

Footprints

1598 ~ 1784

Rob McBride



1598: The Beginning of the End

The Beginning

The End

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The Beginning

The Griegos

February 1598

Santa Barbara, New Spain

With the first light of day, from the darkness of night, Santa Barbara slowly begins to show signs of life. The sound of the first movement of people is intermingled with the sounds of nature, also coming alive from its slumber.

Juan opens his eyes and rubs them, instinctively looking out the window to determine the time. The moonlight makes it hard to determine, but the sounds of a new day are familiar. He takes a deep breath, folds his hands before him and bows



slightly before them, silently thanking God for another day of life. He wonders whether to roll over and sleep a little more or not. He knows today is a busy day, and while he'd love to stay in bed, he knows he should probably get up. He stretches his arms above him and at the same time points his toes down as far as he can, feeling the life start to return to his body that is still asleep, even though his mind is already awake. He rubs his hands together in front of him and performs a methodical massage, beginning with the tips of each finger, then moving down his wrists, and to the rest of his arms.

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He chuckles to himself, thinking of how his grandmother had taught him to “bring his skin alive” every morning, as she liked to call it. It's still a habit for him after all these years. Sometimes he would stop after having massaged his arms and she would chide him, telling him he had to do it from head to toe to wake up properly. Not doing so, according to her, could bode ill for the day. Considering the importance of all he has to do today, and as if obeying his grandmother's wishes, he continues the process, slowly massaging his feet, legs, torso and finally ending up to the top of his head. He messes up his hair when he's done, just as she used to do to him, to finish the process.

He turns to his side and looks at his beautiful wife. At first, he can barely make out the outline of her face as his eyes adjust to the light. As he watches her, the moonlight shines through the window. A few days ago, it was full and now waning, but still bright. It illuminates her body up to her neck. Instead of getting up immediately, he remains there, watching her while she sleeps. Then something magical happens. As the moon moves, he sees the light move very slowly down her neck and then up to her chin. He is hypnotized over the next few minutes as the light rises up to her mouth and nose, finally illuminating her entire body.

As he looks at her, he thinks about their life together. He can't believe how his life has changed since meeting her. Although it seems like a lifetime, it has only been a little over a year since they met at the harvest day celebration. He smiles, thinking of the first time he saw her. As far as he was concerned, she was the prettiest girl at the ball. He at first felt intimidated by her beauty. Although Juan had been with a few women throughout his life, for some reason or another there was never a special feeling with any of them. The longest relationship he had before hadn't even last a year. He always found something wrong with each of them, or on the contrary, they found his flaws. Somehow, he felt things could be different with this her. He really couldn't explain why, it was just a feeling he had at the time.

Maria was fairly new to town and, as such, she had many suitors who invited her to dance. Meanwhile, Juan stayed behind the scenes, observing and analyzing her reaction to each of those who approached her, seeking her attention. She was cordial, but evasive, rebuffing everyone who approached. The next day, as if he were on a mission from God, Juan set out to learn everything

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he possibly could about her. Where she came from, her favorite color, what she liked and what she didn't like. Only after having all that information, he approached her and asked if he could be her suitor. She looked at him as if he were crazy. He told her what he had done and detailed everything he knew about her. He even showed her the information he had collected. She laughed seeing what he had done and accepted his proposal. The rest is history.

They got married a little over a year ago. Juan considers everything that has happened since then. Certainly, there have been challenges and not everything has been rosy, but despite a few bumps along the way, here they are together, ready to embark on another adventure in life. During the past year, in addition to getting married, they moved from Zacatecas, to Santa Barbara. The promise of abundant work and the possibility of claiming land in the north brought them here several months ago, along with many others, but so far, the expedition has not started.

Apparently today is the day they are finally going to get going, but they have already heard that same tune sung several times since their arrival, with no resulting rhythm to accompany it and rendering it nothing more than noise. Juan has doubts about if, and when, it will ever happen. They've been getting similar calls to action over the past few weeks, only to be canceled for one reason or another.

Juan is not going to get bothered about it one way or the other. If it happens today, as promised, they've got their things as ready as possible and can be up and running in no time. If not, they will continue to wait, there is no other option. In any case, Maria is very pregnant and, although the midwife says she can travel, the last thing Juan wants is for her baby to have to arrive someplace open to the elements and in some hostile environment. So, he's in no rush to get going. Regardless of whether or not the convoy ever starts, there has been no shortage of work or things to do since they arrived.

At this moment, nothing seems more important than seeing his lovely wife now fully moonlit, motionless, except for her torso, which slowly moving in and out with each breath. He takes her hands in his and brings them to his mouth, kissing them softly. She opens her eyes, sees him, and smiles. Then, due to the moonlight in her eyes, she squints to get a better look at him, as she comes to her senses.

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They say that a woman's complexion and appearance improve when she is pregnant. This has been the case with his Maria, she looks bright and beautiful. He kisses her forehead and starts to get out of bed. Before he can do so, she takes one of his hands in hers and stops him, pulling him back towards her. She places his hand on her belly so he can feel the baby move.

As he feels the hardened skin on her belly, he closes her eyes, as if this will somehow help him feel the baby better. She moves his hand slightly and suddenly he feels the baby move. He smiles broadly. From the first moment they felt the baby moving inside of her belly, they have been fascinated by the magical process taking place.

“He's been moving around a lot all night. I think he's ready to go,” she tells Juan, raising an eyebrow as she does so.

“What makes you think it will be a boy? Maybe it will be a beautiful girl, like his mother.”

“Just call it maternal intuition!”

Her pleasant smile suddenly changes to a wince. He takes both of her hands in his and asks if she's okay, seeing the pain in her expression. Although this is their first baby, many have told them what to expect from the process. Based on what they know, and how she's been feeling, the time might be drawing near.

“Yes, I'm fine,” she replies, when the worst of the pain is gone. She doesn't want to alarm her husband, especially with the possibility of the convoy leaving today weighing on his thoughts, but she feels the time is coming. She releases herself from his hands and rolls over to her side of the bed keeping her hands on her belly. She puts her feet on the floor and stands up. Immediately, she feels a gush of liquid gush from between her legs, which can only mean one thing. She turns around and she sees Juan on the other side of the bed, bent over, putting on his shoes, oblivious to what just happened.

“Honey, when you get dressed, I think it would be a good idea for you to go find Petra,” she says to Juan, as if she were asking him to go buy bread on the corner.

When Juan realizes what has happened, he bumps into everything in his path and almost falls several times, before

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making his way out the door of the place they are renting. He quickly arrives at a neighbor's house. He knocks on the door and a matronly woman in her late fifty's answers. No explanation is needed from Juan, his face says everything she needs to know, and in a short time the two of them are back with Maria. Petra is calm and collected as she watches Maria before saying anything. At first, Maria doesn't see them, nor does she hear them enter. Her eyes are closed and her agony is evident. Juan approaches her and sits on the bed next to her. Only then does his wife realize that they have returned.

“Thank you for coming, Petra,” she manages to say when she sees her, despite her pain.

The older woman smiles and approaches Maria, paying close attention to everything she says about the night before and what she's feeling now. Petra assimilates all the information and afterward, tells Juan that the time of delivery is indeed approaching and instructs him as to what they will need. He takes a careful mental note of everything she says, then repeats it back to her to make sure. Then, he's out the door again, as quick as he can.

Once outside, he realizes that he needs to go to a couple of different places, so he needs to formulate his plan of attack. Satisfied he has found the correct order of what needs to be done, he hurries turns on his heels and goes first to notify his mother and father about what is happening and, in turn, also to find out if they have any of the items Petra has requested

They are living just around the corner in another house, also rented, so he arrives quickly. He knocks several times and when he doesn't hear a response, he tests the door, pushing it to see if it is locked from the inside. When it opens, he enters first with only his head, announcing his arrival, so as not to frighten them.

His aunt comes out of their one bedroom, and Juan walks in to greet her. He asks for her blessing, which she gives it to him. He gently takes her shoulders and places a kiss on each of her cheeks. Since before Juan can remember, he has always asked both his mother and his father for their blessing every time he sees them, or leaves them. Although technically they are his aunt and uncle, to him they will always be his parents.

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“How is my father?”

She tells him that he's been sleeping better but he's still not at one hundred percent of his capacity. She notices Juan is somewhat agitated, so she asks him if everything is okay. Juan explains what is happening with Maria and what they need for the delivery. From what Petra has asked for, they can provide several sheets and a pillow.

Juan asks her to go to her house as quickly as she cans to be there in case Petra needs help with anything. Just as Juan is about to leave, his uncle Pedro comes out of the bedroom, still buttoning his shirt.

“What's all the fuss about here?”

“Blessings, father,” Juan says automatically.

“God bless you, son,” he replies. They greet each other with Juan giving him a kiss on each cheek, as is his custom, and a brief hug.

“Maria's water broke. Petra is with her now. She has asked me to get several things.”

“I'm going over there now,” Lorenza tells her husband.

“Well, wait a minute, what about me? I want to go too,” Pedro says, feeling excluded from the process.

“If you want, come when you're ready, but I want to go right now,” Lorenza replies, intent on leaving right away and not wanting to wait any longer for her husband to get ready.

As he sees that Lorenza is not going to wait for him, he looks towards Juan to see what he says.

“Don't worry father. I know you haven't been feeling well. You don't have to go.”

“Are you kidding, Juan? I wouldn't miss this for the world. Give me a couple of minutes and I'll go with you,” Pedro tells him.

I prefer that you take your time, father. When you're ready, go straight there. To save time, I'll go for the other things we need and we'll meet at my house. Is that okay?”

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Pedro nods as Juan and Lorenza leave, both going in different directions once they are out in the street.

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Both Pedro and Lorenza would do anything for Juan. He grew up believing that he was their natural child. It wasn't until a few years ago that his biological father, Lucas Griego, Lorenza's younger brother, accidentally told Juan one night in a drunken stupor that he was the Juan's father. They had both had a lot to drink and although Lucas did not remember what he had said, Juan remembered everything. The next day Juan confronted Pedro and Lorenza, to find out if what Lucas said was true. They shamefully admitted it was. They were actually his aunt and uncle, not his biological parents.

The truth of the matter is that they never wanted to pretend to be Juan's mother and father forever. When Juan was still very young, Lucas was one of the first to embark on an adventure across the ocean, to New Spain, leaving Juan with his sister and her husband. His intention was to seek a better life for all of them, and with the idea that Juan would reunite with him after they were established. When the time came for Lorenza and Pedro to make the journey, to follow in Lucas's footsteps, the only way they could take Juan with them was as their natural son. Passenger regulations were very strict at the time and, except for extenuating circumstances, and with the approval of the corresponding authorities, minors could only accompany their parents on the trips made abroad to Spanish colonies.

Pedro and Lorenza went to see a man in Madrid, to see if there was any way to take Juan with them. He told them that he could get the papers they needed to take him with them as their son. They didn't ask too many questions about the legality of what the man was going to do because they sensed it was not through official channels. The result is they obtained the document they needed for travel. Overnight, Juan Antonio Griego, son of Lucas Griego and Maria Isabel de García; became Juan Antonio Herrera, the "legitimate" son of Pedro Herrera and Lorenza Griego de Herrera. Things have stayed that way since. Initially, they had thought of changing his last name back to Griego, once they got settled, as well as return him to Lucas, but things didn't happen that way.

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When the three of them arrived to where Lucas was living in Zacatecas at the time, in the new world, he was not stable at all, neither in terms of work or housing. So, Juan continued to live with Pedro and Lorenza as their son. Lucas never paid much attention to Juan as he was growing up, nor did he express any interest in taking care of him even occasionally, let alone full-time. For Lucas, it was much easier to let his sister and his brother-in-law continue to take care of Juan. Also, apparently his sister had a knack for mothering, and since they never had children of their own, it seemed to make sense not to rock the boat.

Growing up, Juan had always felt an affinity for his “uncle” Lucas, as he referred to his biological father, but since he was rarely around, that never caused a problem, nor did it make him question his ancestry. Although Lucas could be a decent uncle from time to time, as a father he was lousy all the time. He was more likely to drink, chase women, and gamble than to want to take on any kind of responsibility for Juan. The reality is that Juan is probably lucky with how everything worked out.

Pedro often had to cover for Lucas at work, every time he came in drunk, late, or didn't show up at all. Pedro put up with him for a number of reasons, none of which had to do with him being an ideal partner in his blacksmithing business. His brother-in-law, Lucas, could wield a hammer and set things in his place with the best of them, when he was sober. Unfortunately for everyone, this was not very often. But even with his flaws, Lucas was family, and Pedro had been taught that, above all else, family had to come first. So, he generally put up with his brother-in-law's antics.

The day Juan discovered the truth about Lucas, Juan disappeared and didn't return for several months. He never spoke of where he went or what he did during that period of time, but everyone understood that he had gone through a time of deep reflection. When he returned, he forgave Pedro and Lorenza for leaving as he did, telling them he was grateful for everything they had done for him over the years. Furthermore, he told them that no matter who his biological mother and father were, in Juan's mind, they would always be his only parents. His feelings for Lucas, on the other hand, only turned more bitter with time.

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Juan told them that instead of working with “two fathers,” he preferred to stop working with them altogether. He moved to a rented room on his own, found a partner who already had all the tools of the trade, and began competing with Pedro and Lucas for business. Nevertheless, Juan visited Pedro and Lorenza frequently, and without fail on Sundays after church. If Lucas was there, Juan acted as if he wasn't, completely ignoring him. In fact, since Juan found out that Lucas was his father and not his uncle, Juan had not spoken to him once, despite several attempts by Lucas to strike up a conversation.

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When Juan has everything, he returns to the place where they have been staying since they arrived in Santa Barbara. Like many of the places available for short term renters, it is very basic. Where Pedro and Lorenza are staying, there is a separate bedroom and a common area. Where Juan and Maria are living is a single room with a curtain in the middle separating the room in two, one where they sleep and the other where there are two chairs, a small table and a makeshift kitchen in the corner.

Juan and his uncle sit at the table talking, while Petra and Lorenza take care of Maria on the other side of the divide. Every now and then they hear evidence of her discomfort. Judging by the frequency of the howls, the baby could be born at any time. Juan gets up and begins to pace back and forth in the small space.

He stops, looks at his uncle with a questioning expression on his face and asks, “With everything else that is happening, I forgot to ask you about the launch of the convoy. Have you heard anything? If I'm not mistaken, the start time was about half an hour ago.”

“Believe it or not, it's on the move. I talked to some people on the way here and it seems that this time, it's finally going to go.”

“I don't think Maria and I have any choice but to wait until the baby is born to leave.”

“Nothing is more important right now than what's happening in there,” Pedro says, indicating the other side of the curtain with his chin, just as another piercing scream fills the space. The curtain doesn't do anything to muffle the sound and they can hear every scream, moan, and whisper.

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Lucas expresses his concern for Maria, and hearing him, Lorenza comes out from behind the curtain. Her expression tells them right away she is cross with them. Seeing her expression, Juan immediately sits back down and neither of them says a word, instead, staring back at her, like scolded children.

“It could still be some time before the baby is born. Why don't you go for a walk, a run, or go jump in the river? But do something! You're not doing anything useful sitting there like two toads croaking on a log.

Suddenly, Juan has a flashback from when he was maybe five or six years old. He clearly remembers sitting in his living room, very bored and fighting with his best friend. His aunt appeared in a doorway, with exactly the same tone of voice and body posture, telling them exactly the same thing. As has become his custom over the years, Juan responds, “But if we do that, who will keep you company?”

“Get out of here, both of you, now! I don't want to see either of you around here. Do something, anything, but away from here.”

They leave and once on the street decide to go see how the movement of the convoy is going at the village square, from where it is supposed to leave. As they walk the few blocks to get there, they see groups of people in different stages of preparation to join the convoy and/or witness this event which has brought many people to this small town, previously existing only to support the silver mines. Since the news came that there would be a new expedition by Don Juan de Oñate to the north, along with the promise of work on the road and land when they got there, many have flocked to the town, changing its character dramatically.

Some are already packed and, on their way, while others are in the process of packing and getting things settled. Tearful eyes peek through half-open doors. Many of the women with their children will stay behind until they are sure that its safe. The morning dawned clear, without a single cloud in the sky, but now thin, wispy clouds appear on the horizon, fading the blue of the sky to white.

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When they are convinced that the convoy is, in fact, on the move, they head up the hill and walk just outside of town to where a small spring provides water and creates a small oasis in the otherwise arid setting. They sit on a small bench and gaze out at the city below them bustling with activity and movement.

“Son, I was thinking of something.”

“Tell me, father.”

“Don't you think it's time for you to make peace with Lucas?”

Pedro never refers to Lucas as Juan's father, but rather by his first name, as Juan asked him and Lorenza to do after learning the truth about his ancestry. Juan is silent, looking at his clasped hands, his thumbs moving in circles around each other, something he does when he's nervous.

Juan doesn't say anything.

“As you know my health hasn't been very good,” Pedro tells him. “Although your mother and I would love to accompany you on this trip, I don't think it's going to be possible, so we'll return to Zacatecas, to our home there until I regain my health.”

Juan hoped his aunt and uncle would join them on the trip, but he also knows that the trip is going to be arduous, and particularly difficult for Pedro, if he goes. The caravan has no defined destination and his father's health has been delicate the last several months.

“Lucas is going with his apprentice, Mateo,” says Pedro. “Since we won't be going, he will be the only family you have during the trip, as well as when you arrive.” He is quiet momentarily, and then adds, “And you know, Juan, how I feel about the importance of family.”

“Family? Lucas, my family? That's a joke!” replies Juan, annoyed and raising his voice.

Pedro knows that he shouldn't put too much pressure on Juan, but he also knows that this may be the last chance he has to express what he wants to say. He is silent for a moment, collecting his thoughts, before continuing:

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"I know you don't think much of Lucas, and as far as I'm concerned, I'm your father and you're my son. But with that being said, it's likely that from here on out he'll be all you've got."

Juan looks at his uncle, who is the only father he has known since he was a child. With exasperation in his voice, he says, "I know I should forgive him. I know the reasons why he abandoned me. I know that we all make mistakes, and the good Lord knows that I have prayed to try to forgive him. I just haven't been able to do it, father."

"I'm just trying to do what's right, and in the end, what's best for you. You know that, don't you, Juan?" Pedro says, pleading with Juan to see reason.

"Yes, it's just that there's something deep inside of me that makes me so angry, and I don't know why I can't get over this feeling that I have. Both you and my mother have explained to me that what was done was a matter of necessity and not convenience. However, there's something about him leaving me that I just haven't been able to understand. Every time I think about him, or talk about him, as we are doing now, my blood boils, it's hard to express what I feel."

"May I make a suggestion, Juan?"

"You don't have to, Father," he replies, already having an idea of what he's going to say.

"Well then, son, do it, go talk to him. You know that's the first step, there is no other. Also, you don't have to go as 'his son'; think instead of him as your uncle, as a friend, or simply as an acquaintance. It doesn't matter what role you want to play, but do it!" Pedro lets the words permeate into Juan's consciousness, before continuing. "We all make mistakes and we all have flaws, but we all also have good attributes, as does Lucas. You just have to take time to get to know them and to find them. There is something even more important—"

"What's that, father?"

"If it wasn't for him, you wouldn't even be alive; and we certainly wouldn't all be here right now, here in Santa Barbara. He was the one who took the first big step to emigrate. Despite

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everything you may feel for him, try to remember it took a lot of courage for him to pave the way for all of us.”

Juan has heard these same words, and these same arguments, in his own thoughts over the years. He has played this same story, as well as others like it, in his mind hundreds of times since first learning Lucas was his blood father, but until now he has never really understood the sacrifice Lucas made to be the first in the family to take the risks necessary to give them all a better life. Before, he had always come to the same conclusion: Lucas was a drunk, a womanizer, and good for nothing. Not only that, but what has hurt Juan the most is that Lucas left him in the arms of his aunt and uncle without a second thought, leaving them to care for him.

“You never know what awaits you around the corner and it's important that you have someone to count on, Juan.”

“Father, do you really think that I can count on Lucas, if I need him?”

Pedro considers the question carefully, knowing Juan has been disappointed by Lucas before, and not wanting for it to happen again.

“Yes, son, you can count on him,” Pedro declares, with certainty in his voice. “Lucas may have self-control issues, but never doubt his love for you. He has told me time and again how sorry he is that he can't have a relationship with you, and you know he's tried to make amends.”

Juan has to give that to Lucas. He has tried on many occasions to make peace with Juan, but the latter has not responded and instead has shut Lucas out of life. To Lucas' credit, he has taken it in stride, showing himself imperturbable despite his desire to communicate with his biological son.

“There's something else, John.”

“What's that, father?”

“Don't you think he deserves to know that you're about to become a father and that he's about to become a grandfather, or a great-uncle, or whatever you want to call him?”

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Pedro and Juan arrive to where Lucas and his apprentice, Mateo, have been doing business since they arrived in Santa Barbara. They are busy loading their last trunks to their wagon. When Lucas sees them, he immediately stops what he's doing and walks over to them.

“Good morning, brother,” he says to Pedro, giving him a brief hug and a kiss on the cheek, as is their custom.

Lucas is pleasantly surprised to see Juan with Pedro, but he isn't sure what to say or what to do. He starts to speak and then stops. He looks at Juan, detailing his features. He can't help but be amazed at their similarity in appearance. Seeing them together on the street, anyone would say that they are father and son. Juan has the same build, olive complexion, curly hair, and hazel eyes as Lucas. In fact, Juan has also considered their similarities. Both Pedro and Lorenza have much lighter skin. From looking at him, Juan has no doubt that Lucas is his biological father, he just wishes it weren't so.

What bothers Juan the most is perhaps not that Lucas has abandoned him for the reasons everyone knows, but that after having the opportunity to be with him, Lucas chose not to be around as he was growing up. Juan arrived with Pedro and Lorenza to Zacatecas, where Lucas had settled, when Juan was four years old. Couldn't Lucas have at least tried to spend a little more time with his son? The first memories Juan has of Lucas are almost all the same: drunk and being stupid. There are two types of drunks. Some get happy and go-lucky; while others become impertinent and quarrelsome. Lucas is one of the latter who is unpleasant to be around when he had too much liquor. Fortunately, he now appears to be sober.

Pedro sees Lucas's discomfort, so he decides to help him out. “As I told you the other day, Lorenza and I are not going north. We had originally planned to do so, but I don't think I can make the trip. I prefer to return to Zacatecas for now, then hopefully join you when you get settled, and I feel better.”

Lucas remains silent, patiently listening to what his brother-in-law has to say.

“For me, family has always been instilled as the most important thing any of us can have in life.” Pedro stops and an

example comes to mind that he hopes might help them mend their relationship. "My grandfather used to tell me that friends come and go like leaves on a tree, but family is the tree!" Pedro looks first to Juan, then to Lucas, and then back again at Juan, to see if his words are reaching him. "I have taken these words to heart over the years and they have brought us to where we are today. God knows we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, Lucas."

Pedro approaches Lucas and puts an arm around his shoulders. Juan observes the two men and knows that he, in some way, is a combination of them. One has been his father, present in every sense of the word; and the other has been a miserable father, absent most of the time.

"Lucas, you are like my brother," Pedro says. "As I just said, I will forever be grateful to you for opening the way for us to come to New Spain, but more importantly, for giving us the privilege of loving Juan and allowing us to raise him as our son."

With his free arm, Pedro motions for Juan to come closer, which he does. Pedro brings them both as close, hugging them with all his might, and his way uniting Lucas with his biological father. Even so, there is still a gap between them, which will have to be closed in its own time and Pedro understands this.

"I don't know how you two are going to solve this matter, and it's really not for me to say how you should do it, but for the good of both of you, and the whole family, you have to do it! Family is too important to let anything get in the way. Also, Lucas, I think there's something you should know."

Lucas remains immobile, hanging on every word and aware of every gesture, both from Juan and from Pedro.

"Do you want to tell him, Juan, or should I?"

Lucas and Pedro turn their attention to Juan, both wondering if he will finally break his silence with Lucas. Juan looks down, shuffles his feet momentarily, and takes a deep breath to gather courage.

"You are going to be a grandfather," Juan tells Lucas, looking up at him as he does.

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Lucas's expression changes in an instant from one of curious concern to one of utter delight and happiness. His smile goes from ear to ear. He lets go of Pedro and takes Juan by both shoulders, looking him square in the eye.

"I've never told you this, but I think you should know, Juan," Lucas's eyes are moist and his voice shakes with emotion as he speaks, "you are the best thing that ever came from me."

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While Mateo continues putting the finishing touches on the ropes that secure everything in the wagon, they all enter the place where Lucas and Mateo have been residing and doing business for the last few months. The only thing left in the space now is a large table with four chairs, which were there when they rented it.

"I'd offer you something to drink, but we've already put out the fire and packed everything," Lucas says, apologetically as they sit down.

"It doesn't matter Lucas, we have to go back to Juan's house soon anyway, to see how things are going with Maria, but I was talking to Juan about you and he agreed to come to talk before going back."

Lucas sits up straighter in his chair, fidgeting, not sure again what to say again, or if he should say anything at all. Although it seems that Juan should be the more nervous of the two in this meeting, it is quite the opposite. Seeing this helps Juan to calm down and collect his thoughts before speaking:

"I know I've been hard on you over the years, Lucas, and it's very hard for me to think of you as my father, but I haven't been able to get over the thought that you abandoned me without a second thought."

When Juan finishes speaking, Lucas stares at his hands which lay on the table in front of him, as he thinks about what he can possibly say to make things better and wondering if anything he says will make any difference at all. He takes a deep breath to make sure Juan has finished speaking. When Juan doesn't say anything, Lucas looks up.

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“I know that I have not been a good father and the truth is that I have been absent from you for much of my life. In addition, I don't think I have done anything to earn your respect. My life has been a disaster, and although I have my own excuses for why my life has turned out as it has, in the end, I am the only one responsible.

Although the outside world is buzzing with activity, right now the only thing that matters to these three is this moment. Pedro and Juan listen attentively now to Lucas. They are both sure that he has probably thought a lot about what he would like to tell Juan, and now he finally has the chance to do it.

“I don't expect you to forgive me, Juan, but I do hope that one day you'll understand what I did. What I can tell you for sure is that the second happiest day of my life was when you were born, and the first happiest was when I met your mother, and this led to you.”

“I don't think I know anything about her,” Juan replies, looking at Lucas and Pedro on the other side of the table, “what was she like?”

Lucas takes another deep breath, looks up at the ceiling, and closes his eyes now as he exhales. A serene smile spreads across his face and his entire expression relaxes with the memory. “She was the most wonderful person you can imagine. She was pretty, smart and very witty. She always had something to say that hit the nail right on the head, regardless of the situation.”

“What happened to her?” Juan asks.

Lucas exchanges a brief glance with Pedro.

“Let's just say that she died under very unfortunate circumstances that continue to haunt me to this day,” Lucas says, falling silent briefly before continuing. “I don't think this is the time to go into details, but I promise, when the time is right, and if you want to know, I can tell you whatever you like about her, or about your life before I left you with my sister, Lorenza, and Pedro,” Lucas responds, as he turns and grabs his brother-in-law briefly around the shoulders as he mentions his name.

At first, Juan is about to insist on knowing more about his biological mother but he sees that Pedro's expression indicates it

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would be better to talk about it on another day. So, he says nothing.

