

Fight or Flee

Fight Fear

The Griegos

October 1638

San Juan de los Caballero, New Mexico

Jose Eduardo's heart skips a beat with what he sees.

"Mom, come quickly!"

Carolina runs to where her youngest son watches from a peephole in the wall. She sees two Indians coming down the hill leading to her property and quickly calculates that at their speed it won't be long before they get there.

From previous experience, Jose knows what to do, immediately following his grandmother and his two sisters down the stairs to the cellar. His mother follows them, closes the trapdoor behind her, maneuvers the rug from below to hide the entrance and climbs down, removing the stairs from the entry. Everyone assumes their assigned positions, as they have done so many times before. While it has always been terrifying for each of them whenever they have had to do this, from his mother's reaction, Jose Eduardo knows that this time the danger is more real than ever.

Earlier that day, at first light, his father Juan Herrera Jr., along with his two older brothers, Juan Antonio and Antonio Jose, went hunting, hoping to get a deer to provide them with some meat before the snow arrives for winter. The men often go hunting, but this time of year is their favorite as the bucks are distracted by the does during mating season, allowing get to their objective more easily.

Settlers in the area have become accustomed to being watched from a distance by native Indians, and although most of them are harmless, the Apache and Navajo have caused problems in the past for others in the area. Once, several years ago, a similar situation occurred to the Griegos. A lone Indian arrived to their home when the men were gone. He gained entry into their home, searched through their things, stole several objects and broke others. Fortunately, it was nothing worse than a bad scare.

Many have taken the precaution of hiding the women and children in the basement until the men return from their hunting expeditions, but being in such a small space for so long is uncomfortable, so they get out occasionally to stretch their legs, always aware of what is happening around them.



As their father requested, they remained in the basement for a full hour after his departure, making sure the Indians did not attack immediately, taking advantage of the men's absence shortly after their departure. When nothing had happened and an hour had passed, they came out of hiding, keeping the hatch open and remaining inside the house with the windows closed, on the lookout for any suspicious activity.

Now, back in position, under the floorboards in the cellar, and with the Indians getting closer, his mother opens a box where they keep various objects that can serve as weapons for such an occasion. She hands everyone something and moves to better her view of the opening above.

They remain silent. The only thing that can be heard is their breathing. Then, they hear when the Indians arrive at the house and try to gain entry through the front door. The mechanism they have to prevent the door from opening from the outside holds firm while they shake and push the door.

Jose can barely make out the features of his grandmother, mother, and two sisters in the light interspersed with the shadows of the boards upstairs. His grandmother, Maria, holds a large iron nail in each hand. She seems prepared to throw them with all her might, if necessary. His two sisters, María Inés and María Isabella, seem scared, but also prepared for battle, each armed with a piece of metal they use to work the land. His mother has a shovel and also has all her muscles tensed, ready to go into action. Though Jose is armed with a heavy metal stake as well, he is terrified and not sure if he'll have the strength to throw it if need be. His mother senses his fear and instinctively moves between him and the opening in the floor above them, brandishing the shovel firmly in her hands.

Although the front door held firm, the wooden shutters are no test for them, and before long they hear the footsteps of what appear to be two people above them. Each of them imagines what will happen if they discover the trapdoor that leads to the basement. From the sounds above them, they have no doubt that they will be discovered, as they hear the men throwing things, searching for valuables.

They hold their breath when the rug they use to hide the entrance is pulled aside, revealing the trapdoor. At first, the security bolt below holds firm from below and everyone continues to watch, knowing that at any moment the Indians could enter. They see how the bar they use to stoke the fire comes between the trapdoor and the floorboard. Jose Eduardo turns pale as he sees the door being forced and feels weak at the knees.

His mother, in particular, knows the danger they are in and all her muscles are tense, ready to do what's necessary. They maneuver the bar where the safety latch holds the door. They watch latch break and then see the trapdoor burst open; two wide-eyed Indians look down on their prey.

At that moment, his grandmother throws first one of her iron nails and then the other at the man closest to the entrance. The first one misses its mark, but the second one finds its target, hitting him in the forehead and knocking him backward away from the door.

The other Indian jumps down from above, landing on María Isabella, who hits him as best she can with the iron implement she has in her hands. Her mother swings the shovel with all her might, hitting him hard on the back of the neck and sending him to the ground at the feet of her mother-in-law. She takes several additional swings at him, hitting him on the head and back to make sure he doesn't get back up.

