer ordered men to pour buckets of water onto the burning heaps of coal in the compartment. "Hurry now men, get those buckets of water to put out the fire! Come on not, put your backs into it! We can't let this fire spread to the rest of the coal in the other compartment. Seal the watertight door to the first compartment. Get my men out of there now! We have to save the rest of the ship even if a man may die, said Officer John."

The Officer had been the younger brother named John and the older brother was named Kevin. The older brother was the coal stoker and the younger brother was the officer. On this night the younger brother would risk his life to walk into the depths of the flames to pull his brother out of the first compartment before it was sealed. John ran down the corridor. John slid down the ladder that led to the deepest part of the hull of Titanic. He knew that his brother Kevin would soon be trapped in the first compartment. Kevin was in the coal room where the fire had taken place. He did not want to give the command that sealed his brother's fate. John yelled at the men sealing the watertight door. "Wait, open that door. Don't seal it yet. I have to access the damage to the first watertight compartment, said John the Officer."

The crewmember obeyed orders and opened door. They cranked the heavy metal door open using the brute strength of their weary bodies. They dapped the sweat from their coal covered foreheads. The men opened the half-closed door that they were just about to seal. The two crew men looked at the officer in shock and bewilderment as they obeyed his command. John could barely wait to look under the half-closed door as it reopened.

Inside was a smoky compartment filled with gasping and fatigued men. The coal piles were still smoldering with glowing embers. The



water was up to the mid-calf. John was a tall slender man with broad strong shoulders. He was dressed in his navy-blue uniform with brass buttons. The white shirt that was peaking from beneath his uniform was now covered in coal soot. John's face was smudged with coal as his large dark brown eyes were squinted to see in the smoky air of the compartment.

He spoke as he scanned the compartment for signs of his older brother Kevin. "Start the water pumps to get this water out of her fast! Get the engineers down here to inspect the damage to the hull. After the water is pumped out, we will need to seal this compartment and make do with the other five watertight compartments for the rest of the voyage. It seems we have contained the fire and put it out for good. Where are you, Kevin? Have you made it to safety? Get a head count of injured men reported to me immediately, said John."

Suddenly, Kevin emerged from the plumes of dusty smoke coughing. Kevin spoke and he leaned forward onto his knees gasping for breath. "Don't worry little brother, I'm here. We put out the fire. We will be using what wet coal was not burned up in the flames. Yep, this cheap coal will spark a fire faster than the more expensive kind that White Star Line usually uses. That darn, coal strike caused the company to use a cheaper variety of coal that is known to have coal dust fires. Anyhow, we still have enough coal to get Titanic to New York on time, said Kevin the coal stoker."

John removed his officer's hat to dap his brow with his sleeve while he spoke. "The engineer said that the walls inside the hull of the ship have been weakened, but the ship will be fine for the rest of the journey. The best way to get rid of burning coal is to shovel it into the furnaces as much as we can. We will run out of coal but we will increase the speed of the Titanic and get to New York faster. Kevin, you would be paid to shovel coal in the second watertight furnace room for the rest of the crossing to New York. However, you seem quite winded from fighting the fire. Take sick leave for the rest of the voyage until further notice, said John as he patted his brother on the back."

The other crewmembers and stokers grimaced.. They raised an eyebrow when they heard the orders. One of the other officers pulled John aside to speak to him. "You can't let your brother take time off

and sit on his own while the other men are working hard all night. You are showing favor to your brother and giving him preferential treatment, that makes you look soft on Kevin, said the superior officer.” John shrugged his shoulder and nodded as he spoke. “I realize that, but anyone would give all of the men that fought the fire the rest of the week off as a common courtesy, not just because he’s my brother, said John.”

John retreated from the burning coal piles in the furnace room of the hull and ascended the decks to the bird’s nest. In the bird’s nest two officers sat on iceberg night watch. John looked up at them to speak. “Has anyone seen Captain Smith tonight? It is awfully cold tonight, and I would hate to wake him. However, there is an urgent issue we must discuss, said John.” The two iceberg watch officers shrugged their shoulders and replied. “Captain Smith has turned in for the night. He has left the bridge for the evening. Oh, and Officer John, can you tell someone on the bridge that we need another pair of binoculars to look for icebergs? There have been several iceberg warnings tonight, said the two officers in the bird’s nest of the Titanic.”