“I will always be in debt to Pedro and Lorenza for taking care of you, Juan. It hurts—” Lucas chokes with emotion and for a moment he can't say anything. Eventually, he clears his throat, and when he does speak, his voice shakes with the strange sensation he feels inside. “I guess what I'm trying to tell you, and it pains me to admit it, but I have no doubt you have been much better off with them as parents than you would have been with me. So, I think everything worked out in the end. I feel like our biggest mistake was not being more forthcoming with you about how you came into the world. For you to find out the truth while I was in one of my drunken stupors, was not the right way. My biggest regret in life has been losing my relationship with you.”

Tears now stream down Lucas's face as he speaks. He moves his seat closer to the table, extends his hands over Juan's, taking them in his, before continuing:

“Thank you for coming to see me, Juan. It means more to me than you can ever imagine and I will do my best not to ever disappoint you again.”

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After talking with Mateo, they decide that it would be best for him to go ahead and start the journey alone. Lucas takes one of the horses to catch up with his partner later, after Juan and Maria's baby is born. Since there will likely be work to be done as everyone gets going, Mateo can take care of things as the carriages are carts are being tested to the limit for their loads as the journey begins. This will give Lucas some time to spend with his family.

As they approach Juan's house, they can hear Maria's screams. When they enter, Lorenza hears them. She peeks out from behind the curtain that separates the room in two, finding it strange to see Lucas with them, but says nothing. Instead, she looks at her husband, who gives her a conspiratorial smile, a wink, and a slight nod. Seeing this, it is obvious to Juan that they have talked about reuniting him with Lucas before, though he has previously imagined this to be the case.

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Lorenza tells them that the arrival of the baby is near and instructs them to wait without making too much noise. As if agreed on beforehand, Pedro, Lucas, and Juan look at the two chairs and then at each other, realizing they can't all sit down.

“Age before beauty,” Juan says, indicating with a slight bow to his elders to take the chairs. Besides, I'm too nervous to sit down now.

After Pedro and Lucas sit, no one says anything for a while. They are still, listening to the sounds behind the curtain. After a time, which seems like forever but is really only a minute or two, Juan looks at the two men who have the right to call themselves his father.

“What can you tell me about my mother and when I was born?” Juan asks, his voice low, so as not to disturb the process on the other side of the curtain. “Now I realize that I don't know the story of how I was born. My birth has always been somewhat of a mystery to me.”

Pedro looks at Lucas as if to determine who should tell the story, since they were both there at the time. Lucas indicates that he wants to be the one to tell him, so Pedro sits back and listens. Lucas shifts slightly to face Juan, sitting up straighter in his chair as he does so.

“Well, I guess now is as good a time as any to tell you a little more about your mother. It's been too long already,” admits Lucas.

Juan stops pacing up and down and looks at Lucas with his arms crossed, standing in front of him, anxious to hear for the first time about someone he thought he knew but now finds he doesn't.

“She was a beautiful woman and, to tell the truth, very similar to your own Maria in appearance and stature. She was also called Maria, but we all called her Marisa, since her middle name was Isabel.”

“How did you meet?” Juan asks, curiosity evident in his voice.

“That is a good question. I haven't thought about it in a long time, but I remember it very well. My father always supported the

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church in everything they did. We also helped on Sundays, as well as on other special occasions, to prepare the service.

“A new family had just moved into town, so in that sense my story is similar to yours. The first Sunday they were there, she came to church with her husband and her five children, three girls and two boys. Marisa was the oldest of them. At that time, I was about twenty years old. Marisa's mother was very religious and she immediately approached the church offering to help in any way she could. The lady who normally taught catechism was sick, so they asked her if she could fill in, which she was happy to do. From there we met and started to get to know each other.”

As Lucas talks, Juan's mind travels through time. He accumulates information like a sponge, thirsty for information about his past that has always been unclear and picturing in all Lucas tells him. He drops his arms from their crossed position.

“I guess that means,” Juan says, “that I must have some uncles and aunts out there that I don't know about.”

Lucas looks at Pedro and then back at Juan before answering:

“Well, yes and no, Juan. You technically have two aunts and two uncles on that side of your family, but the truth is, it's been so long since I've seen them, or been in communication with them, that I probably wouldn't even recognize them if I saw them on the street.”

Juan has more questions, but he decides to let Lucas continue with his story, so he just nods.

“When I saw Marisa for the first time at church, it was love at first sight, at least on my part. Although it wasn't until two years later that we got married, I knew from the first moment I saw her I wanted to get to know her better. I was already working with Pedro in his business and we had worked out a plan for me to become a full partner with him, although at that time he was running the business and I just did what he told me to do.

“About a year after we got married, Marisa got pregnant, but she lost the baby when she was three months pregnant. Otherwise, you would have had an older brother or sister. We never found out if it was a boy or a girl. A short time later, she became pregnant again, this time with you.”

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“Where did you live when I was born, also in Siero, in the old country?” Juan asks. “I understand that we all lived there before coming to New Spain.”

“Yes, that's correct, Juan,” Lucas confirms. “Our family has been from that area for a long time. I think you might know that both your grandfather and your great-grandfather were bakers and very well known in the area.”

“I know you worked with my father, or should I say my uncle?” Juan is momentarily exasperated with the confusion. “Now, I don't even know what to call either of you.”

“Just call me Lucas, I don't want to try to take Pedro's place as your father and much less, Lorenza as your mother. As far as I'm concerned, they are the ones who raised you and deserve to be called your mother and father.”

“I know, but it's strange now that I have both in front of me, now with this new knowledge,” Juan admits. Then getting back on the subject, asks, “I believe you worked with my father since you were young, as I recall.”

“Yes, Juan, that's correct. With my father's approval I started working with Pedro shortly after he and my sister Lorenza got married, which was in—”

Seeing that Lucas is having difficulties with dates, Pedro steps in to help. “I was 24 when I got married and Lorenza was 16, so it must have been around 1552.”

“That seems right to me,” Lucas says. “If I remember correctly, I was 12 or 13 years old at the time.”

Juan hangs on to Lucas's every word, learning for the first time about his true beginnings in the world and more about his birth parents. Momentarily lost where he was in his story, Lucas collects his thoughts again, and then continues:

“Marisa's pregnancy with you went smoothly. We were both very excited for you to come into the world, and when you did arrive—” Lucas pauses, his eyes moisten and his voice trembles with the emotion of what he feels inside, with the memory of the moment. “As I told you just a little bit ago, Juan. You are the best



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that has come from me. It was an amazing feeling when I was finally able to hold you in my arms.”

“Were you there also, father?” Juan asks Pedro.

“From your very first breath, we were both there; your mother and me. I guess that’s one of the reasons why it’s been so easy for us to take care of you as if you were our own child because, in a way, you have been.”

Juan rubs his chin pensively, looks first at Pedro and then at Lucas. He is about to say something, when suddenly the loudest scream they’ve heard so far comes from the other side of the curtain. They become quiet and listen. The next thing they hear is a baby crying.

All of their facial expressions change from deep thoughtfulness to pure joy and happiness. Pedro and Lucas, who have been sitting, stand and spontaneously the three of them come together, embracing one another with their emotion of the moment bringing them together.

Lucas feels like he’s somehow in a dream. He has thought about making peace with his Juan and has tried over the years without success. At times, he imagined coming together again with Juan, and what the moment might be like if Juan accepted his apology. He never in his wildest imagination thought it could be as it is, right here, right now, becoming a grandfather and a father again at the same time. He hugs Pedro and Juan with all his strength, thanking Pedro for reuniting him with Juan, while congratulating his regained son on his new baby.

While they are in the midst of their celebration, Lorenza emerges from the other side of the curtain with the baby wrapped in a blanket in her arms.

“It’s a boy!”

She approaches Juan and offers him the baby, instructing him to take his son into his arms. At first, Juan is hesitant and unsure what to do.

“I don’t remember ever having carried a baby, I don’t know how to do it,” he says.

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“It's easy, Juan, just pretend it's a small sack of potatoes and you'll do fine,” Lorenza tells him, smiling as she steps forward, placing the baby in his father's arms.

Juan takes the baby tentatively at first and then pulls it close to his chest, hugging and snuggling his son. The emotion on Juan's face is evident. His expression is a mixture of gratitude, joy and fear. He turns his head towards the sky and closes his eyes as tears of joy run down his cheeks. Silently, he thanks God for his baby, then suddenly opens his eyes and asks Lorenza if his wife is okay. When she confirms that Maria is fine, he falls once again back into his state of bliss, his eyes closed and his face raised toward the heavens.

Juan opens his eyes and begins to see every small detail in his son's face. He becomes choked up with the emotion of having him in his arms. When he is able to regain his voice, he looks up, seeing Pedro, Lorenza and Lucas standing before him all hugging one another.

“I think I know what his name should be,” Juan says, his expression firm with resolution.

“Tell us, son, what do you think it should be?” Lorenza asks.

“Well, first in honor of you, mother, and second in honor of my ‘two fathers’, and third because I think he looks like me, his name should be: Juan Griego Herrera II.”The End

## The End

### The McKees

August, 1598

County Antrim, Ireland

Samuel looks out the window toward the path leading up to their house, waiting anxiously for his father's arrival. Word has already come he was injured in battle, and that they are making their way back with him. So far, they don't know the extent of his injuries, but all are worried sick. The atmosphere is tense. His mother, Mary, is crying in one corner. She is being consoled by John and Anne Kelly, who have been neighbors for as long as

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Samuel can remember. His older sister and brothers also do their best to make their mother feel better, though little they do seems to help. Others who live nearby and others from town, are gathered outside. Standing in the portico is a doctor, who has been summoned. All are in anticipation of Captain Hugh McKee's arrival.

Though it is late in the day and the sun has just set, there is still enough light for Samuel to see as they make the rise on the horizon. He is out the door in a heartbeat, running toward the wagon where his father lays covered with blankets. Samuel jumps on the wagon as it's moving and is helped up by one of the two men on board. Samuel kneels next to his father, whose eyes are closed. At first glance, except for a pained look on his dirtied face, there are no other visual signs of anything out of the ordinary. He is much paler than usual, but other than that looks fairly normal. Looking to the soldier perched on the on the other side of the wagon sitting on the sideboard, whom he recognizes as being a friend of his father's, he gives him a questioning look, unsure of what his father's injuries might be. A brief glance to his father's legs by the man indicates the location his injury.

"His leg's got pretty torn up in the battle, son," the man says. He reaches over and places a hand on Samuel's shoulder, squeezing it gently as he speaks. With a grim tone in his voice, he adds, "They had to cut 'er off just above da knee on the way here. I'm afraid, he's lost a lot of blood."

Samuel pulls the blanket down from up around his father's chin to find his hands. They are crossed over his chest as he sways back and forth gently with the movement of the wagon, as it passes over the uneven ground. Grabbing his father's hands in his own, he feels them cool to his touch. He leans down, gives his father a kiss on the forehead, and whispers, "Papa, please don't die, we need you." Tears stream down over Samuel's cheeks as he thinks about facing life without his father. He can't even imagine what it might be like.

Once at the door, several of those who have been waiting help get Samuel's father out of the wagon and carry him into the house. The men accompanying his father explain they are they are coming from some 40 miles away, where the Irish militia engaged the English in a fierce battle. Though they had a resounding victory, repelling the English and keeping one of their

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forts nearby under siege, as is usually the case in a war, regardless of who wins the battle, there are typically losses of life on both sides. They all hope Hugh does not become one of these casualties.

Mary waits at the door as they carry him in. While her initial tears upon finding out her husband had been injured in battle were profuse and constant, they have subsided to intermittent sobs. Now once again the floodgates of her tears and emotions open wide as she sees her husband, seemingly lifeless in their arms. She crosses herself, looks to the heavens, and prays to God that her husband isn't injured too badly.

They take Hugh into his bedroom and lay him on the bed which has been prepared for his arrival. The doctor follows, seeing that the items he has requested have been placed on the nightstand. Seeing Mary fraught with worry reminds him that this has been his most difficult part of being a doctor. One thing is to deal with patients who need medical attention and help them to get better; another is dealing with loved ones, who are torn apart when those close to them are in pain, or who are suffering. He can only imagine what must be going through Mary's mind. He knows he won't be able to do what he needs to do with her in the room, but at the same time, he hates to pull her away from her husband.

He walks up behind her and puts his hand gently on her shoulder. "Mary, I think it would be best if you wait outside. I will let you know when it's okay for you to come back in again to see him." He nods at the neighbor, Mrs. Kelly, who is helping to support her by her elbow on the other side, as she initially resists leaving. She gently nudges Hugh's grief-stricken wife out of the room, while helping to hold her up so she doesn't fall on the way.

Samuel stands in the doorway taking in the entire scene as if it were in slow motion. The doctor immediately bends over his father, as his mother exits and sobs intensify as she gets farther away from the bed. As was the case when he first saw him in the wagon, Samuel's father looks very much the same way when he left, only paler and dirtier. Samuel sees how the doctor pulls down the blankets covering his legs, and there he sees it. Where his father's left leg should be, instead there is a bloodied shirt wrapped around what's left of it. The cloth is completely soaked through with his blood. Just then, his mother gets to the door,

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and to keep her from turning around and seeing what he just saw, he supports her on the other side from where the neighbor leads her, and they direct her out of the room, closing the door as they do. Once into the living area, they lead her to the sofa, where they all sit down. As they comfort her, Samuel can't get the image of his father leg out of his mind. He can't remember ever seeing so much blood.

The two men who were on the wagon with his father are now inside as well. The short, stout one with curly red hair and a full beard, who spoke to Samuel on the wagon, is telling the story of what happened to several people who have gathered inside their home. The other taller man, with straggly brown hair and thin beard, says nothing, instead, listening intently to what the other one says, as if to make sure his is telling the story correctly.

“—you all know that we been laying siege to the English fort at Blackwater, since they first built it last year. We got those bastards starvin' and with no supplies getting into them now for some time. Some say that in Dublin, there was grumblings about them letting the fort go, but then O'Neill got word that they was going to finally come and rescue them who has been stuck at the fort, with none other than that damn traitor, Henry Bagenal, leading the effort.”

There is some talking and chattering among those listening upon hearing this since Bagenal is well known to all of them. Bagenal has hated Hugh O'Neill, the leading clansman in the area, ever since Bagenal's sister, Mabel, eloped with O'Neill against her brother's wishes. She died a few years later, with a lot of speculation as to the circumstances surrounding her death. The official story is that both she and her child died in childbirth, though not all convinced this is true. People in these parts are loyal to Hugh O'Neill, primarily because of the power he wields, but they also know him to be ruthless with his enemies. Many believe he and Mabel disagreed on many things, not the least of which were his infidelities. All this only serves to fuel the rumors regarding what really happened to Bagenal's sister, and how she died. This has served to fuel his hate for O'Neill over the years.

“O'Neill took Cap'n McKee aside afore everything started and told him he wanted us to keep an eye on Bagenal, and that if we had a chance, that we should take him out, not only because he

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doesn't like the man, but more important, because he knew it would cause a commotion in the ranks if he was gone."

More of those who were gathered outside come inside the house when they hear the story being told. Since the first riders arrived several hours ago, accounts of the battle have been starting to circulate, and all are anxious to hear about what happened.

"Our scouts was telling us thair every move since leaving Armagh, from early this mornin'. Just as O'Neill had planned, and with many of our men on the west side of the river Callan, Bagenal chose to cross to the other side, playing right into O'Neill's hand."

"And what was that plan, Fergie?" one of the men asked him, wanting to know each and every little detail. Then when Fergie doesn't answer right away, because he was taking a big swig of whiskey offered to him, the man adds, "And which hand was using?" laughing at his own joke as he does.

"He used the right hand, as it should be, Micky," Fergie answers the man, with a smile when he finishes with his drink. "From the very beginning, O'Neill told us that he thought the battle would be ours if we could separate the lead regiment from the others. By gettin' 'em to cross the river there, he knew it would give us an opportunity to split 'em upriver when they had to cross once again to get to the fort at Blackwater."

Samuel observes the two men who he had seen many times with his father. Every time he had seen one of them, it seems the other has been there as well. He thought it curious that in all the times he can recall, he'd yet to see the tall man talk, though the shorter one whose name he now recalls as Fergus Maguire, always did enough talking for them both, and then some.

"But from what we've heard, I thought we had stopped them?" asks an older man who had come from town and was just arriving.

"Hold your horses, John, I'm not done with the story, and the best is yet to come!" Fergie is momentarily perturbed by the interruption, but gets right back into his explanation. "Mind ye, all this time we was pelting 'em with shot from across the river to make sure we had their attention, but we was too far away to do

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any real damage, so we was more botherin' 'em than anything else, getting 'em to play into O'Neill's scheme." He pauses dramatically, looking around the room before continuing. "You all know the ford between Armagh and Blackwater, right?"

Most affirm that know the place, since it is a well-known landmark.

"There's a series of hills there, if you recall. That's where O'Neill had set up the next surprise for Bagenal and his band of thieves as they was comin'. Mind ye', all this time, our small regiment of 10 men, led by Captain McKee, was shadowin' Bagenal. We was lookin' for him since early, but weren't able to lay our eyes on him until they crossed the river. He had a dandy white feather in his cap, making him easy to pick out, but he was always surrounded by others and we was too far away to get any kind of a decent shot at 'em—"

Fergus gets more animated as he talks. As one of those people who loves being in the limelight, as the life of the party, he is in his element and has the undivided attention of everyone there. Samuel can't see him directly, because of others who block his view, but he sees bits and pieces of him as he moves around, and can hear him clearly.

"So, you was talking about them hills, Fergie, what about 'em," one of the men asks to get him back on track with what he was saying.

"Yeah, right," he says, remembering where his was in his story. "So, we let them go pretty easy over them first two hills, popping them along the way from the sides with shot, but letting them go forward. After that is when they got their next surprise!" Fergie was getting more and more excited now as the crowd listening to him increased in size.

"And what was it?" another asked, while offering Fergie a drink from his bottle, which was gladly accepted.

"O'Neill had several of the regiments working all night long on a trench that stretched from one side of the bog to the other, right through the ford. We really started letting 'em have it from the sides, just before they got to the trench. When they seen the obstacle, they was surprised at first. But since we weren't defending it, they got through it to the other side without much

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trouble. They fell right into O'Neill's trap, which was to let them through easily when they got there. When they was on the other side of the trench, they knew they was getting close to the fort and could even see it from the crest of the las hill after passing through.

“That's when we trapped 'em in. With the first regiment over the trench, O'Neill ordered everyone who had been on either side to move in and cut them off from their other regiments. Just over that last hill, O'Neill had his next surprise for them. He had positioned the craziest of our group there and they was awaitin' there, hidden in the bush. As soon as the English thought they had it made, they started rushing toward the fort. Then is when O'Neill gave the order to attack. The English went from charging forward like there was no tomorrow, to droppin' into pike position to defend themselves as the crazies came at them. Already O'Neill had told them to concentrate their attack on the left part of the formation with as much firepower and muscle as they could muster. When they made a hole through the pike formation, the rest poured into the middle, taking the pikers out first, and then having a hay day with the rest who had no place to go. Their calvary couldn't help since they was separated by the trench and with our guys defending it, they couldn't get over. Those who had passed over the trench so easily were trapped with no escape.”

“And you seen all this, Fergie, with yourn eyes?” yet another man in the crowd asks, wondering if he is making this up, or if he really saw it firsthand.

“I could see the commotion from where we was through the smoke, but all this I learn't later from them that was closer to the action. We was still on the second hill, keeping our eye on Bagenal, and looking for a way to get to him, all the while peppering 'em with shot to make sure they didn't forget we was there. Then, all of a sudden Bagenal ordered the lead regiment, that was trapped, to retreat back through the trench, even though they had little possibility of survival. It was like target practice as they came back over the trench. The bastards were falling over one another right into the hole, as we picked 'em off one at a time.

“Through all the smoke, then is when we seen Bagenal going forward to help those in retreat, as they were coming toward the trench, and towards our guys defending it. At the same time,



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Captain McKee gave the order for our group to attack. When they seen us coming at them from the side, several calvary came to defend their position. While we battled with them, Cap'n McKee, came up from behind us, took careful aim and took a shot at Bagenal, but he missed. As he was reloading, one of the cavalry got past us, leaned down and with his sword took a swipe at the Cap'n, hittin' 'em in the leg, and almost taking it off with one blow. With another round loaded and ready to go, the Cap'n positioned himself from the ground, took careful aim, and this time hit Bagenal right in the head. He fell off his horse like a sack of potatoes."

Several of those listening continue to ask questions about the battle, while Fergus animatedly tells them about all the gory details. The long and short of it is they obliterated the first English regiment that had crossed the trench. The other two regiments of the English retreated through heavy fire and they lost a lot of men on the way. They were hampered by heavy equipment they had with them that got caught up in the muck and mud, and then were further disheartened by an explosion within their ranks. Apparently, it was caused by one of their own who accidentally ignited their supply of gunpowder. They didn't have a chance and many of those who weren't killed in the retreat, surrendered or escaped into the woods to come away with their lives.

While the general air is one of excitement and victory, John Kelly, sees that this isn't the time nor the place for this kind of celebration. Not here, not now, particularly when his neighbor, and brother in life, Captain Hugh McKee, is critically wounded in the other room. He shoos them all out of the house and into the street, closing the door, and giving the family some privacy.

"Thank you, John," Mary manages to tell him through her sobs. "I know they are excited about the victory, but I just can't stop thinking about Hugh, in there with the doctor. I wonder how he is, and if—" her crying chokes off the rest of her words, as she hates to even imagine the worst case scenario.

Once again, the vision of his father's leg comes to Samuel's mind. His sister, Sarah, comes and sits beside him. "Are you okay, Sammy, you look like you saw a ghost." He says nothing, instead just keeps staring off into space, shaking his head, unable to get

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out of his mind the sight of the bloody shirt where his father's leg should have been.

At ten years old, Samuel is the baby of the bunch. His sister Sarah, who is almost 15 years old, takes him into her arms and rocks him, while his two older brothers, John and Andrew, who are 16 and 12, respectively, comfort their mother. The doctor walks out of the room and directs his attention to Mary, who with hope in her eyes, but fear in her soul, asks about her husband's condition.

"I'm sorry to tell you that he's in pretty bad shape, Mary. If it was just for the leg, he would probably be okay, but with the amount of blood he's lost, it's difficult to say whether or not he's going to make it, and if he does, how he'll be."

Mary buries her head into her hands while the rest of them come closer to her, trying to offer some kind of relief from the anguish she feels.

"I wish I could tell you he's going to be fine, but right now—" He cuts off mid-sentence, deciding it best not to say more for now. "You can go in and see him if you like."

Several hours pass, as they keep vigil on Captain Hugh McKee, whose name is now on the lips of many across Northern Ireland as the man who killed Marshal Bagenal. People are already referring to McKee as a hero in what they are now calling the Battle of Yellow Ford, due to the color of the ford where the battle took place.

Ireland's history of conflict goes back as long as anyone can remember. The Irish are proud of their heritage and anxious to keep not only their lands, but more importantly, their religion and their way of life intact. As far as they are concerned, the English, who have abandoned Catholicism in favor of Protestantism, are acting more out of a matter of convenience to fit their decadent lifestyles, than out of a sense of faith. The Gaelic people have long valued their independence and are willing to risk their lives to preserve their beliefs.

As a result, the Irish clans have decided that rather than warring with each other, as they have done for centuries, they will unite to repel the English. By bringing the clans together in a united effort, and with the help of the Spanish, who also

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champion their cause, they are committed to remaining independent from the English. The outcome of this conflict gives weight and substance to their desire for continued independence. Unfortunately, even in victory, misery can also be a companion, as it is now for them.

Mary is unsure if her husband is able to hear what she says, but nonetheless, she imagines he can, holding his hands and speaking to him as if he can understand every word she utters. As a means to pass the time, and also hopefully to do something beneficial for him, she recounts the story of how they met.

Theirs was an impossible love. While Mary's father, who was one of the senior members in the MacDonnell clan, had always wanted for her to marry someone within their own social class, instead she fell in love with Hugh McKee, who owned no land, and whom she met because he ran cattle for MacDonnell's. She will never forget the day she first saw him. Once a year, the senior clan members in the area would host a festival for those who were loyal and worked for them.

At the time Mary was only 14 years old, and Hugh was 18. Though they never spoke, through the glances they exchanged, each made a promise to get to know each other better. From that time on, they would take every opportunity they could to see each other, but it wasn't until the following year at the same festival that they finally got a chance to talk to each other. Nevertheless, their courtship was nipped in the bud by Mary's mother and father who both prohibited her from speaking to any of the workers, and in particular to Hugh McKee.

She had no lack of suitors over the following years, and her parents did their best to introduce her to suitable candidates for marriage, yet none made Mary feel what she felt when she was close to Hugh. There was something about his smile and the way he looked at her that melted her from the inside out. No doubt that marriage to any of the prospects her parents brought to her would have given her a life of leisure, but she wasn't interested in any of them, or in that kind of a lifestyle.

Hugh and Mary started seeing each other on the sly, meeting where they knew no one could discover their indiscretions. When she was with him, she lost herself in his wit and in his ability to make her laugh. Perhaps this is what most attracted her to him.

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She found herself giggling at his antics, which only encouraged him to be even sillier, until they would sometimes both be literally be rolling on the ground with laughter.

Whenever a new suitor would come by to try and impress her, all she could think about was Hugh. In her eyes, there was no upper and lower class involved in their relationship. Instead, she saw a man who made her feel good and who cared little for what others thought about him. On the contrary, those who came to see her trying to gain her interest, seemed to be in constant competition. Each doing their best to impress each other and themselves.

After refusing several marriage proposals, her father finally took a stand, telling her that he would find a suitable mate for her and that would be the end of the story. After all, she was already almost 20, and, according to him anyway, almost an old maid. She cried for days, refusing to eat and remaining in her room, not talking to anyone. When she did come out, she was reserved and monosyllabic in her replies to questions about her condition and how she felt.

She sent word to Hugh to meet him at one of their favorite places along the lake. She was distraught and worried that her father would make good on his promise to make her marry someone of his choosing. While they had talked before of marriage, of having kids, and growing old together, Hugh feared that if he did approach her father, that old man MacDonnell, would simply get rid of him, sending him away to never come back again. He couldn't bear the thought of never seeing Mary again. She insisted that Hugh talk to her father, finally giving him the courage to ask her hand in marriage.

Hugh went to see MacDonnell, and was at first unable to gain his audience. Hugh persisted and was finally was able to talk to the old man, who was incredulous with his proposal, once he heard what Hugh had to say. He couldn't believe the audacity of the boy. Nevertheless, Hugh was unflappable, telling Mary's father he would provide for her and give her a good life. When asked how he planned on doing that, being little more than a nomadic cattle herder, Hugh firmly told the older man he wasn't exactly sure how he was going to do it, but that he had no doubt he could provide for her every need, just as he had for himself since being orphaned at an early age.

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Old man MacDonnell was impressed with the young man's composure and the way he handled himself under scrutiny. He had to admit that over the years Hugh had been loyal, doing everything he had been asked to do, and then some, while at the same time admiring the courage it took for the boy to come talk to him, particularly after knowing about his position regarding any kind of relationship between Hugh and his daughter. After talking it over with his wife, they finally agreed to give their blessing to the union. As a part of their dowry for Mary, they were given a plot of land to work nearby.

Mary tells the story to Hugh, while the others keep vigil. Though Samuel has heard this story many times before, hearing his mother tell it now to his unconscious father, it is as if Hugh were listening to it for the first time. Despite his young age and lack of experience, he gets the point. His parents' union, and subsequent marriage, was based on love, not convenience.