As the other Indian recovers from the blow to his forehead, he cautiously looks toward the basement and is greeted by additional objects being thrown at him, but this time he is ready for them and is able to dodge them without being hit. Carolina looks at him with the shovel over her head, ready to hit him if he tries to come down, and daring him to do so with fierceness in her expression. Although at first it seems like he will go down to try to save his friend, when he sees the damage that Carolina has caused to him with the shovel, he thinks twice about it, and walks away from the opening.

They listen to him rummage above them for several minutes, before hearing his footsteps move towards the door, unlocking the latch and leaving. They remain silent, their senses on alert, prepared for anything.

After hearing him leave, everyone looks at Carolina to see what they should do. She looks down and can't be sure if the man at their feet is still alive. He is face down and doesn't seem to move. Just in case he is still alive, or pretending to be dead, she takes a piece of rope and, after maneuvering his body to remove his arms from underneath him, ties them behind his back while the others stand alert for any movement. She stands up from tying his hands and looks more carefully at the back of his head and neck. Because of the amount of blood and damage she's done, she doesn't believe he could be alive, but she's not willing to take any risks, so she ties his legs as well.

She looks at each of her children and her mother-in-law and asks if they are okay. When they assure her that they are not hurt and that they are safe, her gaze drops once again to the man lying in front of them. Until now, her determination has been strong and rock solid to defend them from the present danger. But now, seeing that the worst seems to be over, a floodgate of emotions comes forth, bursting from within. She falls to her knees and begins to sob uncontrollably.

Jose Eduardo had never seen his mother so upset. He approaches her to console her, as do the rest of them. The silence is deafening to each of them in a different way. As for Jose, the images of what just happened keeps playing in his mind, rewinding in a constant loop, over and over again.

The Griegos	1638				
Generation	Name		Spouse		Children (year of birth)
I	Lucas *Lorenza	(1540 ~ 1614) *(1536 ~ 1620)	María Isabel de García *Pedro Herrera	(1542 ~ 1566) *(1528 ~ 1598)	*Juan(1564)
II	Juan	(1564 ~ 1628)	María Romero	(1576 ~ ~~~~)	*Juan II(1598), Sara(1601), José(1604)
III	Juan II	(1598 ~ ~~~~)	Carolina de Cantillana	(1602 ~ ~~~~)	Juan Antonio(1619), Antonio José(1620), María Ines(1624), María Isabella(1626), *José Eduardo(1629)

Flee Disaster

The McKees October 1638 County Antrim, Ireland

With the first light beginning bring color and life to the dark of the night, Liam moves in unison with four other men whose objective is to recover a mill recently taken by the English from the one of the areas most beloved families.

As they creep forward, they split up with three taking the center. Liam's best friend takes the right going upriver, while he goes left to approach from below. When he gets to the river, starts following it uphill toward the mill. He sees the flash of several muskets followed by their sound and instantly knows their position and their mission has been compromised. Things are not going as they planned.

They were told there was only one soldier protecting the mill at night, and that they saw him snoozing in the early morning several days ago. They didn't expect much resistance, thinking they would be able to sneak up on him easily and take control. Apparently, they were sadly mistaken. He takes refuge behind a tree which allows him to see down up the hill toward the mill. Suddenly, another round of fire comes from the mill.

After the sound subsides, he waits a moment and then whistles two times sharply, to see if he receives a reply from his companions. When he hears none, he immediately diverts his attention to the mill, where they are now aware of his presence. He realizes what he did was stupid, but had to know if he would get any response from his comrades.

They know where he is, and for all he knows, his friends are either dead or wounded. Without giving it much more thought, he tucks his pistol into his belt and runs quickly toward the river, leaping into its strong current which takes him downstream quickly. He once again hears the sound of the muskets, but this time their report is partially muffled by the water with his ears underwater, as he attempts to float down the river with just his mouth and nose above the waterline. He sees several splashes close by that miss him, but he knows it won't be long before they reload.

He makes his way to the other bank and scrambles up the other side, hearing the sound of danger in the air as they once again fire upon him, missing once again. He runs quickly for a thicket, getting lost in the underbrush and coming out on the other side through a patch of trees around a small stream leading to the larger river, now blocked from danger with the trees acting as a natural barrier to their weapons. He continues up the slope seeking higher ground. He comes to the crest of a small hill and carefully looks out over the trees below, to the other side of the river being careful to remain hidden.