Meanwhile down in the telegraph room the private messages were being sent out for the businessmen of the Titanic. Message after message arrived from the ship called the Californian warning of icebergs nearby. The ship Californian had decided not to proceed through the same waters as the Titanic because there were too many icebergs and it was too precarious to proceed! The Californian dropped anchor for the night. They decided to wait until morning to see the icebergs better. In the morning they could navigate past the icebergs in the daylight. Captain Smith had gone to bed. The Captain left the bridge to one of his officers. The Carpathia was several miles away receiving telegraph iceberg warning also.

Meanwhile, there was a gathering of men in a smoky room in New York. The gentleman was puffing a cigar. He was sipping brandy as he spoke about the Titanic. The gentleman was Richard the manager of the leather factory. “I suppose the White Star Line had no idea that the Labrador stream and the Jet Stream would be different this year causing large icebergs to stay afloat. It seems no matter where the Titanic sails, it will very likely encounter an iceberg

that is difficult to see. The size of the ship will make it hard to maneuver and navigate. Many messages have been sent to Captain Smith warning him to deviate from the original path planned for the crossing. Little does he know that instead of avoiding the iceberg field he is headed straight for it. We have informed all other ships in close vicinity to the Titanic to drop anchor for the night to avoid collision with the iceberg field. We have labelled Titanic a quarantined ship because of the outbreak of the coughing sickness onboard the Titanic. We cannot allow the coughing sickness to reach New York again. It would simply ravage the already plagued population. Plus, there are whispers of war coming in Europe. The leather factory will be primed to make government contracts to make combat boots for the soldiers, said Richard.”

Richard leaned back on the Chesterfield sofa. Richard sipped more brandy as the cigar smoke filled the air. The other gentlemen in the room were captains of industry and prominent businessmen. Richard continued to talk about the Titanic. “Several of our adversaries are onboard the Titanic. With all of the wealthy businessmen out of the way, we will be free to do as we please in our industries. Several of the wealthiest men in the world may very well die on the Titanic. These men were trust builders. They were greedy avaricious businessmen who were selfishly acquiring weaker companies. They were bankrupting businesses to make themselves ruthless millions. With men like John Jacob Astor dead, many of us can return to ruling the industries that we make our living at, said Richard.”

**Now was the hour of reckoning. The iceberg was beckoning. The sinking of the Titanic was beginning. There stars were shining, and the moon was setting. All of the gambling men were playing late night poker and betting. There was a curse on the Titanic. Fate was not forgetting. The first-class ladies were tucked securely in their linen bedding. The sheets would be a death shroud that the proud would wear to their wedding. A funeral instead of a marriage is what they were dreading. Titanic was regretting. The ship was thrusting forward toward the growler iceberg on a deadly heading. The Titanic hit the iceberg. The outcome would be upsetting.**

There were two crewmembers that were given the responsibility of looking for icebergs in the bird's nest perched high above the deck of the Titanic. The darkness of the night was pierced only by the faint twinkle of distant stars in the night sky. The silence of the night was suddenly ruptured with the words of impending doom when the crewman with the binoculars yelled. "Iceberg straight ahead!" Suddenly the bridge of the Titanic was stirred with the alarming news. The Officer that was at the helm of the ship had been taking the place of Captain Smith as he slept. The Officer yelled in reply. "Full stop and turn the rutter!" The Officer used every bit of strength in his body to turn the massive ships wheel. He tried to turn the rutter out of the way of the iceberg ahead. The Titanic had been going too fast to stop. The ship was too big to turn quickly! The Titanic turned. However, the side of the mighty ship scraped up against the iceberg causing immediate punctured holes in the side of the hull.