Then something happens that each of them will remember for the rest of their lives. Hugh O'Neill himself comes to their house to pay his respects, and to thank Hugh McKee for his service. By now word had spread throughout the territory, not only of their resounding victory, sending the English back with their tails between their legs to Armagh, but also of McKee's bravery in taking down Bagenal, even after having his leg almost cut off. As is often the case, as the story is told again and again, certain details are left out, while others are enhanced, but the underlying fact remains unchanged. Captain Hugh McKee is a hero in their eyes.

After speaking with the two soldiers who accompanied McKee from the battlefield, O'Neill goes into the bedroom, kneels down beside the bed, says a prayer for Hugh, making the sign of the cross, as he does so.

After he is finished, O'Neill stands up and addresses Mary directly, politely taking her hands in his as she sits beside her husband on the bed.

"I will never forget what Captain McKee did out on the battlefield ma'am," he says to Mary. "He is a very brave man and his actions will not go unrewarded. Besides, he is my name brother, and now we are forever bound together in spirit due to his actions to protect our freedom."

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Samuel has heard of Hugh O'Neill many times before, but this is the first time he sees him in person, and he seems larger than life. There is something about the way the man carries himself, his presence, and his charisma, which command respect. Watching as others give reverence to this legendary man, and how they react to his presence remains etched in the boy's mind.

"I understand your father is John MacDonnell?" he asks Mary.

She nods.

"The good Lord knows I have had my differences with the MacDonnells over the years, but as you know, we've now come together now to get those English bastards out of our lands."

Mary says nothing, instead paying attention as best as she can, given her grief, to this important man who has played such an important role in their fight to remain independent from the Crown.

"We have to realize that we are not each other's enemies," O'Neill says. "The enemy is the English who are trying to force their way of life upon us. If they want to go against God's will and all go to hell, then let them, but I will be damned if I let them come into our lands and into our homes to convert us to their god forsaken ways!"

"We must remain strong and united in the face of this threat to our independence. For hundreds of years, we have lived on our own terms, and we can't let that change. Of course, we have had our own problems, and no one is beyond reproach. We are, after all, mere mortals, but as God is my witness, I plan to defend our lands and our rights until the day I die."

When O'Neill is finished with his brief rant, he turns back to McKee, and leans over him, making the sign of the cross once again, this time on his forehead. "God bless you Hugh McKee, you have done a great service to all of us, and as I've already told your wife, your bravery will not go unrewarded." He stands up, bows slightly to Mary, turns on his heels and is out the door.

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Immediately after O'Neill leaves, the priest who has been summoned by the doctor enters the room. Upon seeing him, Mary once again begins crying uncontrollably.

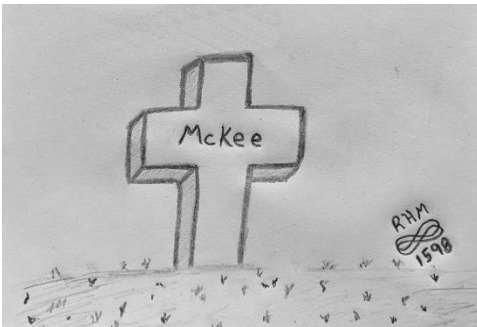
The doctor takes Mary gently by the shoulders, "I've done everything I can for him, Mary. He lost too much blood. I'm sorry but there's nothing else we can do for him." The anguish of not being able to save her husband resonates in his voice as he speaks.

As last rites are administered, everyone except for the priest, Mary and the doctor leave the room. Samuel waits outside with everyone else while the priest performs his ritual. The mood is somber and everyone is tired from the emotion of the ordeal. Since finding out his father was injured, Samuel feels like an eternity has passed, though in reality it's only been hours.

Samuel isn't old enough to understand a lot of things, but he does understand one thing for sure. What has just transpired is going to have a huge impact on his life. When he thinks about all the things his father does, he can't imagine how they are going to try and take his place and manage now that he's gone.

As it is, they will have to make due. As the youngest of his siblings, likely he won't have to bear the brunt of what's to come, but he knows he will surely have to help much more than he has so far. For now, the thoughts of what might be, or what already was, seem too murky and dark to hold the boy's attention for any period of time.

All he knows is that he feels a tremendous sense of emptiness and sadness enveloping his body and his senses. It's a feeling he will never forget. Samuel is numb by the time the priest finally comes out of the room with his final blessing:



"May Captain Hugh McKee rest in peace."

## ***1618: The Possibility of Hope***

### **Sow Possibility**

**The Griegos  
April, 1618  
Santa Cruz, New  
Mexico**

Juan Jr. looks to the sun which is already making its way down over the horizon. He watches as his father finishes preparing the last trench where they will plant this year's seeds. His father stands up, looks around and then whistles, as he does when he wants to gather everyone together. Juan Jr. has been part of this yearly ritual for many years now, so he knows what's coming.



Getting the ground prepared and planting has become one of his favorite times of the year. With the trees beginning to get green again and the sweet smell of wildflowers in the air, Spring seems to him as if it were a new beginning. The possibility of what will soon be sprouts everywhere.

His family joins him, and as if by previous agreement, position themselves according to their age and position in the household. First is his mother, Maria, who stands closest to his father, then himself, as the oldest sibling, followed by his sister, Sara, and then finally his little brother, Jose. They each hold out



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their hands as Juan Sr. carefully puts several seeds into each of their outstretched hands.

Juan Jr. has always likened this to taking communion at church. At 20 years old, he has gone to his fair share of church services. While he isn't completely convinced of all the teachings, he sees it as a chance for him and the rest of his family to be with others who have settled in the area. He considers all the times he has prayed for things, particularly as it relates to this very ritual they are going through right now. He is doubtful whether or not the prayers make any difference over the outcome, but continues to go through the motions, since he has known no other way for as long as he can remember. Besides, he knows from experience that if the seed isn't sown, the plant will not grow. He considers that maybe this might also be the case with prayers, so he continues to say them, despite his underlying doubts.

Both his mother and father are devout Catholics, as are the rest of the Spanish settlers in the valley. Religion, perhaps more than anything else binds them together through all the difficulty they undergo. Since just after he was born, his family made its way north from Santa Barbara into the Rio Grande Valley where they now live. He doesn't know all the history first hand, but he has grown up with the stories told time and again. While their main difficulties over the years have had to do primarily with the weather and the elements, there have also been isolated raids over the years, particularly from the Apaches and the Navajos. By in large their overall relationship with the Pueblo Indians in the area has been positive. Nonetheless, he feels there is a lot of resentment for their presence in what has been tribal lands since long before they got there.

The Catholic priests and missionaries are intent on their efforts to convert the barbaric Indians into God fearing Christians, but even with their insistence, many of the Indians continue to worship their old gods and to value their relationship with this land, as they have since long before the arrival of the Spanish settlers. Of course, much good has come with the knowledge brought, but so too many bad things have come to the Indians lives as well.

There have been rumors of abuse, rape, and pillage, on the part of the Spanish Conquistadors over the years. It's one of those things most people imagine to be true, but prefer not to talk

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about, particularly since it continues to be a source of friction between the indigenous tribes and the Spanish settlers. The other main problem ravaging the indigenous people have been the diseases the Spanish settlers have brought with them, to which the Indians have no immunity. For the most part, and as a sort of compromise, the Pueblo Indians have set up their settlements in certain strategic areas agreed upon by the Spanish, with the tacit understanding that neither side will bother the other, but this isn't always the case, particularly as it comes to their conversion to Catholicism.

The attacks by the nomadic tribes are entirely different story, and they are a constant threat. But now, Juancito —as he has come to be known—, feels the seeds falling into his hands being given to him by his father and looks out over the fresh late Spring afternoon. It's hard for him to even imagine how any of all these things he has heard about can be true. He takes in a deep breath of fresh air. Though he is physically exhausted from all the work over the last several days, at the same time, he is exhilarated from the satisfaction of seeing the result of their efforts.

While everyone helps out on the communal farms, where much of the food is grown for the entire town, each family also has a plot of land with which they can do with as they please. Most use their individual parcels to grow fresh vegetables, and many have planted orchards around their homes. The abundant water from the river creates an oasis in the otherwise arid environment.

This particular area was first spotted as they made their way north with the Oñate expedition, back in 1598. His family, along with many others, settled here, remaining close together for protection. Since then, others have moved south to Santa Fe, while they have remained. Juancito has heard stories about what their lives were like before migrating, but this is the only reality he has ever known.

When his little brother gets the seeds in his hands, he asks:

“What are we planting this year, father?”

They know that it is common for his father to choose something new to plant in this particular row, which he insists on

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preparing himself, while most of the rest of the tilling of the soil and planting, he leaves to his children.

“This year I got some peas which they say have grown well in this area, so we’ll see how we do with them.”

They each spread out along the freshly turned soil. They all look to him and when he nods slightly, giving them the signal, they spread the seeds in the small trench before them, bending down afterward, carefully covering the seeds with dirt. They finish their planting ritual with a prayer for abundant crop, and then walk toward their adobe house.

“I thought you would never finish,” Grandma Lorenza says, when they get there, rising out of her chair on the veranda, where she has been watching. “I’ve got a wonderful lamb stew which should be ready, along with some of the last of the corn from last year, potatoes and onions.”

They all go inside and get situated around a table which serves as the principal piece of furniture in their small but comfortable abode. Despite her advanced age, Lorenza helps to bring the food to the table from the stove where it has been keeping warm. Along with help from the everyone else, they have everything set to go in short order.

Juan Sr. stands at the head of the table and waits for everyone to get to their respective places, with each behind his or her chair, as is their custom before eating a meal. He pulls out his chair and sits down, with the rest following suit. Sitting to his right are Maria and Jose. Sara sits directly in front of her father, while Grandma Lorenza and Juancito are to his left.

As they are getting settled Juancito considers how this dynamic has taken place over the years. He can’t ever remember them sitting in any other way and sometimes wonders if the world might stop turning, if just for once they might sit differently. He laughs audibly and shakes his head, thinking of his incredulous thought.

“What’s so funny, son,” Juan Sr. asks him.

“I was just thinking. I don’t think we have ever sat down any other way than the way we are now. It’s always Mama on your right and Grandma Lorenza on your left.”

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“What’s wrong, Juancito, you don’t like to sit next to me,” his grandmother asks, poking him in the side as she does and laughing heartily at her own joke.

“No, it’s not that Abuela, it’s just that sometimes we get so used to things, we don’t even ever consider changing them. We get so comfortable doing certain things, in a certain way, that we don’t even think about other possibilities.”

“Like what other possibilities,” Sara asks, curious as to where her brother’s line of thinking is taking him.

“For example, we have always lived here in this valley, and it’s a nice valley. But what if there were an even nicer one somewhere else? What if we are so comfortable here that we don’t even care to look beyond what we already know. What if there are some other places where our crops could grow even better and our animals could graze even better? What if that place is right up the road? What if just because we are too afraid to try something new, we miss it, even if it is right under our noses?”

“Well, I didn’t know you were going to get so philosophical, son, when I asked what you were snickering about, but I suppose it’s a valid point.”

“Many have explored North and they say this is still the best place in the area,” responds his mother. Then after further consideration, she adds, “Besides, out there all alone in the middle of nowhere, how could we protect ourselves from Indian attacks? At least here with others around, we can watch out for each other.”

“I’m not saying where we are isn’t nice, and surely there would be challenges no matter where we decide to live,” Juancito answers, shifting in his seat slightly as he does. “All I’m saying is that things don’t always have to be done in the same way. It seems to me many inventions have come about by changing the typical way we do them.”

From experience, they have learned that whenever it is time to eat, it is Juan Sr. who decides when it’s time to start and when it’s time to finish. It is not uncommon for him to want to talk with his family before saying grace and commencing the meal. Juancito sometimes imagines his father thinks all day about exactly what he will say before meal time and to whom. His father

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and mother have worked hard to encourage their children and to speak up for themselves. As is the case with all children, they have had varying success, with Jose, the youngest, being the least expressive of the three. On the other hand, both Juancito and Sara have learned to be very vocal, so this interchange of ideas between them isn't at all out of the ordinary.

“So, what would you propose, son?” comes the inevitable question from his father.

“Well, what if just for today we change things up a little?” Juancito answers, after thinking about it for a moment.

His father looks at him questionably, particularly in light of the importance of this day to all of them, but nods for him to continue with his thought.

“How about if we all move one place to the right, just for today's dinner?” Then poking back at his grandmother, he adds, “That way I will still be next to you, Abuelita.”

“Sure, why not?” replies his father, willing to go along with what his son suggests.

They all get up and move one place to the right before sitting down again. This puts Grandma Lorenza at the head of the table. Juancito, now faces his father, while Sarah faces her mother, and Jose faces his grandmother from the other end of the table.

Though it is a small change, it feels different for all of them. Juancito feels proud of himself for having made the suggestion, and everyone else seems to enjoy the slight adjustment. Juan Sr. asks Jose to say grace, which he does. After finishing, they serve themselves and begin eating.

During the course of the meal, his father asks Juancito how he came up with the idea of switching places, to which he responds that he has been thinking about it since the last church service they attended. The main thrust of the sermon was that we can often see things in a different light if we change our perspective. He further explains that normally, his father, who was at the head of the table, is the one who directs the conversation. By switching one place to the right, now they can give their grandmother that place of honor, and perhaps give her a chance to talk about whatever she has on her mind.

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His father agrees to this additional suggestion, and for most of the meal his grandmother talks about the old days, but primarily about the trip bringing them north, from Zacatecas, just after Juancito was born. She relates how their resolve and endurance were tested to their limits and recalls how many people didn't make it to the end of the journey for a variety of different reasons perishing along the way.

They finish eating and clear the table. Juan Sr. grabs a bottle of wine he has been saving for the occasion and places it in the middle of table. At first, several of them are unsure of where to sit. He indicates they should stay in the same positions they were for the meal, with Grandma Lorenza still at the head of the table. He fills all of their glasses with wine and Sara, who is inquisitive by nature, asks her grandmother about her life before coming to New Spain.

Lorenza has aged well, though no one knows her exact age, because she is always evasive whenever the subject is brought up. They all imagine her to be in her early to mid-70's, though the reality is that she is close to her 82nd birthday. She has some short-term memory lapse, and is often looking for things "she just had in her hand," but her long-term memory is surprisingly good. She is able to remember minute details about many things which happened ages ago.

The older woman considers her granddaughter's question and is about to give the standard response as to her time living in Spain, since as long as she can remember, but she looks closely at each of them before doing so. Juancito, though they call him "Little Juan" and he still has some boyish features, has grown strong and broad in the shoulders with his work. He is already taller and stockier than his father. Sara has become a beautiful, mature young lady and Jose is starting to become surer of himself little by little, as he gets older.

Lorenza looks at Juan Sr. as she prepares to tell a story they will not soon forget. She knows from experience that her son might either be relieved for them knowing what she is about to tell them, or very angry for having brought it up.

"I think that before I continue, I need some wine," Grandma Lorenza says.

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They are all surprised as she grabs her glass, drinks the entire amount in one gulp, reaches for the bottle in front of Juan Sr., and then refills her glass again before placing the bottle down in front of her. They all watch her in amazement. They have seen their grandmother drink wine before, but have never seen her down an entire glass at one time. They all edge forward in their chairs ever so slightly in anticipation, feeling something important is about to happen, save for Juan Sr., who moves back slightly in his chair, correctly imagining, in part, what is about to come.

Grandma Lorenza answers Sara's question by telling them a tale taking them back to Spain, to before the time when they crossed over the ocean to New Spain, and to a time about which none of them have any first-hand knowledge. Juan Sr. has an idea about what his mother is going to say, but not even he knows the full extent of what she is about to reveal.

"If you will recall, your Uncle Lucas, was the first one to come over to New Spain. Your Grandfather Pedro and I came later, along with your father," she says, as she looks at each of her three grandchildren. "What you may not know is all the particular circumstances regarding our travel."

She goes on to carefully explain that their "Uncle" Lucas is actually Juan's biological father, and that she and her husband are his aunt and uncle. When Lucas left for the new land, they took on the responsibility of caring for young Juan, who was still very small at the time. They assured Lucas, they would join him on his quest as soon as possible, after he got settled in the new land. She explains to them their trouble leaving Spain, with Juan as their nephew, as well as how she obtained a document indicating he was their son. She then briefly tells them about the voyage itself. Both Juan Sr. and Maria are fully aware of all she is saying, so they primarily watch for their children's reactions to what their grandmother is telling them.

They all take it all in stride, with no adverse reactions. Juancito comments about his father's physical similarity to their Uncle Lucas, who died several years earlier, and Sara nods slightly as she considers what her grandmother is telling them. Surprisingly, Jose, who is normally the quietest of the group, is the only one who asks anything. He is curious to know why Grandma Lorenza is telling this to them now.

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Without answering her grandson directly, Lorenza looks at Juan Sr. and asks him whether she should explain what happened when he found out about his true relationship with Lucas, or if her son prefers to tell the story. He decides he should be the one to express how he felt.

Juan Sr. leans forward and begins to convey the anger he felt toward Lucas when he first found out what happened. Without going into every single detail, he lets them know he was very disappointed in everybody for not telling him the truth from the beginning. He then goes on to explain how he eventually came to forgive Lucas. This story is new to his children.

He goes on to explain how the only man he has ever considered to be his father, their Grandfather Pedro, urged him to forgive Lucas and accept him into his life despite what happened. After he finishes his story, they are all silent momentarily as they take in all they've learned.

They all know that shortly after Juan Sr. and Maria went north with Juancito and Lucas, their grandfather died, so his helping to mend the relationship between his son and Lucas is particularly significant in the big scope of things. Finally, it is Sara who breaks the silence:

“But your glad you finally forgave him, right father?”

He answers that, yes, he is glad they were able to make amends and further explains how their relationship developed after what happened.

After he is done talking, Grandma Lorenza finishes what is left in her glass, and to the surprise once again of everyone, who have never seen her serve herself wine before in this way, fills her glass once again and sets it down in front of her deliberately, lifting her gaze and saying, “There’s more you should know.”

Now it is Juan Sr. and Maria who look questioningly toward Lorenza who takes another drink of her wine, now sipping it, rather than downing it completely.

“I believe it is time that you know about your mother, Juan, I don’t believe we’ve ever given you too many details about her,” she says to her son. She is obviously somewhat ashamed at her



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confession, looking down at her hands, before raising her gaze once again to meet his.

Juan Sr. scratches his head, doing his best to recall what he does know about her, which isn't much. "From what I remember, she died young, shortly before Lucas came to the new land, but I can't recall how she died, I think maybe from some kind of sickness that took many others as well at the time?"

"Yes, that is right, Juan, and that is what we led you to believe." Lorenza takes another sip of her wine, fueling herself with courage for what she is about to tell her son for the first time. "I really don't know how to soften this, but the truth of the matter is that she was burned at the stake, as a heretic, and as a witch."

They are all flabbergasted, each looking at Grandma Lorenza, wondering if at any moment she might smile and say it's all a joke, but she remains serious. Juan looks confused, and then angry.

"I'm sorry, son, to say we misled you regarding your mother, and how she died."

Jose asks his grandmother once again, why she is telling all of them this now, after so many years. She explains to them she is not getting any younger and that secrets tend to fester, like a wound in a dark place with no air. Once they get out in the air, they tend to go away or be cured.

"Though I have no reason to believe anyone would ever tell any of you this, I do believe it is important for all of you to know the truth about who she was, and what she stood for." Lorenza looks around the table. She grabs her son's hand, who is to her right and Juancito's hand, who is to her left. The rest of them spontaneously do the same, so they are all holding hands around the table, as she continues to speak. "I have thought many times about telling all of this, but could never really find the right time or place to do it. I suppose Juancito's of idea of changing things up, and moving me to the head of the table gave me the courage and the opportunity to talk to you about this difficult subject. While I hope to live much longer, the fact is that I don't know how much longer. We all live by the grace of God, so we never know how much time any of us have left."

"Could you tell us more about our blood grandmother?" Sara is particularly interested in hearing more about her.

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“Yes, I will tell you all that you want to know, but first I want to let you know that even though I am not your blood mother,” she says glancing at Juan, now with tears welling up in her eyes, “or your blood grandmother,” she says looking at those who have known her to be so their entire lives, “I do feel very much a part of you, and—”

Tears begin streaming down her cheeks now and she finds it difficult to continue talking. She feels an intense emotion build up inside of her. It’s a combination of fear and anxiety, which springs forth from within her. When they see their grandmother crying, the rest too become tearful. They get up from where they are sitting and stand around her, hugging her from all sides to show how much she means to them.

“It’s just, that—,” she wipes the tears from her cheek and then continues, “I don’t know what I would do without all of you. You are my life and I can’t tell you how terrible I feel about not having told all of you this before. Ever since Sara was born, there has been a nagging feeling, something deep in my being telling me I should tell you the truth, but I could never find the right time, or the courage to do so.”

She looks at all of them, as they surround her, and thanks them for being so caring about her, then urges them to sit down again, which they do. Now, looking directly at her granddaughter, she says:

“Sara, you have no idea of how much you remind me of her. I first met Lucas’ wife when she was about your age, before they got married. While her hair was darker than yours and her facial features were a bit different, there is something in your mannerisms, and in the way that you carry yourself which is very similar.”

Lorenza embarks on a story which speaks of her brother Lucas’ love for this fascinating woman by the name of, Maria Isabel de Garcia, who was two years his senior. Ever since he first saw her, he told her that one day he was going to make her his wife. At first, she thought he was kidding and shrugged it off as a boyhood crush. Good to his word, and when he had established himself in his business, he asked for her hand in marriage and she accepted. A little more than a year after they were wed, Juan

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was born. It was around this time when she began having several women over for coffee in the afternoon once or twice a week.

One of the women attending the meetings was shunned by their group for being obnoxious and nosy, so they stopped inviting her. Enraged by their actions, she convinced her husband to talk to the authorities, alleging the meetings were subversive, and had to do with witchcraft.

Lorenza had gone to some of the meetings, and they were nothing of the sort, rather it was a support group, where the women who attended provided a network they could depend on in the time of need. Some of the women had been battered physically by their husbands, while others had been emotionally beaten by life in general. Some had even considered taking their own lives due to their hardship.

The woman who was banned from the group was ousted because she was talking to others about certain things which were meant to be private. Regardless of the good the group was doing for many of the women who attended, she continued her campaign to destroy your grandmother, labeling her as sorceress, as a witch, and as a heretic. The truth of the matter is that Maria Isabel was the most devout Catholic of them all, using many of the anecdotes she read from the bible to try and help those who came to her weekly meetings.

She continues her story explaining how one day the authorities came and hauled Maria Isabel away. They never saw her again until she was tried, convicted and burned at the stake in a public spectacle, all in the matter of a very short period of time.

After Lorenza finishes speaking, they are all quiet momentarily, each of them soaking in the information they've just received about someone they previously knew nothing about. With each of them still deep in thought, Lorenza continues:

“Sometimes there never seems the right time to do certain things, but if there is one thing I have learned in life, now is the only time we really ever have. I remember living through this very terrible time with my sister-in-law and brother. At the time, it seemed like it enveloped our existence. No matter where we

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turned, the harsh reality of what happened to her was a constant reminder of a tarnished spot on our family.”

“Was this the reason why you decided to leave Spain?” Sara asks, moving forward in her seat, anxious to know more.

“In great part, yes, it was the reason. Everything that happened was particularly difficult on Lucas. Afterward, no one wanted to hire him for fear of being associated with his wife, and most of his friends turned their backs on him as well. It was a very tough time for my brother and for our entire family. Though we were affected, not nearly to the extent that it affected him. This is why since the time of this incident, Juan,” she says looking at him, “you have been our son, and though you are not my natural born son, you are the best son I could ever hope for.”

Juan Sr. is teary eyed, as are others at the table, hearing their grandmother express her love for her son, while at the same time revealing a secret which shocks them and they are still processing.

“I will never think of you as anything other than my mother,” he says to his mother, taking her hands in his. “I now more fully understand the circumstances, and probably would have done exactly the same thing you and my father did.”

He becomes silent, choked up with emotion, taking several moments before regaining his voice. “Mother, you more than anyone else know how hurt I was when I originally found out that Lucas was my father.”

Lorenza remembers very well how anguished Juan was with the discovery, recalling in her mind’s eye each detail of how he reacted, and what happened afterward. She closes her eyes slightly and assents that she does indeed remember well how he reacted.

“Though at the time I thought it was the end of the world. As you have all just learned,” he continues, now addressing his children, “I began talking to my father again just before we moved North, in fact, it was the same day you were born, son,” he says addressing Juancito, “and I am so glad that I did. Lucas may not have been an angel, but the little devil inside him sure kept us all guessing about what he was going to do next.” He smiles with the memory and continues. “He was quite a character, and in time, I

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came to know him better and I feel very fortunate for having been able to do so. If it would have been up to me, I would have never have talked to him again, and that would have been a shame. For this I have to thank my father, Pedro.” With a laugh he says, “The best part is that I ended up with two ‘fathers’ in the bargain after it was all was said and done.”

“In great part, this is why I am telling all of you this right now.” Lorenza says when her son is done talking. She takes a deep breath and sits up as straight as she possibly can. “Be proud of who you are, no matter what else happens in life. We all have secrets. Some are insignificant, while others can be pretty dark, like the one I’ve just told you about.”

Additional weight and significance seem to be given with Lorenza sitting at the head of the table. Each of them remembers different things about her, but with one overriding characteristic. She has always believed in hope for a better tomorrow. Whenever any of them has come to her with some kind of difficulty, she has always been willing to listen, and she generally does so without interrupting them. When they finish telling her what they have had on their mind, she typically moves forward, puts her hand on their shoulder and tells them that today will be forgotten when the sun rises tomorrow, bringing hope for a better day.

True to form, she says, “As I was watching all of you work out in the fields today, I thought about the hope that each new seed that we plant brings. Sometimes it works out as we plan it, others it does not. But if we don’t first plant the seed, nothing else will come to be.”

Each of them is off in their own world. Juan Sr. is thinking about what he has just found out about his birth mother. Juancito is thinking of the seeds they just sowed for this year’s crop. Sara is wondering about her similarities with her newly found grandmother. José is thinking about his own feeling of self-doubt which often predominate his thoughts, while Maria is concerned about how her husband will react about finding out that his birth mother was burned at the stake as a witch.

“Difficulties will come, and they will go,” Grandma Lorenza says after a brief pause. “That’s part of life and there’s nothing we can do about it. I know you always think I’m crazy to say that today will be erased by the hope of tomorrow, but that’s the only

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truth we have in life. Once we lose hope, we lose everything. Even during the worst of times with Maria Isabel, we never lost hope.

“Hope is what drove Lucas to come to this new land so many years ago that now, it seems but a distant dream. Hope is what gave my husband, Pedro, and I the courage to follow him here with you, son,” she says, looking at Juan Sr., knowing she probably should have told him long ago about what she just revealed. Nevertheless, it never seemed as important as it does right now in this moment. She feels relieved, somehow knowing this conversation is more significant for her grandchildren, than even for her son or her daughter-in-law.

“You will get over this, Juan,” Lorenza tells her son, her voice firm and strong, “and you will become a better person for it once you realize all the implications.” Then turning to her grandchildren, she adds, “For each of you, I want nothing more for you to remember than that no matter how dark things may sometimes seem in life, as long as you keep planting good seeds, there is always hope for a better tomorrow.