With soft light on the horizon, he makes out the outlines of the two uniformed men who were chasing him. When he is convinced that they are going back to the mill rather than coming after him, he continues downriver until he is sure he is safe. He doesn't think they got a good look at him, but he doesn't want to take any chances, particularly walking around in wet clothes.

He wrings himself out as best he can and continues downstream. Though he knows he will have to cross the river at some point to make it back home, he wants to stay as far away from the mill as possible, so he passes his first several opportunities to cross to the other side.

After making sure there are no English soldiers in sight, he finally crosses and takes the long way home. When he eventually gets there, he is greeted by a full house. In addition to his wife, Hannah, his mother and father are there, as well as his brother, his sister, and all of their children, as well as his own. They see him walk through the door and run to him to give him a hug and make sure he's okay.

"We heard about what happened at the mill!" Hannah tells her husband as soon as sees him. They quickly determine he is uninjured and in one piece, leading him to sit down on the couch.

"What did happen?" Liam asks, when he sits down, unsure as to what really transpired. "All I know is that several men opened fire well before we were all prepared to attack. After they had fired two rounds of ammo, I didn't get any response from anyone, so I got out of there as quickly as I could."

He has kept to himself on the way home, talking no one, though he is relatively sure the news of what happened would have reached his family by now, since he took so long for him to get home.

“They didn’t have a chance,” his father, Samuel, tells him. “Three of the other four you were with were killed. Your friend, Edward, was taken by them.”

From the very beginning, Liam thought that attacking from the front posed too many risks, and it was for this exact reason he offered to take one of the flanks. He realizes that Edward didn’t have the advantage of the current of the river, which had helped him escape. He learns that his friend was shot at and wounded as he tried to get to the other side of the river. They caught up easily with him and took him prisoner.

Liam hangs his head, doing his best to withhold the deep sense of loss he feels. His mother and wife flank him, with the rest crowding around. They have all been worried about him since hearing the news earlier. When he regains his composure and his voice, he explains to them exactly how he was able to escape with his life and then about his relatively eventless trip back home. When he’s done explaining what happens, he asks to be alone with his father.

After they all leave, Samuel sits down beside his son, holding his exhausted body in his arms. His son now, with everyone else gone, lets his emotions flow from him. He is distraught with the loss of the men were with him, and concerned about his friend. His eyes flow forth tears of a terrible loss and are accompanied by sobs which ebb and flow through his body. His father is no stranger to the repercussions of war. He has experienced its effects for most of his life. He knows that more than words of advice or comfort, perhaps the best thing he can do right now is to simply be present for his son.

Their entire lives have been influenced by the power struggle with the English, so Samuel supposes this latest incident is just one more in a long string of tragedies which have taken so many lives and displaced so many people from one place to another for as long as he can remember. At the root of the problem is the Irish’s desire to live as they have for so many years, as opposed to succumbing to change brought with the English, along with their supposed progress and reformation.

Initially, English and Scottish settlers were primarily concentrated in the Plantations which England implemented to gain a foothold in the area. Now the English have crept into every nook and cranny of Ireland. Samuel and his family have always opposed the Crown, in favor of Irish liberty from their reach. Now, as he sees his son distraught with emotion and just barely escaping with his life, he wonders if they are doing the right thing.

After quite some time, Liam’s sobbing finally subsides; now punctuated only with infrequent tremors running through his body as recurring reminders of the pain he feels inside.

“Father, I feel like such a coward,” he says between sobs. “How could I possibly have just turned tail and run? I should have helped Edward to escape. Now he is a prisoner, and Lord knows what they will do to him.”

Samuel considers his son's words carefully before answering. He gently helps his son sit upright on the sofa and adjusts his own position so he can look squarely at his son, holding him at arm's length by the shoulders. His son's eyes are downcast.

"Son, look at me." Liam slowly raises his gaze to look at his father. "Don't kick yourself for what you did, son. You did what you had to do. I would have done the same thing in your situation, as would anyone. We have self-preservation programmed into us, that's what we do."

Samuel knows that his words now might have little meaning to his son and provide little consolation, but later on they may take on more meaning.

"We are conditioned to protect ourselves when we face danger, and to run if there is no other solution. That's all you did."