If the Titanic had hit the iceberg dead on the front of the ship would have been destroyed, but there would still be a possibility of life for the Titanic. It was the turn that truly destroyed the ship. It was a turn for the worst. Most of the passenger of the Titanic had turned in for the night. This was turning into being an epic disaster that would leave an indelible story in history. The ship had turned into a mass grave instead of a covert quarantined ship. The coughing sickness would go down with the ship. So many of the crewmen and the third-class passengers had the coughing sickness that the authorities almost did not want the Titanic to dock in New York Harbor!

The first people to feel the cold seawater flood the Titanic were the coal shovelers. They were in the furnace room in the first watertight compartment in the hull of the Titanic. When the holes ruptured in the sides of the ship the icy ocean water burst into the very front of the ship at the bow. The men that were stoking the furnaces with coal were suddenly knocked off their feet! The water knocked the men down like a boxer in a fight. The ocean had invaded the ship like an army of water. The sea had become like a mighty fist punching through the walls of the ship flooding each watertight compartment one by one.

When the water gushed into the first watertight compartment in the very front of the Titanic, John yelled as his voice exploded through the watery chaos. "Close the furnace doors stokers! Turn on the water pumps for the first compartment, said John as he gave orders as an Officer of the Titanic White Star line." The crewmen obeyed orders from the Officer and closed the furnace doors immediately as the water rushed into the compartment. The men who were not already drown in the sudden flood of water, ran to the watertight door. The survivors of the first onslaught survived at least for an instant more. The time was ticking away on the sinking of the Titanic! Time would run out for so many passengers. Time would stand still for others making an unforgettable memory in time and in their mind.

Kevin was one of the coal stokers who had been busy shoveling the burning piles of coal into the furnace to prevent the coal pile fire from spreading to the rest of the ship. Now Kevin was soaking wet, tired, confused, and short of breath. As Kevin leaned up against the wall, he was safe inside the third watertight compartment.

John called out looking for his brother, hoping that he had made it to safety. "Kevin, where are you? I have new orders from my superior officer, said John." Kevin made his way over to John exhausted and exasperated from escaping the freezing waters of the Atlantic Ocean flood in the first compartment. Kevin spoke as his voice while was still strong. "Are the men being ordered to continue stoking the furnaces? This ship has been damaged beyond repair. I can see that already without expert opinion, said Kevin."

John leaned over and spoke candidly with his brother Kevin. "We have been ordered to keep the furnace fires burning because the ship has struck an iceberg. The lifeboats are being lowered using the mechanical wench. We have to keep the electricity going for the telegraph and S.O.S signal for help. We also need the electricity so that the passengers can see where the lifeboats are. If the lights go out then the lifeboats will have to be lowered by hand. Doing by hand would take too long. If we do it with the electric wench then, most of the passengers would not have time to get off, said John."

Kevin was still panting and trying to catch his breath as he spoke. "The water that I almost drown in was freezing, bone chilling. Even

with a lifejacket on anyone in this temperature of water would quickly freeze to death! I've got my lifejacket on and you have yours on too. They will keep us afloat, but I know for certain that the Titanic does not have enough lifeboats for everyone onboard, brother. That is including you and I, said Kevin."

John cleared his throat with tears welling in his eyes. He tried to keep a stiff upper lip and stern stance as he spoke. "Yes, that may be a grim possibility. The rules of the sea say that women and children will board the lifeboats first. We are crewmembers. Therefore, we will board last, if at all. Brother we may have to go down with the ship or freeze to death floating in our lifejackets, said John."

Roma was the woman from Rome Italy. She had been at the meeting of the Women of the Nightingale Society. She had been searching for the cure for the coughing sickness. Now Roma was on the Titanic. Roma was awakened from her slumber in her first-class cabin. She spoke to one of the crewmen in the corridor with a sleepy sort of voice. "I felt a jolt. The ship seemed to shake and shudder. What was that sudden disruption? It woke me from my sleep, said Roma." The crewman handed her a lifejacket and tried to remain calm as he spoke. "The ship has hit an iceberg. You will need to put your lifejacket on and board a lifeboat as soon as possible ma'am, just as a precaution, said the Titanic crewman."