## Destroy Hope

### The McKees

August 1618

County Antrim, Ireland

Samuel comes over the top of the hill and is relieved to see his secret hiding place seems to be undisturbed. He rides closer to the entrance which is cleverly disguised in the hillside. He whistles a unique set of tones, sounding very much like a local bird, and in short order, a similar whistle comes in response. He looks carefully around him. Though he made sure no one followed him, he realizes anyone could be hiding in the bushes or behind a tree, so he slowly checks the entire area.

This is an exercise he has taught his family for years. He has warned them never to go into this safe place without first making sure there are no curious onlookers lurking in the shadows. When he is satisfied no one is around, he ties his horse in the shade of a tree on the other side of the creek, and then walks briskly toward

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the entrance, jumping over the creek on the way. He moves a lever he designed to move a large rock ever so slightly, allowing him just enough room to gain entrance through a small crack leading into a natural cave which Samuel discovered years ago with his siblings. From the outside there appears to be no access, but once inside, it opens up into a fairly large space, which he has accommodated over the years for just this purpose.

Inside he greets his wife and his children who fortunately are all safe and sound. He already knows the English have identified him as one of the main agitators creating guerrilla warfare, making life difficult for them and the Scottish settlers who have moved into the area to populate the Ulster Plantation over the last several years. While most in the area have already succumbed to the King of England's wishes, Samuel along with several others prefer to hold onto their Gaelic ways which have been woven into their spirit over centuries in this same area.

Samuel has been one of the most vocal in their opposition of England converting the Irish to their way of life, particularly as it relates to their religious faith. In addition, he sees the offer being made as little more than a license to steal lands which have belonged to their forefathers since as long as anyone can remember. His wife, Lydia, often tells him that he is just looking for trouble, and that they will all have to pay for his indiscretions. Though she's probably right, he can't help but fight for what he believes is rightfully theirs.

By Gaelic law, they are entitled to farm the land they inhabit. In truth, the land Samuel and his family occupy has been in their family for a relatively short time. It came as a result of his father, Captain Hugh McKee's heroism some 20 years ago. Hugh O'Neill, one of the area's most powerful clansman, was good to his word to Captain McKee's family, giving them this plot of land after he died in the Battle of Yellow Ford, killing O'Neill's arch enemy in the process.

Nevertheless, ever since O'Neill fled the country years ago, all true hope of the Irish repelling the English seems to be futile as they seem to be making their way slowly into every nook and cranny of Ireland. In protest, Samuel, along with several others, dedicate their free time in making life miserable for the new settlers. But he also knows it is just a matter of time until all of them are ousted from their lands. Even before Hugh O'Neill left

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the country, most of the wealthy man's holdings had already been transferred to the Crown. As it is, it's a minor miracle Samuel and his family has been able to hold onto their homes and land for as long as they have.

He asks his wife about the details regarding how they got out of their house and to the cave. She explains that from early that morning they had seen the bonfires in the distance and knew they had to get to their safe place. They gathered their things and made their way to the cave, making sure no one saw them, just as Samuel had instructed them. They had been there since.

Samuel brings all of them together in a group hug. He asks each of them how they feel. As is typical, their youngest son, William, is the one who speaks first. "You would have been proud of us Daddy, we didn't make a sound, and we when we heard them riding around outside later on, hooping and a hollerin', we didn't almost even breathe."

Samuel smiles at his son and musses up his hair. Though he is only eight, so far, he has by far been the most precocious of his three children. Samuel Jr., the oldest at twelve, is more reserved, given more to contemplation than expression. He says nothing, instead simply shrugs his shoulders and nods. His daughter, Ruth, who is just a year younger than her older brother, is very observant and not much gets passed her. Instead of answering, she asks, "Daddy, there's blood on your shirt, are you hurt?"

He looks down to his shirt and sees where it is bloodied. "No sweetheart, I'm fine. I was trying to help John O' Reilly, who took a beating from the English when they got a hold of him. I got there after they had already gone. I'm not sure if he's going to make it. He got beat up pretty bad."

Samuel looks at his wife, Lydia. Though she is obviously shaken, her eyes show resolve and determination. After giving him a big hug and a kiss, as their children squeeze in where they can, she asks him, "What do you want us to do, Samuel?"

"Stay here for a while until I make sure the coast is clear." His voice is clear and confident, assuring them that everything will work itself out.

Samuel holds them all tightly one last time, and then slips out of the cave, looking around, as he usually does. After making his



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way back to his horse, he works his way slowly up the creek. He rises up around the bend, and as he approaches their home, the smell of burning wood fills his nostrils. As he expected, he sees their crops have been ruined and their home has been burned. All that remains is the stone fireplace in the middle of the structure.

He looks out over the path of destruction, and while he has no reason to expect any less based on the latest pronouncements received from the Crown, before today he had a ray of hope that maybe they were just idle threats. The English made clear the consequences for those involved in attacking the new settlements. In the center of his being, Samuel feels his rage gradually building up inside him before it finally makes its way out in a scream of anguish. He swears that if it's the last thing he does he will make the bastards pay for what they have done.

The house can be rebuilt in the same place or someplace else, but the prospect of not ever being able to live here again and the humiliation of having their lands taken from them is more painful. Knowing there is nothing else he can do in the moment to save anything that hasn't already be destroyed, he takes the road leading to homes of his siblings and his mother to make sure they are safe.

He thinks back to how the day started. Since the previous evening, he was in a neighboring county, and as usual, causing trouble. They heard a caravan of several families was on its way to one of the newer settlements, so Samuel and his cohorts decided to give them a message. Just as the sun began to disappear over the horizon, they swooped in, threatening them and taking some of their supplies. Then they disappeared into the woods, only to come back and do it again a short time later.

After they were done with their little game, they got a couple of hours of sleep and then began to make their way home, still in the dark of the night. As daylight broke, they saw the first bonfires. From as long as Samuel can remember, this has been their way of communicating with each other. He knew by the size of the bonfires and their locations, that this message was clear: the English were coming. King James' proclamation said people either had to agree to their terms or risk having their properties destroyed to make way for others loyal to the Crown.

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They all knew this day would likely come, they just didn't know when. By the time Samuel and his group got to John O'Reilly's place, they knew this was the day they had been dreading. His was the first of many homes they saw burned to the ground, as crops and everything else was destroyed in the process. Unfortunately, the English got to O'Reilly before he could escape and they made a spectacle of the ordeal. As they carried out their orders, they tied John to a post, making him and his family watch as they obliterated everything in sight. Afterward, they gave him a sound beating while he was still tied, stopping only when his wife was able to free herself from their grasp and put herself between her husband and the blows. Fortunately, the English hadn't caused any physical harm to John's family, but from the look in their eyes, Samuel was sure the emotional scars of what they had witnessed would last for quite some time.

John was actually going to join Samuel and the others on their overnight expedition, but at the end didn't go because he wasn't feeling well. Samuel consoled John's wife as much as he could. She was grief stricken. Even in her state, she had the wherewithal to warn Samuel that they were looking for him and the others as well. She said the English had named each of those in Samuel's small group, along with several others they all knew, saying they were next on the list. She feared for their safety especially after seeing what they did to her husband.

Despite Samuel's desire to go and make sure his own family was safe, he knew that if he came across the English soldiers, he would put not only his life at risk, but also the lives of the others with him. Besides, he was sure his wife would have seen the bonfires and would have taken appropriate action.

Instead, together and from a distance Samuel and his group moved cautiously, following the wake of destruction the English created, watching from afar. They knew they were vastly outnumbered in men and weapons. There was no way of to stop them from carrying out their orders.

The soldiers arrived to Samuel's property early in the afternoon. From a distant hilltop, Samuel watched as they decimated everything he had built. Watching it was one of the most difficult things he had ever had to experience, but he had no

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choice. He could only watch, as he had already done with others in his group, as they watched their places being torched in a similar fashion. Samuel knew today was a lost cause but that they would be back another day to avenge the atrocities they witnessed.

Judging by the amount of smoke and where it was coming from at the time, Samuel imagines the homes of his brothers and sister have also been destroyed. As he comes up over the rise, the worst of his fears are confirmed. The English laid waste to their entire property, burning every structure and uprooting the crops, as well as obliterating anything else in their path.

His mother sees Samuel as he becomes visible and begins walking toward him. When they reach each other, he dismounts, takes her in his arms, and says, "I'm sorry momma, I know this is all my fault. I never thought they would make all of you suffer the consequences for what I've been doing."

His mother admonishes him, telling him they had all warned him time and again this was exactly what was going to happen, but he had refused to listen. When the English came, they were ordered out of their houses, and then instructed to watch as they carried out their mission. Samuel asks her how the rest of the community has fared.

Similar to their own case, the homes of those known to be actively involved in the raids, along with those of their close family members, have been devastated. On the other hand, those who had agreed to the Crown's imposition were spared.

Before going back to get his family, Samuel asks his two brothers, his sister, and his mother to all come together with him. Their respective spouses, as well as his nephews and nieces, are on the periphery. He puts himself in the middle, and as he speaks, he turns slowly, talking to each of them in turn:

"I know this all happened because of me and because of what I've been doing. Right now, I'm not sure how I will do it, but somehow, I will make it all up to you. I'm so very sorry everything came to this, but I must follow my heart and it tells me to oppose the English at all cost. We can't just let them do as they please."

Though his brothers John and Andrew are both older, as is his sister Sarah, they all know that Samuel has been the most

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proactive in their being able to stay on the property as long as they have. They rest have been content to farm the land given to them and to raise their families the best they can. Meanwhile, Samuel has done that, and much more.

From the first time the English came, giving them notice they would need to vacate and move to one of the nearby Plantations, it was Samuel who stood up and said they had no reason to leave, and that they should fight for their rights.

It was Samuel who went to the secret meetings held late at night to upset the English and do their best to drive them out of the lands which had been theirs for hundreds of years. Had it not been for his efforts, they would have had to leave long ago. Nevertheless, the weight of what has happened to his entire family weighs now heavily on his shoulders.

They all realize this and instead of blaming him for what has happened, they simply acknowledge he has done the best he can. It was inevitable they would ultimately have to leave. For several outcast rebels in the area to hold off the English for as long as they have is a lot, so they accept their fate. Yet they are concerned about what will now happen to them.

They instinctively turn to Samuel for direction, and he doesn't disappoint them. He has already been thinking of families in the area who might be willing to help them. After sharing his thoughts with them, he rides back to where he left his wife and children.

He goes through the same routine, making sure no one sees him enter their hideaway. As he is about to push the lever and move the rock, he is suddenly overcome with the emotion of the entire day. He begins weeping. Lydia hears him and goes to the opening, activating the lever and bringing him inside.

Each of Samuel's children look at him. None of them can remember ever having seen him cry as he is now doing. They instinctively all go to him to console him in his anguish. His chest becomes tight and his sobs are short and gasping, as if he is trying to get more air into his lungs. After several minutes pass, he is finally able to get a hold of his emotions. Sobs continue to come forth, now and again, as he tells them what has happened to their family and to others in the county.

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Samuel decides it would be best for them to stay where they are for the rest of the night. They are equipped to be able to stay in the cave for several days if necessary. While it isn't absolutely necessary, he chooses to take this time to be close to his family, which is most important to him.

His mood swings over the next several hours come in waves which sweep over him. After his initial grief, he becomes calm and is grateful, considering it a blessing that no one was killed, and knowing fortunately they are all healthy. After their kids go to sleep, he is alone talking with Lydia. His emotions again turn to rage, feeling helpless at having been unable to do anything to stop the English soldiers from destroying everything they have worked so hard to build. Finally, his anger turns once again to grief, and tears once again flow from his eyes. His wife comforts him, urging him to hold on to his faith in God, knowing everything will resolve itself, one way or another.

Samuel's faith has been strong, and it is one of the biggest reasons he and others have opposed the English. Besides wanting the Irish to live in their pagan ways, they also are adamant about the Irish adopting the Church of England, which to them is paramount to sacrilege. Lydia cites several biblical stories to Samuel, doing her best to lift his spirits and give him hope. Though he understands her intent and appreciates what she is trying to do, when she is finished, he simply replies:

"I'm sorry, Lydia, but right now, I don't know what to think. I know God must exist, but right now he doesn't seem to be paying any attention to us, and if He is, how could He possibly let this happen?"

## **1638: Fight or Flee**

### **Fight Fear**

**The Griegos  
October 1638  
Santa Cruz, 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



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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

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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



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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.

## **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 is strong which takes him downstream quickly. He once again hears the sound of the

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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 she 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

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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 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

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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?"

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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.

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“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

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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."



## ***1658: Resist Conformity***

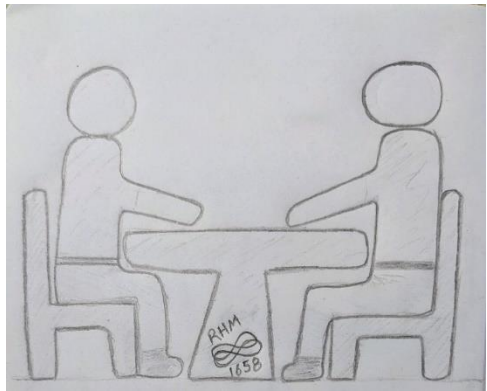
### **Challenge Convention**

#### **The Griegos**

**May 1658**

**Santa Cruz, New Mexico**

Jose Eduardo arrives at his parent's house with his tribe in tow. His wife, Elsa, keeps their four children moving in the right direction as they approach the gate leading into the property. After closing the gate behind them, the kids are free to roam. They quickly go in search of their cousins. Jose Eduardo and Elsa relax their guard once they see their kids running toward the house. This is a weekly routine to which they are well accustomed. Every Sunday after church, together with his siblings and their families, they gather here for dinner.



As is usually the case, most of those present are sitting or standing on the ample front porch, which at this time of day provides a shady refuge from the sun's penetrating rays. They greet all present with a short embrace and kiss on the cheek as is their custom. They are surprised to see a drink prepared with what appears to be fresh fruit.

“Where did you get the fruit; has it been growing on some trees all winter in a secret hiding place we don't know about?”

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Elsa asks, her eyebrows arching slightly surprised to see fruit at this time of the year.

Her sister-in-law, Maria Isabella, explains they preserved the fruit from last season and were saving it for a special occasion. She suspects she is pregnant and that their family will soon be adding another member, so she wants to celebrate the day with something special. The cool spring afternoon with fresh buds of green on the trees promise to bring more fruit in the months to come, but for now are just starting the process of producing the succulent bounty which will soon populate its branches and end up with a similar fate as the drink they now enjoy.

Inside, they find Jose Eduardo's mother, Carolina, bustles around the kitchen, as usual. They greet her and put their contribution for the meal on the table while they chit chat about the day and the church service. She quickly chases them out of the kitchen, telling them she has things to do, and urging them to go out on the porch with the others, refusing their offer to help her by saying she has everything under control.

Outside once again, José Eduardo and Elsa gravitate to where the men are gathered around Juan Junior, Jose Eduardo's father, who sits in the most comfortable chair on the porch.

"Juanto and Antjo, my brothers in arms," Jose Eduardo says jokingly, addressing his brothers by their nicknames, as he approaches them and grabs each by an arm. "How are you both doing, and where's the whiskey?"

On cue, they produce a bottle hidden behind their father's chair. Jose Eduardo briefly looks to his glass, which he had left on the table before going inside. It's still more than half full with juice. He notes that the others seem to be drinking their whiskey with the same fresh juice his sister-in-law has prepared.

"I understand we have cause for celebration," he tells his brother-in-law, Pedro. "My sister says you are expecting to bless us with another child. What's it going to be this time?"

"Well, just as you and Elsa have two boys and two girls, I suppose I am hoping for another girl to round out our bunch with two and two, but I believe Marisa would like another boy."

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Jose Eduardo nods and then asks, “How does the whiskey taste with the juice?”

When they all assure him the combination tastes quite good, he takes a drink of the fruit juice to empty the glass some more and then puts his glass out for them to fill it with the golden liquid. He mixes the concoction with his finger, puts his finger into his mouth, tastes it, and pleased with the results, pops his finger in his mouth as he takes it out.

“Who taught you your manners, Joed?” Elsa asks her husband, feigning a frown and laughing at his antics.

“He did!” Jose Eduardo replies, pointing immediately to his father, who they all know is in the habit of doing the same thing.

“Seed doesn’t fall far from the tree,” Juan Junior responds, affirming his son’s accusation with a wink and a nod.

After their brief interchange, Elsa takes a healthy sip of her juice, and then thrusts her glass forward, asking for equal treatment as her husband. The only difference in their style is that instead of mixing the drink with her finger, she finds a twig on the ground, picks it up and twirls it around a few times to mix the whiskey with the juice before throwing the twig back on the ground.

“You know, Elsa, it’s probably worse using the twig than your finger,” her husband tells her jokingly, “who knows what that twig has been through? At least I know I washed my hands this morning.”

“That’s exactly the problem, honey. No one knows what your hands have been doing since then. More than likely the twig has just been lying there all day, who knows what you’ve been up to?” Several people laugh at her joke and agree that her twig was likely cleaner than his hands.

Jose Eduardo’s sisters and his sister-in-law sit off to the other side of the porch, momentarily distracted by the exchange between Elsa and the men before getting back to their conversation. Elsa pays little attention to them. She is more comfortable drinking whiskey with the men, than talking with the women about anything at all.

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Since Elsa was younger, she has always been something of a tomboy. She was always more prone to go chasing frogs in the creek with her brothers, than to stay home playing dolls with her sisters. Her older brothers initially didn't take kindly to their kid sister tagging along with them, but their mother insisted they watch over her whenever she was with them. They had no other choice than to put up with her, or bear the wrath of their mother. It wasn't long before they found she could keep up with them just about everywhere they went, so they got used to her being around them since long ago.

Jose Eduardo, in large part, fell in love with just this part of Elsa. Her adventurous spirit and independent thought captivated him from early on. She was never one to sit back taking orders, instead being much more likely to be the one to come forward and give them. He can't imagine being married to someone more interested in cooking and sewing than in hunting and fishing. As far as he is concerned, they make a good pair. While some of the women have some jealousy issues regarding Elsa's choice to spend time with the men rather than the women, she doesn't flirt with them, nor has she every given Jose Eduardo cause to be jealous, so it works out most of the time. He enjoys his wife's company and her enthusiasm for life, regardless of what other might say about her behavior.

After having a couple of drinks, and when everyone has arrived, they get ready for dinner. In short order, they expertly convert the veranda into a dining room and sit down to eat. The adults are at one large table in the middle, while the children are split between two smaller tables positioned off to the sides, where the adults can keep an eye on them.

There is no fixed order as to where everyone sits, yet with few exceptions, they generally sit in the same place every time. Juan Junior, as patriarch, sits at the head of the table with his wife, Carolina, to his left. Beside her sit their two daughters, followed by their daughter in law, with their respective husbands sitting directly in front of them on the other side of the table. Juan Antonio, the only sibling who is not married and with no kids, sits to his father's right and directly in front of his mother. At the other end of the table, Jose Eduardo sits next to his brother, while Elsa, sits at the foot of the table, with one open space to her right.

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As is typical, Elsa chooses not to conform, electing to be the only woman not on their side of the table.

For many years, Elsa originally sat in front of her husband, keeping all the women on one side and the men on the other, with the exception of Juan Junior at the head of the table. Then one day, there was a heated discussion between Elsa and her sister-in-law, Petra. That same day, Elsa took it upon herself to move to the foot of the table, and she has sat there ever since. Juan Junior actually enjoys having his feisty daughter-in-law sitting across from him, at the other end of the table, since many of the liveliest of discussions at dinnertime involve the two of them.

After serving themselves, and as is their custom, Juan Junior elects someone to say grace. Today he asks Elsa to do the honors. She is briefer and more concise than usual with her prayer. This leads the older man to believe she has something on her mind, so he asks her about the abbreviated version of the blessing after they have served themselves.

“It just seems to me that there is so much hypocrisy in the church,” she says, her voice challenging anyone to say otherwise, as is often her style. “I wonder sometimes if all they tell us is just a well thought out story.”

“Why do you say that, Elsa,” her husband asks, taking the bait immediately and opening the door for his wife to express what she feels. By now, they all know her well enough to figure that until she has her say, the conversation will likely go nowhere other than where she wants to direct it.

“In church, they talk a lot about doing good deeds, and about redemption for when we are bad,” she pauses momentarily looking at each of them. She has obviously been thinking a lot about this and biding her time for the right opportunity to voice her opinion. “But, does that really happen in actuality?”

As is typically the case, the women roll their eyes with Elsa’s rhetorical question, focusing on their food, and settling in to listen to Elsa’s diatribe, as the men do the same.

“Let’s take the case of our coming to the new world, to ‘civilize’ the uncivilized Indians, who, by the way, have been here for hundreds of years since long before we got here. Do we really

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think that we are doing them a favor by getting them to change their ways and their beliefs to follow ours?”

They all realize she doesn't expect an answer to her question and correctly surmise that she will continue talking if they say nothing.

“They seemed to be doing just fine since before we got here. Since we arrived and began to institute our way of life upon them, it seems to me they are worse off, rather than better off. The other day, I was talking to one of the Indian women in the village who now basically works as a slave with no wages or other benefits. She was telling me about how the Indians have lived off this land for centuries, careful to avoid disrupting the delicate balance between nature and man. She explained how carefully they worked to live in harmony with the land rather to simply take advantage of it, as the settlers tend to do. She pointed out how, since we arrived in these parts, that the Indian have been ravaged by disease and pestilence.”

“And you believe this to be true?” Juan Junior asks between bites. “I would say that by converting them to be God fearing people, we are helping them, don't you think, Elsa?”

“No, I don't think we are helping them, nor do I doubt we have done more harm than good for them since we got here. Every Sunday, we hear about what we should do to live in God's good grace, to get to Heaven; but then as quickly as we walk out the door, we forget about all we have learned.

“Don't get me wrong. I believe much of what is taught in the Bible, and much of what we learn on Sundays is valuable. I just think it's our adherence to the rules and regulations which leaves much to be desired. When we are unable to live by God's intention and do break the rules, be it by intent or by mistake, all we need do is to say a few 'Hail Mary's, in order to be forgiven and go merrily on our way. I'm sorry,” she says shaking her head, “I'm just not buying it. I don't think we can undo all the bad we do in the world by simply uttering a few convenient phrases. It seems to me that to be a good Catholic, we need to do much more than to have good intentions, and apologize for our actions when we are unable to do so.”

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“So, what would you propose?” Jose Eduardo asks his wife. Knowing her, he is confident that she has already thought of a solution.

She doesn't disappoint him:

“I think we should leave the Indians alone with their thoughts and their beliefs. Maybe we could even learn a thing or two from them about living a better life and staying away from temptation.”

“It seems to me that there is something else beyond what you've just told us that is bothering you Elsie, what is it?” Jose Eduardo asks, correctly guessing that what his wife has just mentioned is the tip of the iceberg of what is really bothering her.

Elsa is quiet momentarily, judging the mood of each of those at the table. As tends to be the case, the women are paying little attention to her, or at least pretending not to do so. Her husband is encouraging her to express herself, despite any repercussions, as he usually does. The other men, with the exception of her father-in-law, seem to be minding their own business, in their own worlds, so as to not raise the ire of their respective spouses with any kind of a response to her which they might have to pay for later on when they get home. Besides her husband, only her father-in-law and mother-in-law seem to be truly interested in what she has to say, so she directs her comments more to the three of them than any of the others at the table.

“The woman I was just telling me about confided in me regarding the behavior of several men we know well regarding their treatment of the Indians. What she described is reprehensible.”

She briefly has the attention of all of them, as they are eager to know what the woman said. Elsa goes into great detail about how the Spaniards not only took everything of value on a recent raid of their village, but also had their way with several of the women who could do nothing but succumb to their wishes, or risk losing their lives. One of those women is now pregnant with what she is sure is the child of the Spaniard who raped her.

“In what world and under what religion can this be acceptable?” she demands, after she finishes telling her story. “Do any of you believe that our religion condones such behavior and that we are truly any better than them?”

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Again, though a question of importance has been proposed, they are all quiet, chewing their food and focusing on their plates, rather than venturing into a discussion with Elsa, who can be so passionate about her beliefs and so scathing with her words.

When no one answers, she continues:

“That’s what I thought,” she says when no one speaks up. “A bunch of fearful chickens afraid to speak up against the atrocities we know to be true. We talk about living honorable and respectable lives, except when it doesn’t behoove us to do so. We talk about redemption and salvation in a world which may or may not exist, while those around us suffer the consequences of our actions.”

Carolina is normally accepting of her daughter-in-law’s diatribes, understanding that she is simply expressing her own frustrations. Now with Elsa questioning their most fundamental religious beliefs, she can remain quiet no longer:

“Are you saying that you don’t believe in redemption, in Heaven, or in a life after this one, Elsa?”

She considers her mother-in-law’s question carefully before answering. “I do believe it is a possibility, but far from a certainty. Heaven may be open to those of us who have led decent lives, but I don’t think it would be for those committing these terrible acts this woman told me about, no matter how much they repent for their actions, or how many times they confess to having committed them. What they are doing by subjugating and torturing the local population is wrong, there’s no two ways about it as far as I’m concerned.”

Juan Junior, more than any of those present, has borne witness to just how evil the Spaniards can be with the Indians. Though he has never instigated any of the terrible things Elsa is talking about, he has been present when they have taken place, so he knows what she is saying is fact rather than fiction, but he wisely decides to say nothing, instead deferring to his wife, who has set the conversation going in a different direction.

“And in this Heaven of yours, which would not allow certain people in based on their actions, would you get in based on yours?” Carolina asks, curious as to how Elsa will judge herself.



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“That’s a good question, and I would have to say that up until fairly recently, I did think that regardless of my shortcomings, I would go to Heaven. Now I’m not so sure.”

Now it is her husband who looks at her, surprised with her confession and not sure what to think. “Is there something I don’t know about, Elsa? Maybe you have a sin or two that I’m not aware of, or perhaps a lover? I thought we told each other everything, but now it seems like maybe you have been holding out on me.”

“No nothing like that, Joed. I have never done anything for you to be ashamed, and you do know many of my thoughts and dreams. But that doesn’t mean I haven’t thought about being with someone else, or dreamed about things that I haven’t told you about.” Jose Eduardo, moves his chair slightly, facing her now more directly. “You mean you have thought of being with someone else, romantically?”

Elsa sees she has painted herself into a corner she didn’t want to be in, with no escape. As is her style, she is forthright and honest. “Yes, I have thought about it, though I have never acted on any of my fantasies involving anyone else other than you.”

“And just who have you fantasized about, Elsa?” Jose Eduardo’s normally trusting nature as to his wife’s thoughts and actions is suddenly in question by him and others at the table. The men wondering if they might be the object of her fantasies, and the women are also wondering about where Elsa’s thoughts take her.

“I won’t go into details with you, Joed, or with anyone else, about my most private thoughts. What I will say is that I am willing to bet that I’m not the only one with fantasies. I’ve seen the way you look at the butcher’s daughter, Joed, and I’m sure your thoughts and intentions about her are far from noble.”

Her husband becomes quiet, knowing that his secret lusting after the butcher’s daughter is no longer a secret to any of them, least of all to his wife.

“We all like to pretend to be so holy and righteous, when the reality is that sinful thoughts can populate our minds at the most uncommon of times. If our minds could write an accurate depiction of our thoughts, likely much of what is written would not be fit to be read in public venues.”

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“Speak for yourself,” Maria Ines replies, indignant as to her sister-in-law’s alleged mind reading capabilities.