"I know father, but it still doesn't change the way I feel. How will I ever be able to be able to face those men's families? How will I ever be able to walk through town again with my head high, knowing I turned tail and ran?"

There is no quick fix for what his son is feeling right now, and Samuel realizes this. Yet he also senses what has happened might be some kind of message for all of them. While he is sad for the men who lost their lives and for their families, as well as being concerned for Liam's friend who was captured, he is grateful his son is safe.

"You did what you had to do, Liam. You had no other choice. The plan wasn't thought out properly and your information about the place was wrong. To attack like that with no cover other than a hope and a prayer that the mill would be protected by a solitary soldier who might be asleep was foolish. I'm sorry for your friends and their families, but you have no reason to blame yourself for what happened."

Liam is quiet, listening to his father, but not really hearing him. He can't get the thought of his friends, who have just lost their lives, out of his mind. He knows how easily he could have been one of those killed. They say nothing for several minutes.

"Son, I know this will likely weigh heavily on you for some time, and I don't want to tell you not to let it to do so. What I can tell you is that no amount of worry is going to change what happened or bring those men back."

"I know, father, but I had a feeling from the start that something wasn't quite right about how we planned to take the mill. I told them about my uneasiness, but they didn't listen to me. They just shrugged me off, telling it was going to be easy and not to worry about it."

"It's unfortunate what happened, son, there is no denying that. At the same time, you can't take the blame for what happened. You expressed your concerns and they didn't listen to you. What else could you have done?"

Samuel pauses. He knows his question is rhetorical. He can only imagine what his son is feeling, and he doesn't want to press him to talk about what happened. He knows there

is no easy solution. The conflict with English often seems so senseless, and perhaps this is the drop which finally causes the damn of emotions building inside of him for some time now to finally overflow. Though he has never expressed his doubts to anyone, he decides to do so now.

“Son, I’ve never told you this, but I am beginning to question our role in the battle with the English.”

Liam sits up now, suddenly paying more attention to his father, cocking his head to one side, looking at him with a questioning look.

“Yes, I know this sounds strange coming from me, Liam,” his father explains, “but it’s something I’ve been thinking a lot about lately.”

With his son saying nothing to his confession, Samuel lets his own emotions, which have been aching to get out, take temporary control of him, surprising not only his son, but himself as well. With tears welling up in his eyes, he says:

“Son, you know about all the battles I’ve fought and everything I’ve done to oppose the English. What I have never told you is about my questions and my doubts.”

Liam can’t believe what he is hearing. He has never heard anything from his father but abhorrence of the English and staunch support for Ireland to retain its independence from the Crown.

“You have doubts, father?” Liam asks, his jaw dropping with disbelief over what he’s hearing.

“Yes, son, I do.”

Samuel takes a deep breath, sitting back into the sofa, staring out blankly into the living room, continuing to let flow his thought and emotion:

“Ever since losing our land, there has been an aching feeling in the back of my mind which has been telling me that maybe we should stop fighting and just go along with what the English want, including their religion. I’ve just been too stubborn to pay attention to it.”

“But you have always fought back at every step of the way, father, and isn’t it our faith in our religion which has brought us this far?”

“Yes, you are right, son, but now I wonder about how much it has cost us over the years. You know that economically we struggle, our opportunities are limited and, as a family, we seem to be getting nowhere fast. Maybe I’ve been wrong all along to oppose them and their ways.”

Liam can never remember his father expressing anything resembling doubt on any level, so hearing his father’s words come as a shock.

“Son, we often like to think we have all the answers in the world, but the older I get, I find that more important than the answers we have to life’s queries, are the questions we ask of its wonders.” He pauses momentarily, looks at his son and says with a sigh, “With the questions I’ve been asking myself recently, I’m not liking the answers I’m getting.”

The McKees	1638				
Generation	Name		Spouse		Children (year of birth)
I	Hugh	(1560 ~ 1598)	Mary MacDonnell	(1564 ~ ~~~~)	John(1582), Sarah(1583), Andrew(1585), *Samuel(1588)
II	Samuel	(1588 ~ ~~~~)	Lydia McVie	(1590 ~ ~~~~)	Samuel II(1606), Ruth(1607), *William(1610)
III	Liam	(1610 ~ ~~~~)	Hannah Kelly	(1612 ~ ~~~~)	William II(1630), *Alexander(1632), Lydia(1633), Edith(1635), Hannah Elizabeth(1636), James(1638)