Roma had lived among the ruins of the great Roman empire that suddenly crumbled. Now she was going to see a great and mighty ship of myth and legend crump into ruin right before her very eyes. Roma pulled her night robe up around her neck. Roma shivered thinking about going out in the cold. Roma spoke as she looked down the hall to see what the other first-class women were doing. "I should go and put on my fur coat and boots. The weather seems very cold tonight, said Roma." The crewmember now seemed to look nervously down the corridor as he spoke. "Ma'am whatever you intend to do, you should do it quickly. You should then find your way to a lifeboat with your lifejacket on, said the crewman."

Roma hurried back to her room (mumbling to herself in Italian) as she searched her belonging for a warm coat and fur shawl. She grabbed her full-length wool coat with the fur collar. She but on her

warmest dress and ladies gloves. Then she searched for a hat that might keep her head and ears warm in the cold Atlantic Ocean air. Last of all Roma put on her lifejacket. As she was getting dressed, she grabbed her purse. Roma shoved as many jewels from her jewelry box as she could inside her bag. Roma took one last look at her lavish first-class cabin on the Titanic as she rushed out of the room. There was uncertainty in her voice as she spoke with tears of terror welling in her eyes. "Are you certain that this ship is sinking sir? It was supposed to be an unsinkable ship, said Roma." The crewman was looking all the more anxious as he replied. "I am just following orders. Captain Smith wants all of the women and children to board the lifeboats as a precaution. I think everything will be fine ma'am, said the crewman."

The crewman put both hands on her shoulders and escorted Roma down the hall toward the exit. Crowds of first-class women were gathering in the hallways going toward the exits. Soon Roma was on the deck of the Titanic where she had just danced and dined in luxury. Now, she was shivering in fear as the frigid night air penetrated her delicate female façade. There was a wench lowering the lifeboats down into the water operated by Titanic. Crewmen and officers were giving orders as the brass buttons of their navy-blue uniforms glistened in the dim light of night. Roma spoke to one of the officers with a frustrated and curious tone to her voice. "Why are there so few women in the lifeboat sir? Is it safe? Where will we go, once we are inside the lifeboat? The air is so cold we could very well freeze to death in those lifeboats, said Roma."

The Officer replied as he stayed focused on pushing passengers into the nearly empty lifeboat. "We are ordered to get the women and children into the lifeboats and abandon ship. The crewmen will row the lifeboats away from the Titanic; she is going down by the nose madam, sinking! The distress signal is being sent out. Flares are being fired. Another ship close to us will soon come looking for the lifeboats. You must board the lifeboat now, before it is too late, said the Officer." One of the crewmen then continue to guide Roma toward the lifeboat with a sense of alarm. Stubbornly, Roma stepped on the shaking lifeboat, and took her seat. She pulled her fur collar up around her neck as she felt the cold ocean air claw into her fragile

female frame. She felt as if she could shatter and break like ice if she dare allow herself to comprehend the full extent of what was now happening to her.

Athena, the woman from Athens Greece was now startled and scurrying about the hallways trying to find out what is going on. She was grabbing the arms of the first-class ladies as they rushed by her. She spoke to one of them in earnest. "What is going on? What was that sudden shaking of the ship? Where is everyone going? I see people with lifejackets on. I thought this was supposed to be the most unsinkable ship in the world, said Athena."

The crewman looked wide-eyed and nervous as he spoke. "Yes, it was said that the Titanic would be unsinkable, but madam, I assure you that we are indeed sinking. The ship has hit an iceberg and is going down by the nose. Please put on your lifejacket and go immediately to the lifeboats. The exit is this way ma'am. I have been ordered to direct all women and children to the exits, so that they may board the ship first, said the crewman."

Athena was suddenly filled with dread as the circumstances dizzied her head. **Her heart began to palpitate. Her blood began to race. Her legs were carrying her so fast toward the exit sign that she was exhausted from the pace. The look of terror completely filled her face. She had put on her lifejacket and clutched her suitcase.** Just a few hours ago Athena was sitting on a luxurious sofa wearing a bright emerald green dress. Now that dress was like the wilted leaves of a rose that had been frozen to death in cold night air. Athena was like that goddess of war as she fought through the crowds of women and children racing toward the exit. Athena was used to looking at ancient ruins, but she was unaccustomed to seeing the towering pillars of the White Star Line ship collapse right before her very eyes.