“So, Marines, are you trying to tell me that you have never had an impure thought, or have never done something you were later sorry for doing?”

Knowing that she is likely to lose in any kind of a verbal battle with her sister-in-law, Maria Ines says nothing, instead simply staring back at her in defiance to show her disapproval, but refusing to answer.

“Who of us has not thought an impure thought, at some point in our lives? The bible tells us that it is quite common. Afterall, we are taught that we are born with the handicap of original sin. Yet rather than try to stay away from it and focus on trying to live a good, and honest life, instead we are told that it is okay if we stray every once in a while, as long as we confess our sins. If we repent properly, we can still be admitted into Heaven with a golden ticket, even if it has been tarnished a bit along the way by our actions. Instead of teaching us not to sin and to live a good life, we are instead told that when we do sin, we have an immediate fix to make it right. Isn’t that convenient?”

Elsa looks around the table to see who might have the audacity to challenge her and her thought process. The only one willing to take her on this time is Juan Junior, who despite his occasional misgivings about religion, remains firm in his faith in God and in their ability to get to Heaven despite being imperfect beings.

“I think this is exactly what religion does tell us Elsa. We are taught to do the best we can with what we have been given, then to forgive ourselves and others, when we are not able to do so. I don’t see any hypocrisy in our faith, or in our path to reach Heaven. It seems like it’s pretty well spelled out in the Bible. They are precepts that have withstood the test of time and been lived by for hundreds of years. Who are you to question what we hold to be true?”

Elsa knows from experience that she can count on her father-in-law for a lively debate on just about any subject. While her husband and the other men seldom call her on her antics, Juan

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Junior enjoys a spirited conversation and is no way threatened by her presence or by her ideas.

“All I’m saying is that during the week, we should walk the talk we hear on Sunday mornings. Instead of just taking for granted that we will be pardoned for any sin, whether acted on or imagined, we should live what we are taught. Isn’t one of our religion’s basic precepts that we should treat others as we would want to be treated ourselves? Should we rape and pillage our neighbors, when we would not like for them to do so to us?”

They all know she has a point and that there is little to nothing they can do to change her opinion on just about anything, let alone her religious beliefs, so they say nothing.

“I just think that if we are going to walk into church on Sunday straight and tall, that we should live a life justifying us doing so. Instead, we find people, who sin throughout the week, go into church with their heads hung Sunday morning, and walk out later on absolved of any wrong doing and free to do so again whenever they like. We can’t just blindly follow where others may lead, regardless of the consequences. If we do, we may very well be led off of the proverbial cliff that drops into the oblivion of eternity.”

## Flow with Change

### The McKees

May 1658

County Antrim, Ireland

Liam’s family is gathered in his living room. They have just finished dinner and the adults are relaxing on a lazy Sunday afternoon, while the children play. He does a quick mental count to make sure everyone who is important for his proposal is present. Seeing they are, and sensing the time is now right for what he has in mind, he stands up to speak. As he does, the others become quiet, aware something important is about to happen, since he was so insistent, they all be here today for their traditional Sunday dinner.

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“I have been waitin’ for this day for quite some time,” Liam begins. “Since my mother died, some 18 years ago, this community has embraced all of us. We’ve all grewed up here together as individuals and as a family. For that I am eternally grateful.”

He suddenly becomes more emotional than he thought he might be. Seeing his loved ones before him makes him realize the significance of what he is about to say. After collecting himself, he continues. “I know my mood lately has been rather sour, and I’m sorry for all of you who have had to put up with me, especially to you, Hannah,” he says to his wife. “I know how difficult it must be for you to deal with my moodiness and I’m sure the rest of you has sensed it as well. For some time now, I have realized somethin’ has not quite been right with my life, but I really couldn’t put my finger on what was wrong.”

Liam’s gaze looks at each of those present. On one couch, Billy Boy, his oldest son and namesake sits next to his wife, Ruth, along with his second son, Alexander and his wife Anna. His three daughters, Lydia, Edith and Hannah Elizabeth are on a second couch, flanked on one side by Lydia’s husband James, and with his youngest son James on the other side next to his sister. Only Edith’s husband is missing from the group. Hannah sits off to the side on a chair observing the others and her husband, who is acting strange.

“Several months ago, I was sitting by myself, close to the stream relaxin’ in the sun, and it suddenly came to me. I realized what I was missing.” He is quiet momentarily before adding, “I miss my extended family.”

While he wasn’t very close to his mother’s family growing up, Liam’s father and his side of the family were always present. Now, many years later, he realizes the bond which at one time was so strong between them has slowly fizzled away.

“When my mother died, I lost contact with my father after he remarried and moved north. Shortly thereafter I lost my siblings as well, when we moved here. There has been an empty space they once filled, and until the other day, I couldn’t put my finger on the loss I felt. Now I realize what I was missing. It has to do, in great part, with all of you and what you represent to me.” He

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pauses, looking at each in turn, before continuing. “More important than anythin’ else in the world to me is my family.”

Everyone is taken aback by his manner. In particular, his wife Hannah is concerned with what he is saying, and how he is saying it.

“Aren’t we enough family for you, Liam?” she asks, hurt with what he says and implies with his words. “This family, the one you have right here?”

“Yes, you are enough for me, Hannah, and each of you are more important to me than you can possibly imagine,” he says, doing his best to calm her anxiety. “I am grateful to each of you here, for what you have all brought into my life. Especially for you, my dear wife, I am so blessed to have you; and for you my children, along with your families, for the hope you give me for the future. I am also grateful to your family and friends, Hannah, who welcomed us all into this community when we had almost nothing.”

“So, what is it then, Liam, what are you trying to tell us. You’re worrying me, I’ve never seen you talk like this.” Hannah looks to their children and their significant others, before addressing her husband again, now in a more informal and direct manner usually reserved for when they are together. “Maybe you coulda told me in private you was gonna go crazy, rather than gatherin’ everyone here to do so like this.” She shakes her head in disbelief, spreading her arms out before her. “What’s gotten into you, Liam? Have you gone bonkers?”

The mood is tense in the room. Although Liam has rehearsed what he wants to say time and time again in his head, he feels now almost as if he isn’t a part of what is happening. Almost as if he is outside of his body looking down upon the situation from above, seeing each of his family members and their loved ones as if in a dream with him addressing them from below.

“Because of everyone here, in this area, we have all been able to make our lives and grow with our families. Yet, recently I have become painfully aware of this void in my inner soul. As a result, I put out inquiry as to my father’s whereabouts.”

They are all surprised since it has been so long since mention of Liam’s family has been made. Their children were all quite

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young when they moved to this area and none of them remember any of their father's relatives. Though they know they exist, none of them have met them, nor could they recognize them on the street if they were to come across one another.

“Do you remember, Hannah, last week when I went to the coast to pick up the delivery for the mill?” She acknowledges that she does remember it, and thought it odd for him to go since he isn't normally the one to do so. “Part of the reason for that trip was to see my father, whose address I found through a friend of a friend.”

“Oh, my goodness, Liam, why hadn't you told me about this?” Hannah says, her voice wavering and incredulous with anger.

“I know I should have told you, Hannah, and I also realize that I probably should have talked to you in private before bringing everyone else into this discussion. After thinking long and hard about it, I decided this was the best way for me to make a proposal to all of you. All on equal footing, and all at the same time.”

“So, pray tell, what did you find out? Don't keep us hangin' like this, Liam,” Hannah is indignant he would not first consult with her about what wants to say, which seems so important to him.

“Well, I found out my father, Samuel, isn't doing too well health-wise. He's been sick now on and off for about a year, and the doctor isn't sure what's wrong with him.”

“And what about your brothers John and Andrew, and your sister Sarah. I heard years ago they had also moved north.”

Liam is surprised she even remembers their names since it has been so long since they have even talked about them.

“My father told me Andrew died in a freak accident several years ago. As for Sarah and John, as you say, Hannah, they have both relocated north as well and live fairly close to my father, his wife and their three kids.”

They all soak in the information, momentarily considering what Liam is telling them. They are now discovering relatives

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they imagined existed, but whom they never knew anything about.

“I heard that your father converted to Presbyterian along with that new wife of his,” Hannah says, her tone indicating disapproval. “Is that true?”

“Yes, it is, Hannah, and I must say, it seems to be suitin’ them just fine. I was happy to see how well they live, and how well respected my father has become in the community. His wife, Rose Marie, is the daughter of the deacon of their church and together they’ve done very well for themselves. So well, in fact, that my father promised me that for any of us that want to move there, he can get us good paying jobs at a new linen factory in town and help us to get settled.

“After a lot of soul searchin’, I have decided that I would like to go and live there for a while, to be close to my father. I know all of you have your lives pretty well set up here, but I would like to take my father up on his offer and would love for any of you, or all of you, to come with me.”

“Well, how nice for you to include me in your plans,” Hanna says with contempt riddled in her manner. “Besides wantin’ to leave me, do you want to convert to their heathen religion as well? How can you even consider goin’ to live among them?”

“I imagined you might not be happy with me, honey, and I know how much you like to be with your family here. That’s why I really didn’t count on you necessarily wanting to go with me, though I would love for you to do so, along with the rest of you as well,” he says to include all present. “I would like for you all to accompany me on this new adventure in life. I feel it could bring great opportunities for all of us. I’m not sure how much more time my father has to live, and I feel that going to live close to him and his family now is the right thing to do.”

They are all quiet initially, each of them soaking in the information their father has just given them. Each considering their options. The first to speak is Edith.

“I understand what you want to do father, and I encourage you to do it. As you know, my husband, George, is right now doing something very similar, taking care of his elderly parents who are both failing in health.”

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“Yes, I have thought of George quite a lot recently, sweetheart. Thanks for your support. I know it has been difficult for you since he left several months ago, and I imagined I might cause similar hardship on all of you with what I have planned. That is why I would like all of you to come with me, and this is why I wanted everyone together to make my proposal.”

“I would love to join you, father, but I’m afraid that with George gone, it would just be too difficult for me and the children to join you,” Edith adds, with regret in her tone.

“I also wish you the best, father, on your endeavor,” says the oldest of the siblings, Billy Boy, “and would like to join you, but I’m afraid it too would be too hard for us as well.” He turns to his wife for her thoughts and she nods, knowing that it would be quite difficult for them to move to another place, particularly considering the fact that her husband is so important to her own father’s business.

Hannah’s original displeasure with her husband seems to be waning slightly but she says nothing for the time being, anxious to see what her other children might say.

Their daughter Lydia turns to her husband and asks, “What do you think, James, would you be game to move to a new place and a new job?”

He looks up to the ceiling, scratches his head, and then nods his head slowly before speaking. “I think I might be able to make it happen, but I would first need to talk to my partners to see if we can work something out. It might take a while to get everything set, but yes, I could use a change of environment, and I think it would be great for our kids to get to know your father’s side of the family.”

Of the other children, the youngest, James and Hannah Elizabeth, both say they would be willing to go. James has been seeing a girl he likes for several months, but has no other ties, and Hannah Elizabeth, who is a single mother with a four-year-old son, depends on her parents to help her get by. Her ultimate decision, she realizes, will be influenced heavily by what her mother decides since she relies so much upon her, but she is willing to accept her father’s proposal from the get go.



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With almost all of the children speaking their mind, except for Alexander, which is not unusual, everyone's attention turns to Hannah, who considers carefully not only her husband's proposition, but also the manner in which he chose to make it. She shakes her head back and forth with a sardonic smile before speaking to her husband.

"Liam, you are a work of art and a tricky devil to the last card. You know that if you would have approached me first that I likely would have said no, and nipped your idea in the bud. Instead, you have now got several of our kids willin' to join you on your wild eyed adventure with no more than a few choice words. I should say no, just to spite you. There are many things I do not like about your idea, but instead of declinin' right now, I will instead give you a definite: maybe."

This is all Liam needs to hear. He kneels down beside Hannah, takes her hands in his and smothers them in kisses. "I know this is a lot for you to take in, honey, and I do apologize for springing all of this on you in this way. As the old saying goes: I figured it would be better to ask for forgiveness later than for permission beforehand."

"You sly old fox, you tricked me this time, and while I wish you wouldn't have brought all this up just you did, I think I understand why you did it. Can I make a suggestion?" "Sure, Hannah, whatever you want, honey," he agrees.

"You go along first. Maybe you can take James with you and then when you are able to get a place, and get settled, the rest of us who want to, and can go, will follow. How does that sound?"

The first sincere and genuine smile most of them have seen from their father in ages spreads across his face, dominating his expression as joy exudes from his inner soul. "Thank you, dear, you've just made me the happiest man in the world."

# ***1680: Compassionate Intolerance***

## **Show Compassion**

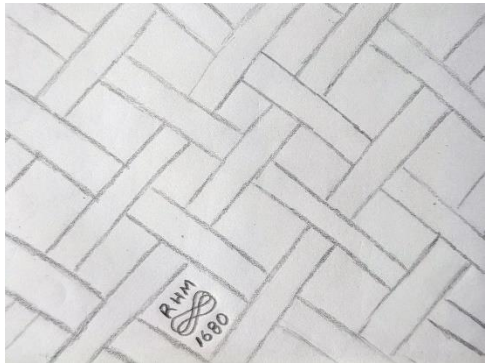
### **The Griegos**

**August 1680**

**Santa Cruz, New Mexico**

As Elsa and Jose Eduardo prepare for dinner, Elsa's Indian friend, Nambe, shows up at the door, asking her to step outside for a moment. Since this happens from time to time, Jose Eduardo thinks nothing of it, going about setting the table and getting things ready for dinner.

After a short while, Elsa comes back in looking as if she has just seen a ghost. Immediately, Jose Eduardo notices her change in demeanor and asks what's wrong. After a moment of looking blankly into space, she turns toward him and says:



“We need to leave.”

“Go where, Elsie? We can go wherever you want to go after dinner, everything is ready now, should I call Francisco, or will you?”

She looks back at him, her eyes and expression indicating the importance of what she is telling him. She tells him point blank, they need to leave their home, and they need to do it now. She goes on to explain her friend, who just left, told her that at daybreak tomorrow, all settlements in the area will be to be attacked in a revolt led by the Pueblo Indians.

## 1680: Compassionate Intolerance

He stops what he is doing and considers what she has just told him.

“If we are attacked, aren’t we better off staying here in our cellar to wait it out, as we have done before?”

“She told me that this time will be different. She tells me that anyone who is found in any of the Spanish settlements tomorrow morning will be killed, and that all structures will be burned or destroyed. She took a risk in coming to tell me, but she told me that under no circumstances should we stay, and that the farther away we are by morning, the better off we will be.”

Jose Eduardo now understands the urgency of her message and takes no time in making a firm decision. “Go get Francisco, he’s outside by the orchard. I’ll start packing what I can and gather the animals. Put the food in some containers and we’ll take it for the road.”

After telling her youngest son Francisco, who is the only one of their children still living with them, what is happening. Elsa instructs him to go to the homes his four siblings, who all live close by, to inform them as well. Once ready, and as soon as possible, everyone is to meet where the rivers come together.

The next moments are a mass of confusion and activity in all of their households. All this due to few words of friendly advice from Elsa’s longtime Indian friend. While there have been other scares before, and on other occasions they have been warned of impending trouble, this is the first warning which comes directly from the source of the danger, so they pay particularly close attention.

Jose Eduardo, Elsa and Francisco meet their other grown children, Jose Jr., Josefa, Samuel, and Maria along with their respective families as planned. They begin their journey heading south, just as the sun begins fading in the distance. When they come to the fork in the road leading to Santa Fe, which is where Jose Eduardo assumed they were going to take advantage of the protection of the Spanish forces, Elsa tells them that instead, they must follow the river. Though the path is more difficult and less traveled, she was assured by Nambe that if they went that way, they would be safe.

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They continue through the night, and as the sun peeks out over the eastern horizon, they finally stop for the first time, since beginning their journey. All together they have a total of five wagons filled with whatever they could get together before leaving hurriedly, along with their livestock in tow.

Elsa takes out the containers with the meal they had prepared the night before, and together with additional food from the others, they all sit down to eat and talk for the first time together about what is happening. Her youngest son, Francisco, who is curious by nature, asks his mother if she has always been friendly with the Indians.

Elsa looks at him, and then to her other children and grandchildren who are gathered around. She considers all they have been through as a family over the years. Their hardships and sorrows, their hopes and joys. She senses the apprehension several have regarding their decision to leave their homes on such notice. Though no one has yet voiced their dissent, she is relatively sure some are not completely convinced what they are doing is the right thing to do.

“Francisco, what you need to understand is that I have seen many things in my lifetime and experienced many others.” She pauses, looks around, and takes a deep breath before continuing. “I have seen terrible things done in the name of justice, which are quickly covered up as if they never happened; and great things which have been done which are supposed to be bad, but which may not be so. I have seen atrocities committed by men who I thought were honorable, and kindness bestowed from the most unlikely of sources. The short answer is, no, sweetheart, I was not always so friendly towards the Indians. The long answer is that at first, I feared them, and I’m not afraid to say, I spent many a sleepless night wondering if one might come through a window to try rape me or kill me, or both.”

“So, what happened?” Francisco asks with curiosity in his tone. “For as long as I can remember, you and Nambe have been friends. How did that happen and what changed?”

Though they have all heard bits and pieces of Elsa’s very outspoken opinions over the years, none of them, even her older children, can ever remember hearing how her friendship with Nambe started. It’s not something Elsa likes to talk about, though

## 1680: Compassionate Intolerance

her husband does know the details of their friendship. She feels now might be the right time to talk openly about what happened for the first time to anyone other than Jose Eduardo.

She chooses her words carefully. While all her children are old enough to understand, her grandchildren are still young. She doesn't want them to misunderstand or misinterpret what she says. She explains that the woman they all know as Nambe, is actually named Eyota, which in their language means great. She goes on to explain that many from her tribe, the Nambe, identify themselves by the name of their people.

The two of them met when Elsa was very young, several years before she met Jose Eduardo. She tells them about a raid by the Indians, when she was about 12 years old. One of the Pueblo warriors was dragging her away to have his way with her, when Nambe's brother, who was also a warrior, saw what was happening. He intervened, and though it caused friction between the two men, he held his ground, determined to protect Elsa from being taken against her will.

Sometime later, Elsa wanted to thank the man for what he had done. She found out who he was, and later learned his sister came to town a once a week for provisions. Elsa approached her and told her what her brother had done. They quickly became fast friends. Though Elsa has been chastised for talking to Nambe, they have continued to meet clandestinely from time to time over the years. Now, at 48 years of age, Elsa considers Nambe to be like a sister.

"One of the things I have learned through our friendship," she explains, "is that we need to be compassionate to the needs of others. Though we supposedly are the superior race for having originally come from Spain, and have several advancements the Indians do not, I am convinced we have much we can learn from the Indians."

"Mother how can we be compassionate with someone who wants to take everything we have and kill us?" Josefa, her oldest daughter, asks.

Elsa understands the dichotomy of thought between what she is trying to convey to them and the reality of them now fleeing in fear of the Indians.

## 1680: Compassionate Intolerance

“Yours is a good question, Josefa, and one I have struggled with for many years. I wish I could tell you that I have an easy answer, but I don’t. What I can tell you is that things aren’t always what they seem, nor do they seem as they are.”

“What do you mean by that, mother?” Francisco asks, as his custom, being the most vocal of all her children, despite being the youngest.

She scratches her head, thinking of how she can make herself understood.

“Son, let’s take for example the way we approach hunting, as opposed the way the Indians do it. We hunt primarily to eat, as do they, but the big difference is what we do with the rest of the animal. We normally discard what we don’t need, leaving it to the elements, whereas the Indians use virtually every part of the animal for one thing or another.”

Jose Eduardo, as is usually the case, remains silent as Elsa talks. In their relationship, he is generally the one who listens and she is the one who talks. He observes each of his children and grandchildren, as she expresses herself. Their children are used to this dynamic and take after their father, in terms of letting her talk, with the exception of Francisco, who seems to have been born full of questions. Of their eight grandchildren, who range in age from six months to 12 years of age, only the oldest are vaguely paying attention, while the others are in their own thoughts, occupied with eating and wandering around the wagons and the animals.

Just as Elsa is about to continue speaking, they see two Indians on horseback approaching. Rather than continue towards the group and confront them, the two go down towards the river and onward without incident. As they do, it is as if everyone becomes made of stone momentarily. Each of them watches as the perceived danger comes and goes.

“What exactly did Nambe tell you mother, and why in such a hurry to leave as we did last night?” Francisco asks.

“A wide spread attack has been planned to push all of the Spaniards from the entire region. She told me that while they have failed before in their efforts, this time she believed they would be successful, and thus her insistence we leave right away.

## **1680: Compassionate Intolerance**

She told me everyone who was in their homes would be massacred, and those on their way to Santa Fe were at risk as well. She told me that as long as we stuck by the river, and away from the main road, we should be safe.”

“Is she reliable, mother?”

“As a friend, I have to say I have no better. So far, what she said seems to hold true, let’s hope it continues that way.”

## **Intolerance Festers**

### **The McKees**

**August 1680**

**County Antrim, Ireland**

Liam wakes up early, as he does most days, and goes about his daily routines. He is anxious for what is to come. He knows today is the day his grandson, along with his family, is coming to visit. Since a little more than a fortnight ago, he can think of nothing else.

His grandson wrote to Liam and his wife, Hannah, telling them his father, Alexander Sr., had passed away. By the time they found out, it was too late to go to his burial, but Liam sent word back to his grandson with their condolences, and also with an invitation for his grandson to come visit with his family.

With their grandson’s reply in the affirmative, they became anxious to see him. The thought of seeing their grandson for the first time in many years, and meeting great-grandchildren, whom they have yet to meet, sent both Liam and Hannah to the moon with anticipation.

Both of them have been like little kids, getting their home ready to greet their family. When Liam and Hannah moved north several years ago, as often happens, family ties were temporarily damaged in some cases, and severed in others. Some of Hannah’s family have come to visit, and they too have been back to visit a few times, but they lost touch completely with Alexander, their second son, who seemed constantly mad at the world, as well as his parents, and anyone else who got in his path. As for their

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oldest son William, who also stayed back when they moved north, they have kept in contact with him through letters over the years and with several visits to share with his family.

It is through William they have stayed abreast of Alexander's family. Liam tried several times to get in touch with his son over the years, but was never able to do so. When Alexander died, William encouraged his nephew, Alex, as most call him, to contact his grandparents and let them know what had happened to his father. As a result of that letter, today is the day they will finally meet the family they have heard so much about but have yet to meet in person.

The morning goes by quickly. Both Hannah and Liam finish their chores quickly. They make some tea and sit on the front porch of their home, anxiously awaiting Alex and his family. As they sit in the silence of their thoughts, their minds' meander through a maze of memories, past and present, weaving them together in different ways.

Hannah thinks of her family back home, and how much she misses those who are still living. Though her mother and father died long ago, she still has siblings and other relatives from the area where Alex lives. She wonders how so much time could have passed so quickly. It seems like only yesterday that she found herself loading a wagon with all their belongings to move to where they are now, to be with Liam's father, Samuel.

Her mind passes to the present. She feels fortunate to be with her husband, and to have their other children and grandchildren close by. She realizes that while not perfect, their lives have been much better since they moved north. Like everyone else, they have had their share of hardships, but the support of her father-in-law, who died four years ago, was tremendous since they first arrived.

Good to his word, after they arrived, Samuel helped his son and daughter-in-law get situated. More than financial help, he gave them moral support to follow their dreams and live their lives as they wanted, and on their terms. One of the most difficult things they had to deal with at the beginning was the change in religion. At first Hannah was quite hesitant to even consider a new religion, much less adopt it. She had been a devout Catholic for her entire life and was proud of it.



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Rose Marie, Samuel's second wife and mother of three of his children, quickly took Hannah under her wing, and they immediately became fast friends. Contemporary in age, they also have similar beliefs about raising children and the importance of family. Liam and Hannah's children have been in the unique position of having aunts and uncles younger than themselves since first moving there. They have all become very close, typically spending most weekends and holidays together.

It was Rose Marie who helped Hannah work through her feelings on religion. Just as Hannah had grown up Catholic her entire life, Rose Marie had done so as a Presbyterian. In Rose Marie's case, religion has been an even more prevalent part of her life since her father was a church deacon. When they began to compare notes regarding the underlying beliefs of each religion, they both agreed to highlight the similarities between the two instead of marking off the differences.

Initially, Hannah went to go to the Catholic church for several Sundays upon first arriving, but then began going with Liam, and the rest of the family to the Presbyterian services. Hannah determined it was more important for her to be with her family on Sundays and during other times of prayer than to adhere to Catholicism.

As for Liam, his thoughts are filled largely with regret: for not having returned to where they lived before more often, for not being able to tell his son how much he loved him before he died, for not being more insistent in his efforts to contact his son.

He wonders if maybe it might have made a difference if he had just shown up at his son's doorstep, while he still could have done so. He imagines things might have worked out differently if he had just managed to see his son one more time to offer his help and direction.

Then he comes back to reality, shakes his head and realizes that what's done is done, what's said, is said. No amount of thinking will change things or bring him back. Many of his friends and family have died over the years, and it never gets easier when another goes, if anything, it gets harder. Perhaps more difficult because knowing that each time another breathes his or her last breath, it could have been him who ended up six feet under.

## 1680: Compassionate Intolerance

Having his son die has taken a heavy toll on Liam's soul, and he feels mixed emotions now as they await his grandson's arrival.

After some time has passed, they see the telltale sign of dust being kicked up on the trail leading to their home off the main road. As their grandson gets closer, neither Liam or Hannah can say they recognize the man who comes forth and embraces them tentatively. The last time they saw him, Alex was only 8 or 9 years old, and even then, it was only for a short time.

He remembers his grandparents vaguely, though they seemed much bigger and larger than life, than they seem now. What is very familiar to him are their voices. Alex introduces them to his wife, Elizabeth, and their four children who all dutifully line up for the introductions.

Liam leads them toward the house and when they get there, he tells the children they can come inside, or go down to the creek just on the other side of the house if they prefer. The two older children choose to go see the stream, while the younger two prefer to stay close to their parents.

After going inside and getting situated, it is Liam who speaks first:

"Alex, I am very sorry for your loss. I don't even know what to say. As you know, I wasn't close to your father, but not of my own choosing. I was never able to get through to him, and unfortunately, we didn't see eye to eye on many things."

"Yes, I know, grandfather, and believe me, no one else knows better than my wife and me how difficult and moody he could be. He didn't see eye to eye with many people on anything."

They are all quiet momentarily, each reflecting on their own memories of Alex's father. They become uncomfortable in the silence. Hannah, always aware of what's going on, breaks the ice by offering them all something to drink. Elizabeth immediately stands up to help her and in short order they all have a drink in front of them and the atmosphere is more relaxed.

Alex asks his grandparents:

## 1680: Compassionate Intolerance

“Why was my father so mean and terrible to everyone, including himself? I could never understand why he had such a terrible way about him.”

It is a question Liam and Hannah have considered over the years many times, without ever coming up with a suitable answer.

Hannah temporarily evades Alex’s question, turning to Elizabeth and asking:

“Tell us about your children.”

Elizabeth lights up as she talks about each of their four children, pointing out each of their characteristics and highlighting what makes each of them special and different.

Besides wanting to know the answer to the question about her great-grandkids, Hannah had another reason for asking it.

“Elizabeth’s description of your own children is the best explanation I can give you, Alex, for your father’s behavior. She shakes her head and looks down to her hands which hold the drink before her, before looking up again to her grandson. “Everybody is different, and your father was perhaps a bit more different than most.”

She looks to Liam, and sees him nodding his head.

“Yes, Alex, I think it’s just as your grandmother says, it was just his way, from since as long as I can remember, he was just different. He had a difficult time getting along with people, and I believe this got in his way with his ability to get along in the world.”

“I can tell you that we raised all our kids by the same standard. When it comes to your father, Alex,” Hannah adds, “he was just cut from a different pattern. Since the time he was a little baby, he just seemed to have a tougher time with life than everyone else. When he wasn’t crying, he was getting in trouble. When it came time to go to school, he kept mostly to himself, had few friends, and fought with those he did have.”

Alex and Elizabeth consider what they hear, and it makes sense. The last several years with Alex’s father were a nightmare. He was in jail much of the time for fighting and disorderly conduct. When he wasn’t in jail, he was drunk, or getting there,

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and fixing to go back again. There are different types of drunks. There are those who are happy and go lucky, and those who are mean and ornery. His father was the latter. There isn't a time any of them can remember when he wasn't fighting with someone about something.

“You know, I've thought a lot about my father over the years.” Now at 30 years old, and as a young man with his own family, Alex has his own thoughts and criteria about what happened. “As I see it, my father's fatal fault was his intolerance. I'm not sure where he got it, or how he got it, because the two of you certainly don't seem to have it,” he says indicating his grandparents. “I know my uncle Billy, who is completely different from my father, and as normal as they come; so, I guess maybe he got it as a bad luck in the draw?”

Alex pauses, anguished by the loss of his father, but more so by the way his father was while he was alive. He wonders if somehow things could have been different.

“My father didn't like people; he was intolerant of them. He never tried to get along with anyone and it seems as if he battled each step of the way in life. Then he tried to find himself in the bottom of a bottle, and that didn't seem to work either.”

“You know what, Alex?” Liam asks.

“Tell me, grandfather.”

“Intolerance tends to fester and rot like a poorly healed wound. I don't think any of us could have helped your father with what he needed. What we couldn't do for him in life, hopefully he found for himself in death. May God, bless his soul.”

## ***1704: Build and Grow***

### **Construct the Future**

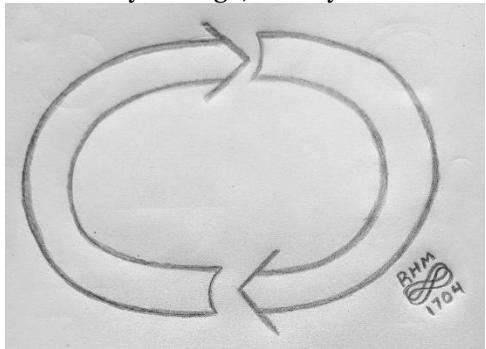
#### **The Griegos**

**April 1704**

**Santa Cruz, New Mexico**

Francisco takes off his hat and wipes the sweat off his brow. The morning sun is already high in the sky, and though there is much work still to be done, he decides it's time to call it a day. After all, those helping him are there of their own free will and not getting paid for what they do, rather are helping out of friendship, and not obligation.

After leaving the area more than 20 years ago, heading south to escape the wrath of the Pueblo Indians, they are back and now reconstructing what they had so many years ago in exactly the same place. When they arrived two years ago, shortly after his father's death, their main objective was to reconstruct the house where he and his siblings grew up. Virtually nothing was left from what they had left behind so many years ago, and what was there, was of little to no use.



It took them nearly a year to get things back to normal, and when they did, he and his wife Maria, along with their children stayed in the small but comfortable abode with his mother. Now that she is established, and things are running fairly smoothly, he

decided to build his own home a short distance away, so he could be close to his mother should she need him for any reason.

At first, most of the work was done by Francisco, Maria and their older children. Now, after having the experience of rebuilding his mother's home, Francisco realizes that if they want to move anytime soon, they need the help of others in the area to achieve their objective. At first, he was hesitant to ask for help, understanding that others also have their own agendas and work to be done. He was surprised when, after church service one Sunday, he approached several of his friends and family members about helping him and they readily accepted.

It really should have come to no surprise, since Francisco himself had helped many of them in similar circumstances. It was understood between them what was required. Francisco knew it was a privilege to have others helping him construct his future. He did his best not to waste their time, and to have everything ready when they arrived to get right to work. In addition, Maria made sure they had plenty of food and water to keep them sated.

He whistles loudly to get everyone's attention and asks them to all drop what they are doing and come together where Maria has arranged a table with a late breakfast, before sending them on their way. Among those present are his brother, Samuel, his two brothers-in-law, his oldest son, Domingo, and two other friends.

They get settled, say grace and begin eating. After expressing his gratitude to each of them for their help, he asks if there is anything he can do to help any of them. They all have similar challenges, one of the greatest of which is channeling water from the river to irrigate their crops. The Spring runoff has already started to raise the level of the river, and they know they must get the irrigation ditches ready, before it rises much more. They all agree on a work schedule where they will all contribute to clear those they already have and make several additional to assure their crops have all the water they need through the summer.

As they are discussing the irrigation ditches and the preparations for the crops they will soon be planting, Josefa, one of Francisco's older sisters comes running up the road. They are all surprised when they see her in such a hurry. They rise from their seats as she approaches.

“A mountain lion just attacked Francis Jr., as he was playing out in front of mother’s house. I saw the whole thing,” she says, nearly out of breath, when she reaches them.

Francisco and Maria’s expressions change immediately as they imagine the worst. Lately, the felines have been braver and more aggressive than ever.

She assures him that the five-year-old boy is alive, but injured. She explains that she was on the front porch with her mother, Elsa, when she heard the boy scream. She picked up the biggest rock she could find and charged the beast screaming at the top of her lungs. Her tactic was sufficient to scare the animal away, but not before it had already mauled the boy. This has been a recurring problem for several months, and many of those present have lost livestock due to the attacks. This is different though, since it is the first time they know of that a human has been attacked, albeit a young one.

Those who have rifles grab them and they all go running to where the boy’s grandmother comforts him in her house. When they arrive, they do a superficial check of his limbs and torso. The worst of his injuries is to one of his hands, which was bitten by the predator as he tried to protect himself. He has other scratches on his body, but seems to be in one piece otherwise.

Francisco hitches a wagon to one of their horses and asks his wife, mother and sister to take Francis Jr., into town to see the doctor. Meanwhile, the men go in search for the mountain lion, convinced they must kill it before it strikes again.

Several hours later, the men come back empty handed. The women are already back with Francis Jr., whose right hand is heavily bandaged.

“Is he going to be alright?” Francisco asks, as he approaches the boy and gives him a big hug before inspecting the bandage.

“He lost is right hand. They had to amputate it,” his wife tells him, her voice trembling with emotion.

Francisco is solemn, nodding his head slightly, taking in the fact that his youngest son’s life is likely to be much more challenging due to the attack. He takes a deep breath and then

expresses his regret for what has happened to his son's hand, but thankful he is alive.

“Thank you, Josefa, for being there to scare the animal away. If you hadn't had been there, who knows what might have happened.”

“I was mainly here to take care of momma, but fortunately I was here. It all happened so fast.”

Francisco explains they were unable to track the animal. Elsa suggests they talk to an Indian friend, who is very talented at tracking just about anything. She sends word to him and within a relatively short period of time, he arrives and is shown to where the attack took place.

They are all amazed at what happens next. Despite all the different footprints around, he quickly finds the beasts footprints and is on his task in no time at all. Francisco and his two brothers-in-law, all armed with rifles, follow him. Two of them are on horses and the other on foot.

As dusk comes, they return home with the animal strapped to one of the horses. Elsa gives the man a basket of baked goods she has made and thanks him for his time and effort. Francisco tells them in detail how the man slowly but surely tracked the animal. When he knew they were getting close, the Indian man told them to leave the horses behind, and for only one of them to continue with him. Francisco's brother-in-law, Diego, went since he is the best shot of them all, and they knew they might only get one opportunity to kill the animal. The other two men watched from afar as they slowly approached from below. When they were close enough, Diego took his shot and hit his mark, killing the mountain lion instantly.

Elsa and Maria have prepared a meal, correctly guessing they would all be famished. After the meal is done and they are about to leave, Francisco tells all of them:

“I don't know what I would do without all of you. Not only are you helping me to get our new home up and running, but you have also helped us to avenge Francis Jr's, attacker. Thank you so much for helping us. I appreciate what each of you has done for us.”



## Destroy the Past

**The McKees**

**April 1704**

**County Antrim, Ireland**

A sudden scream from Alex sends Elizabeth running to see what happened. She goes outside to the shed he has been building to store equipment and at first sees nothing out of the ordinary. She runs to the door, and there she sees him lying on his back with a large wooden beam holding him down. He's gasping for breath, trying to get his air back after having it knocked out of him in the fall.

"Alex, what on earth were you trying to do?"

Answering her is out of the question, but a quick look at the situation tells the story. Alex has always liked to do things on his own and seldom seeks help for anything. He has been working on this project for several weeks now and though he has made progress, it's much slower than either of them hoped it would be.

With summer right around the corner, and work to be done, the time he is taking for his project is taking time away from other chores which have been set aside until he finishes. She has told him time and again to ask for help but as usual, he refuses to ask for it.

She runs to him and attempts to move the beam, but is unable to make it budge even slightly. She moves closer to her husband who is wincing in pain and slowly getting his air back as he gasps.

Seeing him as he is, and without being able to do anything to help him, she says, "I'm going to get Hugh, he will know what to do." Then as she is leaving, she turns back and despite the difficulty of the situation and true to her character, looks back and tells him in a joking manner, "Don't go anywhere!"

He looks back at her still wincing in pain, unable to speak. Instead, he shakes his head and motions for her to get their son. The sharp pain he feels in his shoulder is like no other he has ever felt. Slowly his breath comes back and as it does, the pain seems only to intensify.

Immediately, his mind begins to replay what happened. The center beam for the shed he is building had already been set, the walls were up and the roof was underway. The beam was a bit off center, and though it seemed to be firm and not going anywhere, he decided it should be straight. He thought it would be no big deal to give it a few thuds with a hammer to put it into place. What he didn't expect was for it the beam to come loose with the blows, knocking the ladder out from under him, sending him tumbling down, and pinning him beneath the large beam.

In short order Elizabeth is back with their oldest son Hugh, who together with his wife and children live close by. Hugh immediately sees the predicament his father is in and the pain evidenced by his expression. He says he will work on getting the beam off his father, asking his mother to go get the doctor.

She leaves and Hugh sets to getting the beam off his father. If only for the weight, he should be able to move it. When he can't, he notices it has become lodged into one of the walls, making it impossible to move. With the same hammer his father was using, he is able to dislodge it and finally move it.

With his father laying on the ground, Hugh does his best to analyze the situation and determine whether or not to just leave him there until the doctor comes, or try to move him. His father tells him the pain is unbearable. It's near impossible for him to move, so Hugh goes to the house for a pillow and a blanket to make him more comfortable where he is in the meantime.

He returns and his father's pain is evident in his expression. No words are required, so instead of asking him how he feels, he does his best to get the pillow under his head and cover him with a blanket to keep away the chill of the unseasonably cold weather. He asks his father if he can get anything for him, but with his injury, it's impossible for Alex to think of anything except for the intense pain he feels.

Hugh had checked for blood and saw none, so he's assuming the main source of the pain is his father's shoulder, which he clutches as he moans in agony. After several minutes, when he thinks his father can finally talk, he asks him what happened.

“I was trying to put the beam to center and it came down, knocking the ladder out from under me. I put out my arm to break the fall and the beam landed on me, pinning me under it.”

Hugh shakes his head and tells him, “Father, why didn’t you call me to help you? I’m always willing to help whenever you need me. You know that.”

He admits his son is probably right, but explains how he hates to be a bother. They both know that Alex is very particular about the way things are done, and in truth, prefers to work alone. They both think back to the last time Hugh helped him. It was exactly with this same beam which now came tumbling down on his father.

Despite his age, Alex at 54 is still quite nimble and can do most of the work younger men do. Nevertheless, there are certain things which just can’t be done alone. Setting this center post for his new shed was one of them. Hugh arrived to help his father as planned, but from the get go things didn’t go right. Hugh made a miscalculation on the first cut in the post, and things went downhill from then on. After they had finished his father would just look at the post, cock his head slightly to the side and shake his head. From that day Alex had it in his head the post wasn’t straight and he couldn’t just let it go. Instead, he had to get up there and try to straighten it out with a few sharp blows with his hammer.

“Son, I told you from the get go that the post wasn’t straight.”

“I know you did, but it was secure until you went banging on it. With the extra weight of the roof, it would have settled perfectly into place.”

His father is quiet a moment, before speaking. “I know, you are probably right, but I just couldn’t let it go. It looked crooked to me.”

Just then he tries to move and another sharp pain courses through his arm, his shoulder and his entire upper torso. He winces but makes no sound, repressing the urge to scream in agony.

Hugh does his best to comfort his father, but there is really little he can do. He offers him some water, and the offer is

accepted. Hugh walks out to the house, leaving Alex with his own thoughts which can do little else than try to manage the pain he feels. Like a short movie reel, the fall keeps playing over and over in his mind. The first two taps to the post with the hammer moved it slightly, and then a third knocked it out of place, bringing down the ladder and himself with the beam on top of him.

He closes his eyes, breathing in and out as deeply as he can, imagining somehow the additional oxygen will help with the pain. He's not sure whether or not it does, but concentrating on his breath does seem to bring some relief, if only as a brief distraction to the unbearable pain he feels.

Hugh returns with a glass of water in one hand and a root of some sort in the other.

"I'm not sure if you want to try this, but I know mom says that taking a piece of this root and sucking on it helps with some kinds of pain, like headaches. Would you like to try it?"

He agrees, taking the root and biting of a small piece into his mouth. "What's it going to do, kill me? I don't think anything can be worse than this pain I feel right now. I've never felt anything like it son.

Hugh thinks back to his own medical history, which while pretty sparse with few illnesses, did include a broken ankle from jumping off of a roof on a dare, when he was a teenager. He recalls the pain, and though he's not sure how it compares to his father's, he imagines it must be similar.

Elizabeth arrives with the doctor, who immediately goes to Alex to assess the situation. He runs his hands down his neck, over his shoulders and down his arms, to his hands and fingers. From there he takes his head in his hands and examines it for any contusions. Each small movement causes Alex to wince in pain.

After his brief examination, he says, "Alex, you've broken your collarbone, but otherwise seem to be okay, does anything else hurt?"

He shakes his head, telling the doctor only the area around the shoulder hurts. With the aid of Hugh, they gingerly help him stand up. Alex is upright but bent over favoring his injured shoulder. The doctor helps him to stand up a bit straighter and

they remove his shirt. When they do, the doctor runs his hands over the neck and shoulder again, and as he does, asks Hugh to step closer. He takes Hugh's hand in his own and runs it over the bone running from just below the neck to the shoulder.

"Now feel the other side with your other hand," the doctor instructs Hugh. "Can you feel the difference?"

Hugh nods his head, immediately detecting the separation of the bone on one side. The doctor tells them that there is not much to do in this case except wait for the broken bone to heal. He indicates that in most cases the bone will repair itself over time, but that the process is painful. He gives him some ideas and suggestions on how to make sure to make the bone heals properly. He gives him a sedative to alleviate some of the pain, and then is on his way.

Dusk is upon them, and it will be dark soon, so they take Alex into the house and get him situated as best as they can in the chair he generally uses at the kitchen table. It is the only chair that keeps him in an upright position. The doctor told him to avoid laying down in any position and to keep his posture as erect as possible for the next several weeks.

After a short while, the doctor's remedy for pain, along with the one from Elizabeth, have Alex relaxed, but he is still uncomfortable. It's still early in the evening and none of them are tired yet. Hugh offers to stay while his mother takes care of several things she was unable to get done before. She gladly accepts his offer.

When she is gone, Hugh goes to the cabinet and grabs a bottle of whiskey they usually keep there, but seldom use except for special occasions. Alex is somewhat surprised to see his son take out two glasses and put a splash of whiskey into each.

"What are we celebrating, son?"

"How about the fact that you are alive?"

When his father says nothing, Hugh asks:

"Why is it that you are such a loner, paps?"

Alex considers his son's question. It's a good one, and one he has often thought about over the years. While everyone else

seems to be anxious to see others and participate in social events, he has done everything he can over the years to avoid such events, and for the most part, he has done so.

Many people they know sometimes wonder if he has moved away, or if they are having some type of marital problems because they never see them together. Elizabeth has learned to love him as he is, and though she doesn't always like or agree with his ways, she has come to accept him with his faults. There are other qualities she does like about him, but being social isn't one of them.

"I don't know, son. I just don't feel comfortable around people. I guess maybe I just don't trust 'em."

Though neither one of them says anything about it, they both wonder how much Alex' father might have to do with his trust issues. His father was about as unreliable as they get. This together with his untimely death, certainly no doubt weighs heavily on him.

"I'm sure it doesn't make much sense to you, Hugh, and I know we are supposed to be social animals, as they say, but I just prefer to be on me own. I've been disappointed by too many people in the past, and it's just not easy for me to be around others."

"Is it some kind of a phobia, paps?"

"I guess you could call it that, son, but for me more than a fear, it is just an uncomfortable feeling I get. Like I don't feel right in my own skin. It's hard to explain. I'm not really afraid of people, and I don't mind seeing others in the street. I just don't like interacting with them."

They are both quite momentarily, each considering Alex's words.

"Son, I've often wondered why I'm like this, and I why I avoid people. I've come up with a million different reasons and have several theories, but I really don't want to blame anyone or anything for it. Whatever I feel is my own doing, just as whatever we ever have in life is of our own making. I have made my life without having to deal with more than a handful of people, as you well know." He takes a deep breath, shakes his head slightly and

continues, “In time, I have simply accepted myself for what I am. I’m afraid, it’s too late to change now.”

“There’s where you are wrong, paps. You still are young at heart, if not so much in age. You have the strength of many of men my own age, and you can wield an ax with the best of them. It’s never too late to change, and maybe all this happening is some kind of a message for you to make some kind of change.”

“You mean so I don’t fall on my ass and nearly kill myself like an idiot?” Alex asks, finally able to break a slight smile for the first time since Hugh has been there.

“Well, yes, paps, that’s one good reason. Another is so that you can be part of the family and accompany mom to certain events which are important to her. You don’t have to go to all of them, but couldn’t you just try to join her every once in a while?”

Alex considers his son’s proposal, and knows it’s a good one. He too has thought he should be more considerate of Elizabeth, and her feelings. He agrees that he will make an effort to at least accompany her from time to time, and make the best of the situation.

“You know what, Hugh?”

“Tell me, paps.”

“They say you can’t teach an old dog new tricks, but I think you just taught this old dog a new trick.”

## **1724: Words Matter**

### **Honest Indian**

#### **The Griegos**

**June 1724**

**Santa Cruz, New México**

“Please be careful, son,” Maria tells Francis Jr., as he double checks the cinches on his saddle and makes sure everything is strapped on tight. She is always amazed at how agile he is despite not having his right hand. His arm still works just as well as the other, according to him, so it doesn’t seem to slow him down much. He stops what he is doing and gives his mother a big hug.



He releases her, taking her by the shoulders, between his good left hand and his right wing, as he likes to call it. Though he is now much taller than she is, and he must look down to meet her eyes; to him, she will always be larger than life. As the youngest of all his siblings, he has always felt like he was given special treatment by both of his parents. The good Lord knows his parents could have stopped having children after his two brothers and two sisters were born. He has always felt fortunate that they decided to continue having children. Then, after losing his hand to the mountain lion, others seemed to favor and pay more attention to him.

His attention turns to his father, and as is their custom, they shake hands with their left hands and then come together in a half hug.



hug with his right arm embracing his father. “Are you sure you want to do this, Lefty?”

Francis Jr., nods, indicating his mind is made up. They all know of the risks involved with his venture. His father has been ill lately, lacking energy and drive to do the most mundane of tasks. He has also had fever, chills, and dizziness to top it off, besides losing a lot of weight. Just for him to get out of bed to see his son off has been a huge effort.

Accompanying Francis Jr., is his Indian friend, Raymond. They are going north to meet with a medicine man from the Apache, who is said to have herbs and medicines which may be of help to his father.

“You don’t have to go on my behalf,” Francis reminds his son, as he has done repeatedly since learning of his son’s intentions.

“I know father, and if I thought there was any other way, I would do it. We have tried everything we know to try and get you better, yet I nothing seems to work. We need you back healthy again, father. You don’t do anyone any good at all as you are now, least of all yourself.”

Francis knows his son is right. He has tried everything they can possibly think of to get healthy again. He has been eating better and getting out at least once a day to get some sunshine, but nothing seems to help. He feels as if his energy is completely sapped, even after sleeping. Then when he does get up, he has trouble walking because everything seems to start spinning as soon as tries. Through Raymond, they learned of this medicine man, and though he is normally out on the eastern plains, they have learned he is now in Taos, so they have decided to meet with him.

“I’m glad you are going with Raymond,” Maria tells Lefty’s friend, who is already on his horse, ready to go.

“It’s my pleasure, Nana Maria,” he replies, nodding in her direction while tipping his hat slightly. “You know how close our families have been over the years, so I wouldn’t think of letting Lefty go alone, yet I’m really not sure how much help I might be. As you know, our tribe, the Pueblos, are not on friendly terms with any of the nomadic tribes in the area, though the Apache

seem to be the most reasonable of all of them. If it was any other tribe, I wouldn't suggest we go."

Besides seeking relief for his father, Francis Jr., also knows the Apache have been trading with the French. He knows of several people who have acquired goods from them because they have proved to be of better quality and price than from what they get from the Spanish, bringing goods up from Old Mexico.

They bid farewell, as the sun makes it's way slowly but surely toward the horizon. They figure they have about four hours of light, which will get them close to Taos by nightfall. They are supposed to meet with the medicine man just outside of the Pueblo, in Taos, tomorrow.

They begin their trek with an extra horse and a rifle given to Francis Jr., by a soldier who decided his life on the frontier was over, and it was time for him to get back to his family again. Though it wasn't allowed for people to leave without properly notifying the authorities, many did it anyway. The hassle involved in asking for permission usually took a long time. He was ready to leave right away. So instead of going through the bureaucratic mess of asking to leave, he just did it, leaving those things of value to friends, or selling them before his departure.

Francis Jr., had first met the soldier several months ago, when he was on patrol in the area. Soldiers were often sent from Santa Fe to see how the settlers were faring up and down the Rio Grande Valley. Francis Jr., came up upon him when he was down by the river, contemplating life, unaware anyone was around. The man was obviously distraught. He approached the man and asked him of his troubles. The soldier seemed relieved to have someone listen to how he felt. They talked for quite a while and the man told him he was thinking about leaving. Grateful for friendly at a time of need, the soldier came back before he was going to leave, giving Lefty the horse and the rifle, as a token of his friendship and gratitude.

They make their way up river, making good time over the flatlands leading north. The river creates a green oasis off to their left, snaking it's way through the otherwise arid landscape. Francis Jr., loves this time of year. Though the predominate color of the landscape is brown or tan, the overall hue now is jade due to the sagebrush. Pine trees and other bushes in bloom provide

pockets here and there as the desert comes to life. The tumbleweeds, which will later dry up, be uprooted by the wind, and be blown across the desert are now green bushes preparing themselves to go to seed by Fall.

To their left in the distance loom the mountains, which though it is already summer, continue to sport white caps on the highest peaks. The flat plain comes to a bottleneck as the river winds its way through the canyon about an hour into their ride. Their progress is slower as they navigate the trail down close to the river. They are constantly looking up to the ridges around them, aware they are easy targets for anyone wishing to ambush them along the way, but today they are fortunate, winding their way through the canyon without incident.

The cottonwoods along the river create umbrellas of shade, forming small oasis in certain parts of the canyon. As they make their way through the steepest part of the canyon, the sun briefly disappears and reappears behind the ridge above them. They are pleased to see the sun making its way down since the first part of their journey was under the constant surveillance of the hot summer sun.

By in large, this is why they decided to leave when they did. Raymond, also known as Running Creek in his language, knows this path well, and they could have traveled overnight to reach Taos by morning. Instead, since there will be no moon tonight, they decided to take advantage of the daylight as long as they could, sleep under the stars, and then continue on in the morning.

The sun falls beyond the horizon as they make it through the steepest part of the canyon. They turn northeast and continue along the foothills until they come to a small river coming from the mountains above and feeding the Rio Grande below. It seems like as good a place as any to stop, and they are only about an hour and a half ride out from where they need to be in the morning.

They water the horses, make a fire to cook several fish Raymond managed to trap with his net in one of the many pools formed by the river. The last of the sunlight disappears into the dark of the night as their campfire brightens the space around them. They are relaxed and tired from the ride. Their thoughts disappear into the flickering fire which holds their gaze.

Raymond is thinking about the dangers involved with what they are doing. It has been illegal for quite some time to trade with the any Indians other than the Pueblo, and though many do it, there is always the risk of getting caught. He has worked hard to maintain a good relationship with the Spanish settlers who have moved into the area and changed their way of life, as well as their religion. Since early on, he and Lefty have been friends. Their grandmothers were very close, bringing them into contact from an early age.

Francis Jr.'s, grandmother Elsa used to take him when she would visit her Indian friend Nambe, who is Raymond's grandmother. As the two women talked, they played, and fought, and became lifelong friends. Lefty is as close as he has to a brother since he is an only child, his mother dying at his birth. His grandmother raised him, and Lefty was always around.

Meanwhile, Francis Jr., is thinking of his father. He thinks back to only a few short weeks ago when his father was healthy, working on the farm and doing normal things. Now he can barely get out of bed, and when he does, needs to sit down once again or have someone help him so he doesn't fall from the vertigo. He has also lost a lot of weight which is of equal or greater concern. He knows from experience that people who consistently lose weight for no apparent reason are soon to pass on over to the other side. He sighs deeply, not even able to imagine his father dying, anguished with their inability to help him over these past several weeks.

Then, silently and out of the shadows, they are surrounded by five Apache braves who suddenly appear from just beyond the light of their fire. They both move to get their weapons but are quickly restrained from behind. Those in front of them indicate they mean no harm, and after grabbing their weapons and setting them aside, they are released.

When they are freed, an older man in full headdress joins them from the shadows. He nods slightly to each of them and then gestures for them to sit, as he does the same. Though they do not speak the same language, common gestures and courtesies are understood by all. Raymond indicates he is confused, understanding they were to meet in the morning. The older man tells them he is needed in the mountains to the west.

After being advised of their advance toward Taos, they decided to come and meet them here, before continuing. The five warriors stand constant vigilance around them, aware of each movement and sound. It is an honor for them to be traveling with Dancing Wolf. He has become somewhat of a legend among his people, being known to have special curative powers. For them, they are proud to be his escort, and willing to do whatever they must do to protect him.

The communication between the three men is slow, but fluid. Through gestures and expressions, they are able to convey what they need to say. When Raymond was setting up the meeting, the old wise man wanted to know only one thing. Was Lefty good to his word. When Raymond confirmed he was, and had borne witness to his friend's honest time and again, the meeting was accepted.

Initially, Lefty feels he is somehow being tested. After cordialities and greetings are exchanged, he notices that the man does not look again at Raymond, instead focusing his attention only on himself. He feels the old man not only sees him, but also somehow seems to see right through him.