When Athena reached the deck of the Titanic, the cold chill of the night air took hold of her senses. She could taste the bitter blast of arctic Atlantic air in her mouth. She could inhale and exhale the cold clouds of breath from her own mouth as she panted in the darkness. The cold clawed at her skin like a predator hunting its prey. She would give in to the cold as she shivered in the dim light of the stars above. Soon Athena fought her way to the lifeboat.



At this point few women were willing to get inside of the cold wobbling lifeboat. The lifeboats were dark and desolate. They hovered above the Atlantic Ocean suspended with ropes. The boats were lowered down to the unknown depth of ocean water below. The women crowded around the lifeboats, but few of them wanted to get onboard. Athena parted the crowd and boarded the lifeboat. It jerked and jolted as it was lowered into the ocean. Tears streams from the strong face of Athena as she realized that she was going to be rowed out into the middle of the ocean, going nowhere.

Paris was the woman from France. She was elegantly dressed in her evening gown as she left her room. She had come from the dinner party with Captain Smith and Mr. Andrews only a few hours before the ship hit the iceberg. Paris had just begun to change out of her evening gown. She had been entertaining some gentlemen in her cabin for the night. Right at the time when she was ready to turn in, she felt the ship rock as it struck the iceberg. She stood in front of one of the crewmember who was carrying a lifejacket as she spoke. "I hear that the ship has struck an iceberg. I see the rumor is true. Is this a precaution or a drill? Do you want me to put on my lifejacket? I am rather cold. I will oblige you with wearing a lifejacket over my coat, said Paris."

The crewmember was wearing a lifejacket himself as he nodded and spoke to Paris. "Yes, please do put on your lifejacket and go to the deck to board a lifeboat immediately! The ship will indeed sink soon. It is my duty to get as many women and children off of this ship as I can. There will be a rescue ship coming to pick up everyone soon, said the crewman." He cleared his throat. He continued down the hall as he spoke to Paris. "If you have a lifejacket in your cabin please go and get it quickly. Your cabin might very well be underwater soon. Better yet, take this lifejacket now, and come with me toward the lifeboat right now, said the crewmember."

Paris was named after the capitol city of France. Paris had a lot of capital assets as a businesswoman and entrepreneur. Paris wore the most fashionable clothes and jewels among the Women of the Nightingale Society. On the night that the Titanic hit the iceberg, her huge diamond necklace and matching earrings resembled massive chunks of ice like a glacier or an iceberg. Her sapphire ocean blue

evening gown was beaded with pearls from the bottom of the sea. Anyone that would see her would think she had not a care in the world or anything to worry about because of her wealth. On this night, instead of drowning her cares in glasses of champagne, she stared out the glass windows of the Titanic, wondering if she would drown alone in the darkness.

Finally, Paris reached the deck of the Titanic. At this time there was cause for alarm because the ship was tilting forward as the front end of the ship was visibly sinking. Now the lifeboats were filling up rapidly. There was a frenzy of both men and women trying to get on the lifeboat. The first-class men were pushing toward the lifeboats frantically as if their lives depended on it. Paris was panting and pushing passionately passed the people. She reached the front of the crowd with help from crewmen who ushered her forward toward the lifeboat. She was leaving the gentlemen in her past behind her. The Officer spoke loudly. "The lady must board the lifeboat! No gentlemen please, at this time. There will be another lifeboat for the first-class men to board. We must all be brave and wait our turns politely gentlemen, now step aside for the ladies to board, said the Officer."

Mercedes was the woman from Berlin Germany. She had brought her car onboard the ship. She was going to drive in Corona California when she got to America. Now she was speeding toward the lifeboat on the tilting Titanic. Mercedes had to hold on to the railing on the deck to stand up. The nose of the Titanic was starting to go underwater, and tip the tail end of the ship up into the air. Now the panic was setting in. The passengers were scurrying like ants trying to stay above water. The second-class and third-class women were now flooding the decks rushing toward the lifeboats. Their clothes were saturated with cold ocean water from being below deck where the ship was already submerged in freezing dark water. The first-class women had been given priority earlier. Now, it was a free-for-all attempt to get on the dwindling amount of lifeboats still left on the Titanic.