For several minutes, which to Lefty seem like an eternity, the old man gazes at him. The wrinkles in his face show the effect of the wind and the cold over a number of years. His eyes are dark, yet have a mystic quality to them which seems to make them sparkle, though Lefty realizes too it may just be the reflection of the fire. At first Lefty is not sure where to look, or what to do. After initially looking at the fire and then back at the older man several times, he decides it best to match his gaze.

The old man nods gently, and from beneath his clothing pulls out a long pipe, filling it with some substance. Immediately one of the braves steps forward and pulls a burning stick from the fire, lighting the pipe for the old man. After taking several puffs and creating a great deal of smoke from the end of it, he hands it to Lefty. At first, he isn't sure what to do. He looks at Raymond who indicates he should take it.

He draws deeply on the pipe and isn't ready for the feeling the smoke creates in his throat and lungs, coughing hard almost as soon as he inhales. The old man laughs and takes the pipe back, offering it to Raymond, who learns from what happened to Lefty,

and is more careful about how hard he draws on it. They continue smoking for a while, watching the fire.

The pipe is refilled and passed among them several times. Before long, both Lefty and Raymond began to feel a strange feeling rising up from within them. The old man sets the pipe aside. He is still momentarily, and then reaches into one of his pockets and grabs something. He holds his hand out, offering it to Lefty, who grabs it.

To see what he has been given better, Lefty looks toward the fire and opens his hands to see a rosary. It is made out of a rose-colored wood, with pieces of silver. The old man smiles and indicates Lefty will likely have more use for the object than he will.

Lefty bows slightly toward the old man, expressing his thanks for the gift. The man then encourages Lefty to take the rosary in his hands and think about the people who have held it previously in their hands. Though not exactly sure how he understands the old man, he knows this is the meaning of his gestures. The old man then tells Lefty to close his eyes and feel the emotions coming forth from the rosary.

He does as he is told, and it is suddenly as if he is in a dream world. Faces, both familiar and unfamiliar flash before him in his imagination. His grandmother Elsa comes to mind immediately since she is the person he most often saw with a rosary. A flood of emotions begins to course through his body. He feels a type of vibration from within which he has never felt before which suddenly bursts forth from within him as a deep sorrowful groan.

He doesn't understand what he is feeling, but it is a strong sense of sorrow and loss. It is as if he is suddenly experiencing the emotions his grandmother experienced as she prayed the rosary. All of her grief, and all of her anguish seems to somehow vibrate from the rosary, up through his hands and arms, before coursing through his entire body. The vibrations come in waves. At times quickly and suddenly, and at others more slowly and calmly. The overall effect is to make his body feel heavy and sluggish.

Then, suddenly the feelings he has of grief and sorrow change. He realizes they have become those of a priest. In his mind's eye, he can picture the face clearly, though he doesn't

believe he has ever met such a man. Then he feels himself drawn closer to the priest until he seems to be absorbed inside the other man's body. He sees what the other man sees, and feels what he feels.

The rosary still seems to be emitting vibrations of feelings and emotions, but now they are of well-being and hope. A broad grin comes across his face as his body now vibrates with the possibility of hope. A sense of peace and tranquility are now form the base of the vibrations which course through his body in slow, steady waves. He sits taller and his shoulders move up and back slightly.

Then what he feels changes once again. Now, he still appears to be within the body of the priest looking out, but now he sees confusion and mayhem. His breathing quickens, his senses alert with fear. The rosary in his hands now feels warm, the beads moving through his fingers one by one. He hears his own voice repeating the words of the rosary which have been ingrained in his soul.

A cloud suddenly comes over him and he is aware of now having no feeling at all. Not sadness, or joy; not hope, or fear. Only nothingness, a feeling of being in limbo. His face shows no expression, his breathing is even and deep.

His attention now turns to his body. The air as it goes in through his nose and breathes out through his mouth. The feeling of the heat from the fire against his skin. The gentle breeze cooling the opposite side of his body. Time becomes irrelevant. He isn't sure if he remains sitting there for several minutes of several hours. He disappears into the sensations he feels coursing through his body.

Lefty opens his eyes to find the others have opened their eyes and are gazing at the fire which has almost burned itself out. Though it is late and he feels he should be tired, he feels somehow energized after the experience. He feels like he has just been through some kind of test.

The old man calls over one of the men who has keeping watch and gives him some instructions. They are all quiet, still watching the last of the fire until the man comes back with three small pouches. He takes the pouches and offers them to Lefty,

instructing him what to do with them, and how to administer the medicine to his father.

When he is done, he stands up, bows slightly toward them, says goodbye, and disappears back into the dark, in the same way he arrived. They look at each other, unsure what to do. One of the Indian Braves instructs them to wait. Shortly another man comes and introduces himself as the person who will negotiate the trade of goods.

He speaks the Pueblo language, so communication with Raymond is fluid. They make an agreement as to the value of the horse and rifle they have and agree on a trade which seems fair to all for cloth and other goods they have to offer for farming.

After the deal is done, they once again disappear into the darkness of the night.

## **Your Word is Your Honor**

### **The McKees**

**June 1724**

**County Antrim, Ireland**

After they are done eating and the table is cleared, Hugh asks his oldest son, James, if they can go for a walk together. Sunday family dinners have been a long-born tradition with the McKee's and while not all of Hugh's five sons are always able to make it, most of them generally do. James is the exception. This is the first time in almost a month that he shows up, and this time, he has come by himself without his wife and children.

Hugh suggests they walk up the path by the small creek which runs through his property. It's a beautiful summer afternoon. The deep blue sky is dotted with sporadic white fluffy clouds which invite one's imagination to see figures in them. The lush green of life surrounds them as they walk slowly.

After they have walked for some way, Hugh says, "I've been worried about you son."

"Why is that papa?"



“Well, for starters, we haven’t seen you around in quite some time, and now that you do show up, you are without your lovely wife and those rambunctious grandkids you both have given us. You didn’t say much of anything at dinner, and so, I’m imagining something is amiss.”

“Well, now that you bring it up, I do need some help, papa. I’m in a tight situation, and I was wondering if I maybe I could borrow some money.”

Hugh sighs deeply, imagining this might be the case. He has helped all of his children over the years financially, and otherwise, to the best of his ability. But James has been a special case. He always seems to be in need of money, and unlike his siblings who have been pretty responsible in at least making an effort to pay him back, James makes no such effort.

Hugh asks him what he needs the money for, though he doesn’t expect a truthful answer. As expected, his son tells him a cock and bull story about needing the money for the kids. Hugh knows for a fact his son has a gambling problem, and he can only imagine how much money he owes and to whom. Rather than accept his story and give him money as he usually does, this time he decides he no longer wants to fund his son’s addiction.

“Jimmy, you know that’s just not true.”

His son looks directly at him at first, challenging his father as to his accusation, but then lowers his eyes, knowing that the web of lies he spreads eventually has to break, showing the truth of his circumstances. He knows that not only his father, but most of the town know about his problem, but he just can’t help himself.

“Papa, I’ve gotten in with a bad group of people. I fear for my life. They told me if I don’t pay them back by this week, that harm will come to either me or my family.”

James’ demeanor changes completely with his confession. His shoulders hunch forward as his problems weigh upon him. As they walk, Hugh brings him closer with one arm, hugging them as they continue on, weaving slightly as they match each other’s step. James begins to weep silently, tears rolling down his cheeks. He feels safe now in his father’s embrace; but he fears the safety of himself and his family.

They walk along silently for a while and then Hugh finally says, “Jimmy, tell the men to come and see me, I will find some way to keep them at bay.”

Hugh feels the sigh of relief his son breathes, and they continue walking slowly along the path bordering the creek. They come to a bend where a Hugh built a bench and has planted flowers. They sit on the bench and observe the creek as it continues on its constant journey from places unknown to others yet to be discovered. They remain in silence for quite some time watching the stream and all the life it brings with it.

“Papa, I wish I knew what to do about my predicament, but I just don’t know what to do. I’ve tried to stop gambling. I know I shouldn’t do it, but I just can’t help myself. I get sucked into it time and again.”

Hugh considers his son’s words and his own experience, looking for something from his knowledge he can share with his son which can help him through his troubles.

“Jimmy, I wish I could tell you I have all the answers and some magic wand to fix it all, but I don’t.” He stops and considers carefully what he is about to say and how to say it. “Son, I think one of your main problems is that you are a liar, and you can’t be trusted.”

James looks at his father, at first offended and shocked his father would speak to him directly and in that way. Then his indignation turns to shame as he realizes his father is right. He looks down again at the ground before him.

“I’m sorry to tell you this so bluntly, son, but it’s the truth.” Hugh shakes his head thinking back to when his son was younger. “When you were a little boy, we used to think it was cute how you seemed to always get your way with little lies, but then you got used to doing it. It stopped being funny long ago.”

James has to agree with his father, though it’s tough to admit it to himself. He has always lied about many things. He isn’t quite sure why he does it, but it seems almost like a game to him. Mostly he does it because he tells other people what he thinks they want to hear. As a livestock trader, he has become very adept in his negotiations, but honesty and transparency are not his strengths.

His reputation has gotten so bad where they live that many of the locals refuse to trade with him, since they feel he has taken unfair advantage of them. Instead, now James travels the countryside plying his trade. He has learned what people want to hear, and so he has learned to tell them what he thinks they want to hear, rather than the truth.

“You know what the worst part of it is, son?” Hugh asks after a brief silence.

James shakes his head. His body language is that of a beaten man, a bit unsure of who or what has beaten him.

“The worst part, Jimmy, is that you lie to yourself. It’s bad enough you lie to others, but the worst part, son, is that you are lying to yourself, and you don’t even realize it. You are constantly looking for the upper hand, and history has proved you will say anything to get your way. If you weren’t so damn good at selling livestock, you’d likely be in jail.”

James continues looking down at the ground before him, deep in thought as he considers what his father is telling him. What he says is right on the button. He isn’t sure when or why he started lying as he does, but it has become a habit. It seems so much easier for him to tell a convenient lie than the truth most of the time. He does it to achieve his objectives.

“Let me ask you a question, son.”

“What is it, papa?”

“How many times have you ask me to lend you money, promising to pay me back?”

James doesn’t answer, but his expression says volumes. The truth is that he has borrowed money many times over the years and never paid any of it back. Hugh knows from his own experience that his son probably has done the same to others.

“Jimmy, you can’t go through life walking along the backs of others. You can’t just hope someone will come and bail you out when you get in trouble. You need to start by being honest with yourself. I don’t know anything about what drives your addiction to gambling, but the only bet I’ll make is that there is someone out there who knows something about it who can help you out.”

James nods his head slightly, knowing his father is right. He needs help with his addiction, he just doesn't know who can help him. What is certain is he hasn't been able to fall in its trap.

“Son, you need to turn over a new leaf. You can't continue going on as you are, or you won't make it to 30.”

James looks at his father with a surprised look, and says, “I'm 29, now.”

“That's the point, son. You can't keep doing what you are doing or you are going to end up in an early grave. Why is it you always want to have the upper hand? Why are you always wanting to win at all costs? Why are you willing to do anything to get your way?”

James says nothing, but hears everything in a different way from what he previously understood. He never really gave too much thought to the little lies he has told over the years to get what he wants. Whether it is in business or a card game, he has never had any scruples about saying what must be said to win.

Hugh moves closer to his son on the bench, and wraps his arm around him. “As I think about what I just told you, I suppose your mother and I are partly to blame, after all, we did bring you up. We always thought your desire to win was a good thing. We thought it would be helpful for you in business and life, but we were wrong. What we once thought was cute and funny, turned out to be not so.”

The silence of the moment is broken only by the gurgle of the stream. After several minutes have passed, Hugh takes a deep breath, and as if making a confession says:

“I've done a lot of things in my life. I'd say some of them have been pretty good, and others not so much. Truth be known, I've probably learned much more from my mistakes, and the mistakes of others, than all of my successes. No, son, I can't tell you I'm any kind of an example to live by, but I have learned a thing or two in life. I've come to the understanding that one of the most important things we can do is to be good to our word. When we do what we say we're going to do, not only are we respected by others, more importantly, we respect ourselves, and this is even more important than pleasing somebody else.”

“Yes, papa, I think I understand what you are saying, but I’ve always been programmed to win.” He stops for a moment, smiles for the first time since they left the house and looks at his father. “I think you and mom were the ones responsible for that. You always the ones who wanted me to be first and to win.”

“I can’t deny what you say is true, Jimmy. We did do that, but in retrospect, winning isn’t everything, though I admit that we used to think it was so. Also, as our first born, I’m sure we were also more demanding of you than we were on your siblings.”

James has often thought his parents were unduly demanding of him, particularly in light of how lax they were later with his siblings, but says nothing.

“Nevertheless, I have a different view of our relationship now not only with other people but with the world around us.”

“Okay, you have my attention, papa, what is your new view of the world around us?”

“We are not meant to compete with others, rather than to cooperate with them. When we work against people, someone generally loses, either us or them. It always ends in disappointment on one side or the other. When we work together with people, we can achieve much more. Rather than always try to get the upper hand, I’ve found that in negotiations of any kind, it we can both go away feeling good about the transaction.”

“That sounds good, papa, but what if this isn’t possible. Positions are always taken in any kind of negotiation. It’s not always possible to win.”

“What I want to say is that our aim is to make the other person feel good about dealing with us. If someone feels they have gotten the wrong end of the stick from us, we make an enemy. If they feel they got a fair shake, then they will come back time and again. I suppose, what I’m trying to say, son, is to be true first to yourself. When you are, then it’s much easier to be true to others.”

## ***1744 Up and Down***

### **Happiness is a Feeling**

**The Griegos  
July 1744  
Santa Cruz,  
New Mexico**



The early morning dew is fresh in the cool summer breeze, as Lefty and son, Antonio Miguel, walk upstream to their favorite fishing hole. Thoughts go in and out of their minds as they walk in silence. The sound of their footsteps beating against the path is the only noise they hear, save for the ever-present sounds of nature in the background.

The birds are beginning to go through their morning routines as first light begins to spread across the valley. In these moments, Antonio feels closest to his father. Though only one of many children, he is generally the only one up early enough to join his father on his regular fishing jaunts. They have gone to many places over the years, but this one is special.

One of the reasons his father likes it so much is because of the way the early morning light fills the valley until it finally breaks over the horizon. At this time of the year, the first rays of light shine on a pool which forms alongside of a rock which changes the direction of the river.

## 1744: Up and Down

When they get to the spot, they sit in their designated spaces and talk about the previous day's events and those of today. Antonio marvels as he watches his father going through his routine to begin fishing. Each move is calculated, as he expertly prepares his fishing apparatus, which while little more than a hook and a line, have proved to be very effective.

His father collects things he finds to make flies attached to the hooks with a needle and thread. Antonio is always amazed at how adept his father is at making replicas of many of the insects the fish feed upon in the area, particularly since he has only one hand to do so.

When Lefty sees his son isn't preparing his gear, he asks, "What's up? You are just going to be a spectator today, or what?"

His son explains he isn't feeling good because of a situation at school with a friend, which has caused a cold war between them. The other boy has been his best friend as long as anyone can remember, and he now feels torn because they don't even talk to each other.

After listening carefully to what his son is saying, Lefty looks up from his work and says, "Son, you will find in time that people often act in ways we don't like, or we don't want them to act, but even though it's difficult, don't let it get you down. I know you and Pedro have been very good friends for a long time, and while you didn't really tell me what the discussion was about, the reason doesn't really matter."

"Why doesn't it matter, father?"

"Son, if things are meant to be, then they will be. If not, they won't."

They are silent momentarily as Lefty puts his finishing touch on his work of art, and puts it up to the light to see it better and inspect his work. He throws it with the fishing line he has wrapped around his lucky stick, in the water. With the other hand holds the line to keep tension, as the fly lands in the water and begins to move slowly toward a small eddy which forms where the pool begins.

"Antonio, there are certain things that happen in life which we aren't going to like. There are a lot of different ways to deal

with difficulty, regardless of what it happens to be. That's why it really doesn't matter why you are angry with each other, and furthermore, why I don't even need to know. That's something between you two."

They both watch as a fish suddenly darts out from beneath the inner confines of the pool. It races around, and then they see it attack a fly floating on the water several feet from where Lefty's fly is. They both look each other and smile, knowing it's only a matter of time before one of the fish chooses Lefty fly.

"Son, take for example this rock we are on. If we look up above, we can pretty tell where it came from, and when it did, it blocked the river here. Likely when it first fell, the river crashed violently against it, trying to make it move. When it couldn't, it simply began flowing around it. The undercurrents began moving the bed of the river below, and over time it has caused this beautiful pool to be formed."

The fly moves out of the pool and downstream. Antonio scrambles down the rock and takes it out with a stick where river continues its path downstream. He brings it back to his Lefty, who winds the fishing line back on the stick as Antonio approaches. Lefty takes the fly from him and dries it off first shaking it, and then dabbing it with a cloth he keeps with him. Then, as a final touch, and purportedly for luck, he blows on it before tossing it back in the same place as before.

"Life is very similar to this pool of water, Antonio. People come in to our own pool of life at some point, and most of them go, but some stay. If your friendship with Pedro will continue on, then it will. If not, it won't and it just wasn't meant to be."

Antonio considers what his father says and asks, "Yes, I think I understand that father, but why does it hurt so bad? I can't even imagine him not being my friend. We have had discussions before, but never anything like this. It's been over a week since we've talked to each other."

"Everyone thinks a little bit different, son. We are all entitled to our own opinions, even though others may not always agree to them. All we can do is to be true to ourselves."

"What do you mean by that, father?"



In that moment a fish comes up and takes Lefty's fly. He immediately sets the hook and in short order has the fish up on the rock, where Antonio grabs it, removes the hook from its mouth and throws it into a small bucket they brought and which he has filled with water, covering it afterward.

Lefty makes a few adjustments to the fly, determines he can still use the same one, and throws it back into the river.

"Let me give you an example, Antonio, of how we can be true to ourselves."

Antonio sits up and turns slightly toward his father.

"You and I both enjoy coming fishing, right?"

"Of course, I love coming with you, father."

"How many of your brothers or sisters generally come with us when we come fishing?"

Antonio things back and can't remember a time when any of them have come. "None as far as I can remember, unless it's been the whole family that comes."

"That's precisely my point. I am true to myself whenever I come fishing, because I really enjoy it. You are true to yourself also when you come with me, because you also enjoy it. But this isn't the case for the others. Sure, they've come and many of them know how to set up a rig, but they don't really enjoy it. They are true to themselves by not coming, and you are true to yourself by doing so."

"I think I understand. Kind of like, everyone has different interests?"

"Yes, that's right, son. We all have different interests and different ways of thinking. Sometimes these coincide and sometimes they don't. Just because your brothers and sisters don't like to come fishing with me doesn't make me feel anything less toward them. I simply realize they like different things, but you know what, son?"

"Tell me, father."

“I’m really glad you like to come with me, because I enjoy the company.”

Lefty stops what he is doing, and opens his arms toward his son, who comes into his embrace.

“Son, don’t pay too much attention of what others think of you. Pay more attention to what you think of yourself, and do the best you can.”

Lefty catches two more fish. They are about to pick-up, and go home, when Lefty sees a particularly large shadow beneath the ledge. He wraps up another fly and throws his line in one more time before they leave, this time a bit more upstream from where he has been previously fishing. Almost immediately, he gets a strike. They see one of the largest fish either of them has ever seen come up from under the ledge, take Lefty’s fly from the top of the water and come flying out creating a large splash as it falls.

Lefty struggles to take up slack in his line, but is unable to get it taut before the fish races upstream. It gets to the end of the line and fights momentarily before disappearing again under the ledge. Lefty hands the stick to Antonio and then he takes up the slack working his way down the rock. The fish suddenly races out once again and pulls the line taut, with Lefty struggling to bring it in. The fish leaps once again, and as it flails in the air, it shakes the hook and drops back into the river.

As the tension in the line slackens, Lefty loses his footing, slips and falls down into the water, which comes to just over his waist. The cold water against his body makes him take a deep breath, as his body receives the shock. Then he begins laughing hysterically as he struggles to get out.

Antonio reaches down and gives him a hand, but his father slips down once again, and his laughter becomes even greater the harder he tries. When he finally gets out and up on the rock, Antonio also is laughing as they both sit down and consider what has just happened.

When Lefty finally stops laughing, he says, “That’s the biggest fish I think I have ever seen!”

Antonio agrees and they both recount their version of what happened. They gather their things, along with the fish they

caught and return home. They continue talking about the big one that got away, each of them speculating as to just how big it was.

When they are almost home, Antonio asks, “Father, how is it you can keep in such a good mood, despite losing the biggest fish we have either seen, and getting soaked in process?”

Lefty feels this is an important question, so he stops in the trail, squares up with his son, taking by one shoulder with his good hand and the other with his flipper —as he likes to call it— looking Antonio directly in the eye.

“Son, many years ago and as you well know, I lost my hand. As I grew up, I learned that I could either be sad because I didn’t have a hand, or happy that I still had one that did work. I decided to be grateful for what I did have, rather than bitter for what I didn’t. I have learned to use my flipper with my good hand to do just about anything others can do with two hands because I have been willing to try. It hasn’t always been easy and I haven’t been able to do everything, but I quickly learned that for things I couldn’t do, others were usually willing to lend a hand, so to speak.”

They both chuckle, and Lefty continues:

“Life is very similar. We can either be grateful for what we do have or feel bad for what we don’t. Let’s take the huge fish I just lost. In the first place, it really was never mine to begin with, so I really didn’t lose anything at all. Secondly, it’s a spectacular sunny morning, so why ruin it because I lost something that was really never even mine. We can either choose to see the good in the bad or find bad in the good. Either one is valid, it depends on us. I’ve decided to do my best to find the good in life and leave the bad aside. While it’s not always easy, all any of us can ever do is just to give our best effort, son.”

## Depression is a Plague

**The McKees**

**July 1744**

**County Antrim, Ireland**

David knocks on the door, and enters. He meets his mother as she approaches from the kitchen. To him his mother will always be beautiful, but he has to admit that many years of being responsible for her family have worn on her features, though she still has the same warmth she has had for as long as he can remember. He bends, gives her a kiss on the cheek, and asks for her blessing, which she gives. He envelopes her small body in his large frame, giving her a bear hug.

“How is father?”

“Pretty much about the same usual. In one of his moods, which seem tougher and tougher for him to get out of these days.”

He knows only too well of his father’s moods. It’s something he has never quite understood, but has learned to accept as a reality over the years. Now that he has his own family, he often wonders if his father’s condition is hereditary, and if so, to what extent. He has heard one of his ancestors died at an early age, in large part due to depression. He fears sometimes his father might be going in the same direction.

“Is he awake now, mother?”

“Yes, I think so. I just took some food in for him, but I doubt he’s touched it.”

David goes into their bedroom. The shades on the window darken the room to bare visibility. He grabs a chair has beside his bed and pulls it closer to his father. David bends over his father, giving him a kiss on the cheek and asking for his blessing. As usual, his father says nothing.

Though it is already almost midday and warm in the house, James lays in his bed, in a fetal position, covered with a blanket and staring out into space, not even acknowledging his son’s presence.

## 1744: Up and Down

David grabs one of his father's hands which he had tucked under his pillow and holds onto it, initially saying nothing at all. His father's hand shows no signs of life, and but for his open eyes, appears to have crossed on over to the other side.

Over the years, David and his siblings learned to avoid their father, whenever he got in one of his moods. Now pretty much all of them do stay away, except for David, who is the only one who even ventures to stop by when his father is feeling down, which now seems like most of the time.

David has dissected his father's behavior in his mind, and tried to understand it, but has never been able to fully understand how his father can get so down. Of course, everyone has problems. We all generally find a way to get them taken care of one way or another, and if we don't, a bigger problem usually comes to replace it, but his father is different. Rather, than being able to come up with some kind of a solution to his problems, his father locks up, and becomes catatonic.

David thinks about his three brothers and his sister. As is usually the case with most siblings, they are all different, yet show similarities among themselves, and too their parents. His sister, Hannah, no doubt is very much like their mother, with a similar smile and overall demeanor. David and James take more after their father, while John and Alexander favor their mother's side of the family in physical appearance.

Perhaps because of some of his similarities with his father, David is so concerned about how he handles difficulty. So far, he has been able to take a completely different approach to his troubles, which not everyone may agree with, but which have served him well over the years.

David's large frame has always given him an advantage in boxing, and he was unbeatable for quite some time in his hay day, gaining respect throughout the county for his heavy hands, but he never fought out of anger, only for money, or honor. And he had done so many times over the years.

Now, to see David, it's hard to think of him in that role. He learned early on how to control his anger. Yet it scares him that what his father experiences might be hereditary. In times where his thoughts wonder to whether or not he might follow in his

father's footsteps, David recalls a conversation he had one time with a priest who told him:

“Genetics do have a determining factor in our lives, but not a deciding one. They determine where we start, but not where we end up.”

Since that conversation, David has been able to look at his father's condition in a different light. He used to think his father was just sad. He figured he was sad because he failed to provide for his family. Sad because he had fallen to drinking when he didn't feel good, and feeling worse when he didn't. Sad because his world had crumbled around him. There was only one bright spot in his father's entire life, his mother, Margaret.

She has been the one to keep the household going for all these years. David and his siblings helped as they got older, but she was the one who carried the burden of providing for their family. It's a wonder she has stayed with James for so long, and this only raises her in David's estimation.

For as long as he can remember, his father has contributed nothing to take care of the basic necessities of life. Instead, he is prone to bad moods, and inactivity. He rarely leaves his room, and when he does, it is only briefly, before going back once again into the darkness of his sanctuary, as they have come to call the room.

David can't remember the last time his father left the house, who instead prefers to spend most of his time sleeping or sitting in the dark. As David looks into his father's eyes, he wonders what horrors and what nightmares go on inside his father's mind.

Ironically, his father's downfall might well have been David's reason for success as cattle trader in the area. While his father, James, burned his bridges early in his career and was never able to recover, David has been able to do very well for himself and his family in the business.

David recalls when he first approached people in the area to do business with them. David's physical appearance is very similar to his father's, with one exception, David is much bigger in stature. David was able to learn the trade quickly, and with a little help from friends and family, as well as others, he realized this was his calling. Sometimes he wonders if his own success is

may be part of his father's depression and foul moods. Now instead of people referring to his father by name, instead they refer to him as David's father. He has almost lost his identity.

At first, when his father first started shutting himself in, people would ask about him, wondering why they hadn't seen him. Now, as time goes on, rarely does anyone ask about why they never see him, or if he is even alive. David can't help but think how tragic his father's life has become, yet he isn't sure what to do about it. He has done everything he can possibly think of to try help his father out of his funk, but nothing seems to work.

Like clockwork, David comes by every day on his way home for lunch to see how they are doing. He always asks his mother if she needs anything, though she seldom does. She has become very self-sufficient over the years. With his father, they often they don't talk at all, instead, just be in each other's company. Most of the time, David stays for five or ten minutes and then continues on his way.

David can't help but think about how much he respects his mother. She is industrious, hard-working, and very creative. Since as long as David can remember, she has been the one not only to bring in money for the family but also to be its driving force.

David learned quickly as he grew to help his mother, as did all his siblings learn to pitch in and help in some way or another. But as far as coming to see their father, now David is really the only one who even bothers to do so.

"Father, how I would love to be able to see into your mind and help you with whatever visions haunt you, but I confess that I can't. What I do know is that I can be here for you and mom, for whatever you need."

His father doesn't react. Instead, staring off into space. David is about to get up and go, but decides to sit down again.