Mercedes spoke to the crewman that she saw hurrying around wearing a life jacket. "Where do I go to get to the lifeboats? This ship really is sinking. I can't believe it! I have my lifejacket on. I will leave

my luggage in case there is not enough room for it on the lifeboat, said Mercedes.” The crewmember responded with both strength and fear in his anxious voice. It was John the Officer from the furnace room. “This way toward the lifeboat. There will hardly be room to breathe onboard, so you should leave your luggage and hurry, said John the Officer.”

Mercedes was used to the frigid cold weather of Berlin Germany near the polar ice caps and glaciers of northern Europe. She was not startled by the cold; she was frozen in time as the surreal shock of the sinking of an unsinkable ship was taking place. She let out a raspy cough as she thrust forward toward the lifeboats. It seems that she had picked up the coughing sickness while she was in Germany. She should have been in quarantine, except she thought that her remedies of teas and elixirs had cured her contagious cough. The cold of the German air was said to kill most germs, but the coughing sickness had been germinating in her all along.

With regret, Mercedes reached the lifeboat, clinging to dear life. She regretted that the lifeboat was so full of unsuspecting women, who might catch the coughing sickness from her as they drifted hopelessly into the dark abyss. The deep darkness of the night pierced her persona with depression. She was overwhelmed with a sadness that sank into the ocean. She watched the Titanic tipping its tall tail up into the night air. It would be a tall tale to tell about the night that Mercedes saw the sinking of the infamous Titanic. The lifeboat drifted away from the floundering ship as the crewmen rowed in unison out into the oblivion.

“I’m going out like a lady in my best dress. Do you want them to find you floating in the water wearing raggedy attire. I’m going to change into my evening gown with pearls, satin, and sparkles to drown in, said the first-class lady as she wrapped herself in her fur shawl.”

“Cut that rope that is binding the lifeboat to the ship, or the lifeboat will go down with the ship, said the crew officer.” The rope was attached to the Titanic preventing the lifeboat from floating freely into the water. The courageous crewmember lowered himself down beside the boat with a knife in his mouth. The crewman cut the rope freeing the lifeboat as the electricity shut off on the ship. The only

illumination was from the eerie light of the moon. The crewman had lowered himself down into the abyss of endless darkness to cut the rope, but it was too late. The last remaining lifeboat fell into the water upside-down as it plunged uncontrollably into the cold icy oblivion of the dark Atlantic Ocean.

The crew officers were still giving orders to maintain order. The last lifeboat was upside-down and needed to be flipped right-side up to hold the remaining crewmembers. For many minutes after the ship sank some of the crewmen stood on top of the upside-down lifeboat pushing survivors away as they tried to climb onto the lifeboat from the dark cold water.

Kevin was the man who had shoveled coal in the engine boiler room and put out the fire. Kevin was the coal stoker who had risked his life shoveling burning heaps of coal until the very end, to keep the lights and lifeboat winches working on the Titanic as it sank. The older brother of Officer John was now running for his life. He had made it to the deck, but the last lifeboat was now upside-down on the deck. The last few men of the crew were attempting to float on the capsizing lifeboat. The two crewmembers that were on iceberg watch had no extra pair of binoculars that night. If only they had seen the iceberg sooner, what a different story this would be to tell. The telegraph machine operator (who gave iceberg warning to the Captain) was now running along the deck toward one of the last lifeboats. Most of the passengers were locked below decks to die. There were only half the amount of lifeboats that were needed for everyone onboard. The crewmen that locked the third-class passengers below decks basically murdered thousands of people. The privileged few first-class guests got on the boats first then the crewmen.

The ship went further South and changed course to avoid the unseasonable icebergs. The crew of the Carpathia and California went to sleep. The Captain turned the ship to try and avoid the iceberg, but scraped the fire-damaged side of the ship. The iceberg cut perforated holes in the side of the ship and flooded five watertight compartments. If the ship had hit the iceberg straight on it may have only flooded the front watertight compartment and remained afloat longer if not all the way to New York. Now the survivors would find

their way to New York on the Carpathia ship, which was making its careful voyage toward the iceberg field of the Titanic.

The Japanese businessman was still wondering about on the decks of the ship looking for one of the lifeboats. Soon he found men boarding the lifeboat. He joined them. The Japanese businessman took out some stationery with the Titanic symbol on it. He started to write a first-hand account of the sinking of the Titanic in Japanese.

The woman they called London was from the countryside of London England. She was dressed in a powder blue silk dress and a wool coat. She was shoving a candy-coated cherries into her mouth as she savored the last instant of luxury onboard the Titanic. The candied cherries might very well be the last morsel of food she would get for a long time. London spoke to one of the ladies that was sitting beside her on the lifeboat. "I hope the rescue ship comes soon. I suspect we are being rowed out into the middle of the ocean toward the other ship that will take us to land, said London."

The shivering woman beside her was not a first-class lady. London had missed the boat that was filled with the first evacuation of first-class ladies. The woman on her left was a third-class lady wearing a wet seawater-soaked dress of tartan fabric. The woman on her right was none other than Juliette Laroche, the wife of the French engineer whom she had dined with at the dinner party only a few hours ago. Mr. and Mrs. Laroche had been the special guests of her friend called Paris. Mrs. Laroche replied in a thick French accent. "Yes, madam, I do believe these crewmen are rowing us away from the ship to prevent too many people from swamping the lifeboat and weighing us down. I had to leave my husband on the deck of the Titanic. He promised me that he would be on the next boat. I know now that there was no other boat waiting for him, said Juliette as tears filled her eyes."

Juliette held the hands of her children. One child was sitting on her lap shivering in the darkness. The other child was holding tight to her arm squeezing her hand. The other child was still inside her womb clinging to life. The lifeboat drifted further and further away from the Titanic, deeper and deeper into the darkness. The lights onboard the ship flickered on and off as it sank with the tail standing up in the air as tall as a skyscraper.

Robin and Robert were now waiting to board one of the last lifeboats together. Robin was dressed in a blue sheer nightgown that flowed like water as she ran toward the lifeboat. She had not had time to find her coat or her lifejacket. The officers grabbed her arm. They pulled her forward toward the lifeboat. It was John the Officer from the furnace room. He spoke as he scanned the deck looking for signs of his younger brother Kevin. "Come on, ladies first. You will have to part ways with your husband ma'am if you want to get on the lifeboat. We are only taking women and children now. There is another boat waiting for the men a little later on, said John the Officer."

Robert grabbed Robin's other arm and exclaimed. "Why don't you give us all a chance to live? We are fighting for our lives here! **Let go of my wife, said Robert.**" **He unsheathed a knife and threatened to take the crewman's life! The cowboy and risk-taker personality in Robert did not always do what was right when faced with turmoil and strife. The sinner that knows his actions are wrong is whipped with more stripes.**

Robert spoke to Robin as they were panting with exhaustion. Robert spoke as they came to a standstill in front of one of the last lifeboats. "Robin, I thought I had watched you die the night of the Great Fire of Chicago when your dress went up in flames. Now your dress flows like water as I imagine you floating to your death in the Atlantic. I will not watch you die again, when we have cheated death so many times together, said Robert." Robin's heart fluttered like the wings of a bird hovering between the heavens and earth. As she spoke her life's breath hovered in clouds of steam vapor. "We have escaped death together many times. I owe you my life. You saved me from the fire. We are like fire and ice. We are so opposite but so deadly. It is fatal to fall in love. I fell for you. I gave you my heart. If your heart stops beating, I will die. I don't want to live my life without you by my side, said Robin"

Robin took John's hand from around her arm to release herself from the officer's grasp. She looked into Robert's eyes with frozen tears rolling down her cheeks as she embraced him. Robin and Robert decided to stop trying to get on one of the lifeboats. They would stay together as husband and wife. Instead of pushing and

shoving to get on the lifeboats they retreated. Robert and Robin Nightingale went back to the grand stairway to stare at the chandelier and the fine woodwork as the Titanic sank. They held each other as tight as they could as the Titanic tipped higher and higher into the air, sinking further and further beneath the water.

Mr. Andrews, the design engineer of the Titanic, sped past them reluctantly getting onboard one of the last lifeboats left. John joined him. John spoke with certainty in his voice. "Never mind the rules of the sea, it's every man for himself! Come on get onboard the lifeboat. I would not sentence you to death like an executioner, said John the Officer."

**The screams of the frightened frayed the frigid air with fear. As the floating first-class women watched their eyes filled with tears of terror. Their fear did tear through the air. Some could not look. They turned away as the final sinking of the Titanic was too much to bear, not because they didn't care. The atmosphere was filled with despair. All they could do was stare. The Titanic ceased to be lit as a beacon in the night. They watched in horror as the only source of light vanished. The lights went out on the mighty ship. The Titanic disappeared beneath the surface of the water. The Titanic was taking Captain Smith and thousands of others with him to their watery grave on the crest of a wave. There would be no survivors left to save. If sorrow was a master many minions were its slave.**

Robin and Robert were sitting next to Gail and Williamson in front of the fireplace on the Titanic. The couple had decided to find some warmth as they held each other shivering in the cold Atlantic air. The purple corona aura surrounded them like a halo in the darkness. Soon there was no fireplace, no fire and no ice. There was no warmth and no cold. The couple drifted up into the clouds surrounded in lavender light as they looked down on the Titanic disappearing in the dark.

The survivors of the Titanic were picked up when the ship called the Carpathia rescued them. The lifeboats were pulled onboard the Carpathia. They unloaded all of their passengers. The Women of the Nightingale Society that got on the lifeboats survived and sailed to New York. All of them survived except for Robin Nightingale. Robin

succumbed to the cold water wrapped in the arms of her beloved Robert.

The news of the sinking of the Titanic was on the frontpage of every newspaper around the world. Relatives of those onboard the Titanic eagerly awaited the grim news about who the survivors had been. Robert Nightingale II and his wife Virginia had returned to New York from Europe safely. They went to the docks to look at the list of survivors with bated breath. One-by-one they read through the names of the living, but they did not find Robert and Robin Nightingale among them.

The coughing sickness had been rampant onboard the Carpathia, so much so, that the authorities did not want the ship to dock right way. The few that had the coughing sickness were forced to quarantine onboard the Carpathia until further notice. Virginia Nightingale still had the ingredients to one of her mother's cures for the coughing sickness. The young couple would head back to California with the curing elixirs to stop the coughing sickness, hopefully once and for all.

There were many more stories left to tell about the Nightingale family. Gail Nightingale, Williamson, Robin and Robert would hover in the violet corona that surrounded them. The ghosts wanted to be near their descendants to give advice and protection. Soon there would be another devastating plague. There would be a pandemic that would cripple the world in sickness. The Spanish flue would circumnavigate the globe leaving more mass graves than a battlefield. The harbingers of war echoed in the distance as World War I approached. There would be many more stories of life and death to tell.



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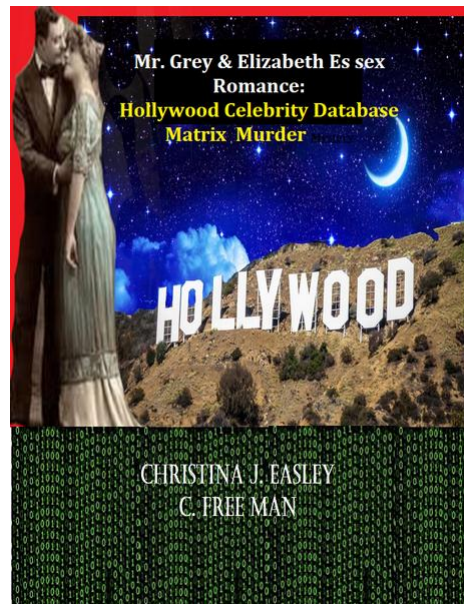
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