"Father, can I ask you a question?"

James seems somewhat taken aback, since he thought their routine of greeting each other and sitting in silence for several minutes had ended for the day.

James turns his head and looks at James, nodding slightly.

“I’ve tried to imagine the reasons why you feel as you do, but what I would really like to know, father, is what you feel? What do you feel which causes you to shut yourself up in this room here as you do? What do you think, father, and how does it make you feel? I would like to know.”

James’ eyes turn once again away from David and stare off into some unknown place. David sighs deeply, and gets up once again, this time giving his father a kiss on the cheek and asking for his blessing.

As David walks toward the door, his father says, “God Bless you, son.”

David turns back, surprised to hear his father’s voice, not remembering the last time he has heard his father speak. He smiles, and responds, “Thank you, father.”

As David, is about to walk out the door, James says, “Would you really like to know how I feel, David?”

David is anxious to hear what his father has to say. He returns, grabs the chair and moves it closer to the bed, taking both of his father’s hands in his own.

“Yes, father, I really want to know how you feel.”

James takes a deep breath, and begins to talk in a manner David never recalls him doing so before:

“Son, I know it’s easy to make excuses, and I’ve done so all my life. It’s not easy for me to say this, but I just feel like a failure in every single thing I’ve done. Over my life, I’ve been hard to keep a job, let alone take care of my family. Everyone knows it is your mother that makes things go in the house. I’m a kept man, son—”

James eyes have become watery as he speaks, red and swollen. Now he breaks down crying. He feels his weak, frail body move beneath his son who is enormous. James has always big, and then some. Now he envelopes his father almost as a mother would her child, moving now up onto the bed and taking him in his arms.



David too is sobbing as he tries to feel the pain of a lifetime flow from his father. He imagines himself relieving the weight of the sorrow his father carries. It comes to him through the spasms of his father beneath him. They both give into the tears which come flowing now down their cheeks, unsure of exactly where they come from, but convinced they are real. If it were up to David, he would soak in all of the terrible feelings his father has and deal with them somehow.

James takes several deep breaths, as the sobs subside, and regains his ability to talk.

“I can’t even properly express it, son,” he says, between sighs. “It’s just like this terrible dark feeling which comes from inside me that I can’t even control. I don’t know why it’s there or where it comes from. All I know is that when it comes, I just seem to get sucked down into it.”

David listens to his father without interrupting for quite some time. He wants his father to let out all of the pain and anguish he feels. James explains in great detail how he felt as a kid growing up. He shares his feeling of inadequacy and his trickery to get his own way regardless of what happened to others. This led affected other areas of his life, eventually taking away his profession, and leaving him humiliated.

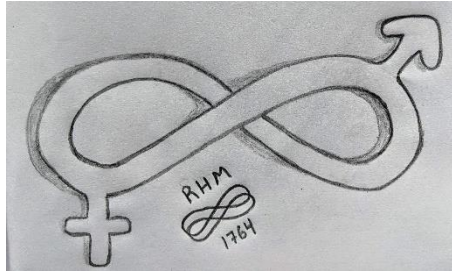
Though much of the story is familiar to David, he hears it now in a new way. He sees his father not as a bad man who did bad things, but rather as a sick man who couldn’t control his impulses.

David isn’t exactly sure how he is going to do it, but he convinced history will not repeat itself, not in his generation anyway, and certainly not on his watch.

## ***1764 Love's Web***

### **A Man's Man**

**The Griegos  
August 1764  
Santa Cruz,  
New Mexico**



Lefty sees Antonio as he is returning home from work. After they greet each other, Antonio asks his father if he can have some time with him. They find a place to sit down, and Antonio begins to explain his dilemma.

“I don’t know even know where to start, father.”

“Try the beginning, son, it’s usually the best place, and I’m in no hurry.”

“Despite being only one of many of your children, I always have felt you have treated me special, and for this reason, I think I can talk to you about anything, father.”

“I’d like to think so, son, and I’d like to think any of my children can talk to me about whatever they have on their minds, but I know that’s probably not entirely true.”

Lefty thinks of his relationship with all of his children, of which he has many. With his first wife, Maria Antonia, he has five boys and two girls. After she passed away due to a sudden and unexplained illness, he married Maria Lorenza. With her he has one boy and four girls. Antonio Miguel is the youngest sibling from his first wife.

He likes to kid around, saying that while he may only have one hand, making him a little lopsided on one side; he came out

all square in the kid's department with his six boys and six girls, giving him an even dozen.

He has always done his best to treat all his children the same, but as tends to be the case, each of their personalities is much different, so it isn't easy. All of them have moved out of his house and are on their own, except for Antonio, who has remained at home, unmarried. Mother Lore, as he affectionately calls his step-mother, is the only mother he has ever known, since his mother died when he was very young. As time has gone on, Antonio has taken it upon himself to take care of all of his parent's needs.

All his siblings are appreciative of his efforts. If it wasn't for him, much of the burden to help their parents would fall on them. As it is, Antonio takes care of most things without even being asked. Not that his father or step-mother really need that much help, since they are still both healthy and active, but nonetheless, he is always there for them. Perhaps for this reason, of all their children, both Lefty and his wife feel closest to Antonio.

Lefty can tell by his son's hemming and hawing that he is uncomfortable about what he wants to say, so he gives his son some encouragement:

"Don't worry, there's nothing you can tell me that I probably haven't already heard or imagined, and certainly nothing that would make me feel any less of you, son."

"The thing is, father, that I would like to get married."

Lefty is caught off guard. To his knowledge, Antonio doesn't have a girlfriend, nor has he showed any particular interest in anyone recently. Rather than say anything, Lefty simply nods and raises his eyebrows, indicating his surprise.

"I know this kind of comes out of the blue, and in great part, that's why I want to talk to you."

Again, Lefty says nothing, though his expression changes to one of confusion. This is the first time he has ever heard Antonio express any interest in getting married.

"Aren't you going to say anything, father?" he finally asks.

“Well, I suppose, I should say, ‘Congratulations, son, who’s the lucky lady?’ but I’m still trying to wrap my mind around you getting married in the first place.”

Antonio takes a deep breath and lets out slowly. “Yes, I know this must come as quite a shock to you, but it’s something I’ve thought a lot about, and believe it to be the best thing for me to do.”

“Well, then, I’ll support you, son. I need know nothing more.”

Lefty gives his son a big hug and as they come apart, he sees tears in Antonio’s eyes.

“What is it, Antonio? What’s wrong?”

“I just don’t know if I’m doing the right thing father, I’m so confused, yet somehow, I do feel it is something I must do.”

“Well, why don’t we start by you telling me who it is, son?”

“It’s Magdalena Montoya.”

“Pedro’s sister?”

“Yes, father, it’s his youngest sister.”

Lefty knows Pedro and his family very well. Their families moved into the valley about the same time. Pedro and Antonio are the same age, and they have been friends since they were small.

“I think Pedro’s father died about the same time as your mother died, as I recall.”

“Yes, that’s correct, father.”

Lefty says nothing, taking in everything his son is saying, and wondering what he isn’t expressing. He can sense there’s more to the story by the way his son is behaving. Antonio used to act similarly when he was a little boy, whenever he was trying to conceal something. Rather than ask his son outright what he is hiding, he decides to let him slowly let it out, as he also usually does with him.

“Our plan is to get married and then I will live with them in their house, since it’s big enough for all of us.”

## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

“I see,” Lefty says, and do you already have a date set?”

“We’re thinking about week after next.”

Lefty says nothing, but it’s not necessary since his facial expression shows his astonishment at the proximity of the date.

“I know it seems soon, but it’s, well—”

“Go ahead, spit it out, son.”

“It’s kind of necessary.”

Lefty’s emotions immediately change to those of excitement and happiness, when he realizes what his son is saying.

“You’re go to be a father, Antonio?”

“Well, yes, you could say that, father.”

Lefty’s expression changes once again, now to one of bewilderment.

“As far as I know, that’s generally a yes or no type of answer, son. Either you are, or you aren’t.”

“Well, it’s not as easy as all that, father. That’s part of the reason I wanted to talk to you here, alone.”

Lefty waits patiently for the explanation which is not long in coming. Antonio explains to his father how his friendship with Pedro evolved into a romantic relationship, some ten years ago. He tells his father neither of them planned for it to happen, it simply happened.

Since that time, Antonio and Pedro try to spend as much time together as possible, but it’s not easy. Recently, Magdalena had a tryst with a soldier who was passing through and much to her surprise has now missed her last two periods, and she fears she might be pregnant. She confided to Pedro what happened. Immediately, the solution came to Pedro. His best friend, Antonio, can marry his sister. They will live in the same house, and when the baby is born, it can be raised as Antonio and Magdalena’s child.

## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

Lefty takes everything his son tells him in stride, without saying anything. While this is a lot to take in. It doesn't come as a complete surprise to Lefty.

"Aren't you going to say anything, father?"

"What would you like for me to say, Antonio?"

"I'm not sure, father, I just hoped you might understand."

"What makes you think I don't understand, son?"

"Well, for one, your silence. You've said almost nothing this whole time. Secondly, I'm just not sure what is going through your mind right now, and I would like your blessing before I go forward.

After remaining fairly expressionless during most of his son's explanation, Lefty now smiles broadly, brings his son closer to him in a big hug, and says:

"Son, it's not my blessing you need. You need only your own."

With tears welled up in Antonio's eyes, he asks:

"What do you mean, father? I don't understand."

"If you want my blessing, I will certainly give it to you, son, unconditionally. But more important that what I think, or what anyone else thinks about what you do, is what you think about what you do. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, but what about the church, and what about what other people might say? I can't tell you about the anguish I've gone through, thinking that I might be doing something wrong. Thinking about I might be damned forever to hell."

Lefty considers what he wants to say carefully, so it doesn't get misconstrued. "The church has its own way of interpreting reality. While I strongly adhere to it, I also think it is meant to be used as a guide, and not a rule. As far as to what other people might say, don't worry about it, son. It is impossible to have everyone agree with our actions all of the time, nor do they need to, and generally they aren't really interested."

"Why do you say that, father?"

“People are mostly interested in themselves. In my experience, beyond a passing thought every now and again, we are rarely in other people’s thoughts. Beyond being fodder for gossip around town, most people have enough to worry about with their own troubles, let alone go around being concerned about those of others.” Then, as an afterthought, he adds, “Besides, it sounds like Pedro has this pretty well thought out, and it’s actually an excellent idea for the two of you to be together.”

“Do you really think so, father?”

“Yes, I do son. While it really isn’t anyone’s business what we do behind closed doors, it’s best not to give people anything to talk about.”

Antonio nods, and then, after taking a deep breath, asks, “Are you somehow disappointed in me, father?”

“Disappointed? Why would I be disappointed, Antonio?”

“I don’t know. Maybe because you might somehow think me less of a man?”

“No, I don’t think any less of you in any way, son. In fact, I think more of you for having talked to me about your feelings. I want you to know one thing, Antonio.”

“What’s that, father.”

“You are my son, and I will always love you, as you are, no matter what.”

## A Woman's Man

**The McKees**

**August 1764**

**County Antrim, Ireland**

“Father, can we speak with you a moment?”

David is surprised to hear his son, James', voice. He turns around to see his oldest two sons at his office, waiting in the doorway. He is surprised to see them, since they usually don't go there. He gives instructions to the two people he has working for him about what needs to get done, and then leads his sons into his office, closing the door behind them.

This space is fairly new. Previously David had always worked side by side with his employees, and there was never any separation, but recently he decided he liked to have his privacy every once in a while, so he made a small office space in the locale he has rented now for several years, where he conducts his livestock trading business. The entire room is nearly occupied by the sparse furniture, consisting of David's desk and chair, as well as two chairs for visitors in front of the desk.

This is the first time his sons James and John are seeing the space.

“So what do you think of my new office?” David asks them, indicating they sit in the only place possible, while maneuvering its large frame behind the desk and sitting in his chair.

James answers, “It's very small, you almost don't fit back there, father.”

“You are right, James,” David says with a chuckle, as he looks around him. “I had some miscalculations in my measurements, didn't take into account the thickness of the walls, and so it came out a bit smaller than I had originally planned. I must admit, it's a little tight. I need to either get a smaller desk or a smaller body.”

When his other son, John, says nothing and remains expressionless, David asks him, “Does the cat have your tongue, son? You haven't said a word yet, you look very serious for it being so early in the morning, are you okay?”



John looks up from his hands, finally catching his father's gaze for the first time since arriving. "Yes, there is actually a problem, father, and I'm afraid that when I do talk, that you're not going to like what I have to say, so I've been restraining myself."

"Well, you've both come here and obviously want to discuss something with me, so let it out."

John takes a deep breath, and his words come out sharply, with ire in his tone:

"Father, we have just learned of two brothers and sister we have that we never knew existed? How could you have never told us about them?"

David imagined this day would come, and he figured it was coming soon, based on recent events. He had thought a thousand times about how he should tell his children about their other siblings, but he could never find the right time or the courage to do so. Now with two of his oldest children before him, all of a sudden, all of the words he thought he might one day say vanish into thin air.

David looks first at John, whose gaze, if converted to light would burn right through him, and then to James, whose expression is more cordial, before speaking.

"I really don't know what to say to you, to be quite honest."

David sits back in his chair, puts his hands in his lap and looks down at them before looking up again.

"It's not something I planned, and I never really thought about the consequences."

"That is quite obvious, father!" John's sits forward putting his hands on the table. David wonders if his son is thinking of coming after him if it wasn't for the table between them. Though there is no doubt John would probably be able to do little damage to his father, who is much stronger despite his age.

"Did you just think somehow that you could just hide an entire family from us? Do you take us for stupid? You could have at least warned us that we might one day meet a family whose children looked like us, and who have similar ages to boot."

## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

David knows his son his right. He pleads guilty on all counts, not knowing what else he can say to minimize the gravity of what they feel. He is relatively sure they don't want to know all of the torrid details of his love affair with a lovely young lady in a neighboring county named Katherine O'Neill, which led to him having another family which includes two sons and a daughter. He spares the details, instead telling them briefly how he met her, along with the names and ages of their three siblings, who are of similar ages to his two sons before him.

"So, you were running around with this other lady, while we were still babies?" John asks.

"Yes, that is correct, son. I'm not proud of admitting it, and the good Lord knows I have asked for forgiveness. While I'm pretty sure it doesn't do any good to tell you this now, but not talking about this has torn me up over the years."

"That may be, father," James says, "but not bad enough to stop seeing them."

"Why would I stop seeing them," David says, now on the defensive. "They are my children, and though I have never told any of you about them, nor them about you. I have always claimed them and supported them as my own."

"And what about, mother, don't you love her?" John asks, disdain dripping off his words.

David sits up straighter, shakes his head and takes a breath before answering, as he thinks of Margaret Patterson, his first love, and mother of six of his children.

"Of course, I love your mother, and I have always loved her. This has nothing to do with love."

"Well then, if you have always loved her, why do have another family?" John demands. "If it was just a matter of lust or passion, surely you would have learned your lesson after a time or two. So, of course it has to do with love."

David struggles now to enunciate feelings he has struggled with himself all of these years and which he does not fully understand. How many restless nights, and dismal days he has spent trying to sort out his emotions between these two women

and his two families. John's question is a good one. If he loved his wife enough, why would he go in search of someone else, and perhaps what's even worse, keep going back for more?

These and other questions have plagued him over the years. What started at first as a passionate encounter, as he was away on business, soon developed into a full-fledged affair. He was smitten at first sight with a small-town girl whose father was one of his best clients in the County of Down. As David's business relationship developed with old man O'Neill, they began to spend more time together. David began staying with them when he traveled there on business. One thing led to another, and before David knew what was happening; and at the same time, he had his wife pregnant back home in County Antrim, and his lover pregnant in County Down.

David immediately took responsibility with Katherine, offering to raise the child as his own, and to provide for it financially. Though her father wasn't happy with the arrangement, he only had himself to blame for letting David get so close to his daughter, who was in the height of her sexual development. Besides, the reason he did so much business with David is because he liked him.

From then on, David would go monthly to the County of Down, to do business, and stay at the O'Neill's, playing husband for Katherine and father to their three kids as he did so. He would typically arrive on a Monday or a Tuesday, stay about ten days, and then return home.

Routine makes fools of us all, and pretty soon, everyone was pretty much used to David's regular absences from both households. David never told any of his children about their other siblings, but Katherine knew from the get go about his marriage to Katherine, who suspected he was in another relationship from early on, though she had never confirmed her suspicions.

Not long ago, one of Katherine's good friends, Ruth McCarty, found out about David's other family when she was visiting her own family, who lives close to the O'Neills. She mentioned what she found out to Katherine, who put on a brave face, telling her friend she was aware of the situation, though inside she was devastated with the news.

When Katherine confronted David with the information, he admitted it was true. She couldn't imagine the shame related to becoming separated from him, and she also had her kids to think about. James and John were already older and pretty much on their own, but her other four children were younger and still very reliant on her. It would be almost impossible for her to work and make ends meet without David.

So instead of issuing any kind of ultimatum to her husband, she simply began a cold war, rarely speaking to him. When she wants something from him, she has taken to snapping her fingers and pointing at it, for him to give it to her. Her behavior was immediately noticed by her children. They questioned her about her sudden change in attitude with their father because she had previously always been attentive to his needs and polite to him. She firmly advised them it was none of their concern.

This is, in great part, to lead James and John to seek out their mother's friend, Ruth, who by chance knew exactly why their mother was acting so strange. At first, she was hesitant to tell them the truth, preferring not to get involved. But they insisted, concerned for their mother's welfare. She gave in and told them what she knew about David's other family in County Down.

Based on David's conversation with his wife, and the way she was acting, he was relatively sure this situation would come to a head also with his children. Nonetheless, he is still unsure about how to proceed and what to say. James seems concerned and curious but not angry; while John exhibits only hate and anger. After gathering his thoughts, David finally speaks.

"I really don't expect either of you to forgive me what I have done, but I do hope one day you might be able to understand. Even now when I go back and think of everything I've done, I can think of so many things I would have done differently. I am sorry for all of the pain and hurt I've caused, particularly to your mother. I know the two of you have seen how she has been treating me lately, and no doubt, this has led to this conversation now. I never wanted to hurt anyone."

James is the first of the brothers to speak. "Father, I can't complain about how you have raised us, and though I think you may have been a little rough on us at times, it was probably for our own good. You have always been a good father to me, and I

feel you have been so to all of us. What I can't understand, father, is how you could live this lie for so long?"

David has asked himself the same thing, time and again, without any suitable answer.

"Son, I really don't even know how to explain it. I certainly didn't do any of this to hurt anyone, and after it had already started, it just seemed natural to keep going. You know my work routine. The first of the month, I head out for about 10 to 12 days for my work, then come back for the rest of the month to settle things up before going out again the next month. This came to be such a habit that everyone just seemed to get used to it, so I kept doing it.

"Don't get me wrong, from the very beginning it was very difficult for me, particularly emotionally. I have had a lot of private prayer sessions with God about my actions, and have asked for forgiveness. Ironically, one of the things that has made me so successful in business is that I have had so many mouths to feed." He smiles, and gets one in return from James, though John remains stoic. "I've never shirked my responsibilities for any of you, nor do I think I've ever denied any of you anything that you really needed."

Both James and John have to agree with their father. Ever since the two of them can remember, he has been one of the most respected men in the area in his business. Wherever he goes, people stop to greet him, and talk to him because of his likability and charisma. Many times, it bothers his children since it seems to take forever for them to get anywhere with him.

As far as material goods and clothes, they live much better than most of the people they know, getting what they need and much of what they want. All of their children have to admit David is a good provider. Though none of them have ever liked his frequent absences, he usually makes it up to them in other ways when he is around. He has always been attentive to his kids' needs.

His situation with the O'Neill's is similar except for the fact that Katherine has been aware of his other family from the beginning. She loved him regardless of his marital situation from first meeting him, accepting him for who he was, and as he was.

## **1784: Holding on to Yesterday**

While James seems temporarily placated by his father's response, John is still angry. David reaches across the table, grabbing John's hands in his own. John's first reaction is to take them away, but his father's strong hands hold them fast. David waits until John's gaze rises from their hands to meet his own.

"I would like for the two of you to know something very important."

David looks briefly back and forth between the two before continuing.

"Love can make us crazy and make us do things we wouldn't ordinarily do. I'm sorry for any pain I've caused you."

## ***1784 Holding on to Yesterday***

### **Turn the Page**

**The Griegos  
October 1784  
Santa Cruz,  
New Mexico**

On a day much like any other day, after clearing the table, Antonio Miguel sits down after dinner. It's harvest time and they

are all tired after a long day's work. As is usually the case, he is flanked on the left by his brother-in-law and best friend, Pedro. To his right is his wife, Magdalena. His mother-in-law sits beside his wife. His son, Miguel Antonio is directly in front of him on the other side of the table.

The conversation is dominated by all the things they need to do in the next several days to get the harvest in before the weather turns. Though still early in the season, they have already snow on the highest peaks around them, and they know soon the cold will set in for the winter. Each of them has their own tasks and responsibilities. After having talked about what needs to be done, Miguel Antonio says:

“I hate to change the conversation, father, but what's going to happen to Grand pappy's land on the other side of the river?”

Pedro exchanges brief glances with his sister and mother, before looking at Antonio for his reply. Pedro knows from past conversations that this is a very delicate subject with Antonio.



## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

Antonio is about to respond, and then instead, takes a breath, and considers carefully what he has to say. This is something that has been stuck in his craw for some time now and though he wants to be reasonable with his response, he feels rage building up inside him as he lets out his breath.

“I wish I could say that it is going to be divided up among all of my father’s children, as was his desire, I’m afraid this doesn’t seem to be the case.”

“I thought you had talked to Barbara and Maria Luisa about what was going to happen. Weren’t they going to talk to grandma Lore?”

Antonio looks at his son, still trying to contain his feelings, yet also knowing they are starting to get the better of him. “They told me mother Lore said everything was already taken care of and that there was nothing to talk about.”

Now it is Pedro who speaks up, surprised at what his friend is saying. “You mean she doesn’t even want to talk about it? I don’t think you’re asking for much, particularly based on what we all heard your father say, shortly before his death.”

They all know the story, but not the outcome. Antonio Miguel’s father, Lefty, received a large land grant on the other side of the river several years before his demise. At the time, he and Mother Lore still had several young children, the youngest were all girls. Though in total he had seven children with his first wife, and five with mother Lore, at the time, he was most concerned with his youngest children, and how they would fare in the world if he wasn’t around to help them. As such, he had written his will at that time to take care of his four youngest daughters in the event of his death.

As luck would have it for them all, he lived for quite some time after he wrote his will, and he was able to help each of his youngest daughters get settled in one way or another. When his death was imminent, he called all of his children together, along with Mother Lore. In a very emotional speech, where he addressed each of his children, he told them that he loved all of them equally. He told them how proud of them he was in their own special way.



## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

At the end of his discourse, he said that rather than leaving all the land to only his four youngest girls, he instead wanted to have it divided up between all twelve of his children, despite two of them having moved out of the area. Mother Lore was quick to remind him that his last will and testament said otherwise. Lefty told her that he realized that and meant to change it, but first wanted to tell them of his wishes. He was particularly anxious for his grandchildren to benefit from the gift, since most of his kids already had their own abode and ability to make a living.

Unfortunately, Lefty never got the chance to make the change to his will. Shortly after their gathering, he became bed ridden after a severe cold, never again recovering. While each of his children who were present heard what their father said, the document with their father's signature said something completely different.

Miguel Antonio, along with several of his cousins, are anxious to make their own homes on the land, since most of them were now getting married and having their own families. While Miguel is still single, he is about to ask his longtime girlfriend to marry him, and he would like to know whether or not they might be entitled to some of his grandfather's land.

With his voice rising an octave and the rage now flowing through his words, Antonio says, "She has decided to stick by what the will says and give everything to her four daughters. After all that we have all done for her, I'm outraged that she doesn't take into account my father's last wishes."

They are all quiet momentarily as Antonio's words seem to hang in the air long after they are said. "I won't use any foul language, because I've been taught better, but if could, now would definitely be the time!" he adds with disgust dripping off of his words.

While Pedro and Magdalena have seen this side of Antonio, it's the first time Miguel sees his father like this. Rather than say anything, they are quiet as they watch Antonio in his own private meltdown. Suddenly, Antonio pushes his chair back, stands up and begins pacing back and forth. Despite his promise not to use any foul language, his anger gets the better of him and Miguel hears him say words he had never heard come before from his father's mouth.

When Antonio's tirade finally subsides, he sits down once again, taking a big drink of water. Pedro puts his hands over his friend's hands and says, "Antonio, I know how much this bothers you, but you can't let it get you down. We have everything we need and Miguel, along with his cousins, will get along as best they can, just as we have all these years."

"That's exactly the point!" Antonio says, his voice still loud, but now sounding somewhat more reasonable. "With few exceptions, all of my siblings, and myself, are all doing pretty well. This is in large part to my father's generosity over the years." He shakes his head, still breathing heavily but slowly regaining his composure. "I could care less about the land for me, or any of us here, except for Miguel. My father wanted to be able to give all of his grandchildren an opportunity to start life out with a place of their own. We all heard what he said, we know what he wanted in his heart, despite what's written on that stupid piece of paper."

Pedro listens to his friend, letting him talk until he has nothing else to say. As is usually the case, Antonio's mother-in-law, Maria Esperanza, says little. She has been blessed to live with her two children, her son-in-law, and grandson. She has no complaints, and at her age has no interest in land for any reason. Magdalena, has taken on a unique role in this non-traditional household where Antonio and Pedro make most of the decisions. While lacking most of the emotional and physical interaction with her husband, she also knew this would likely be the case from the outset of her marriage with Antonio, which was done out of convenience, and not out of love. Miguel has grown up with this dynamic his entire life, and though at times he has been lonely as an only child, he is never alone, since many of his closest friends are his numerous cousins.

When Miguel feels the heat of the moment has finally passed, he stands up, walks around the table and hugs his father, who is still sitting, from behind and asks:

"Are you okay, father? I've never seen you like this before."

With his son's words Antonio breaks down crying, unable to answer through his sobs, instead just shaking his head back and forth, before gaining his voice once again, which is shaky at best.

## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

“I’m sorry, son. I’m sorry all of you have to see me like this, I don’t know why it makes me so angry. It’s not the stupid land that I really want, all I want is for her to honor my father’s wishes.” He is silent briefly, and then again through sobs, he adds, “All my daddy ever had was his word.”

After giving his father another big hug, Miguel walks back around the table and sits down again. After a pregnant pause in the tension, it is Pedro who does his best to comfort his friend:

“Antonio, you know that in the end everyone always fends for themselves. I have known mother Lore for as long as I’ve known you. I know she loves not only you, but all of your siblings, not just those she bore. She gave her life to raising you and your older siblings, before having her own. I’m sure she is just doing what she feels is right, and lord knows she has a handful with several of her oldest grandchildren. Though I can’t say I agree with what she is doing, I can say that in a strange sort of way, I understand it.”

“You understand it? How could you possibly understand it, Pedro, it makes no sense.”

“Sure, it does, just think about it. What would you do for Miguel, if he needed your help.”

“Anything that I could!”

“That’s exactly the point, Antonio. Just as you would do anything for Miguel, she would do anything for her children, and right now, I’ve no doubt that she feels several of them need help.”

Antonio has to admit that his cousins Barbara and Maria Luisa are in particular need of help right now. Between the two of them they have eight children, they all live with mother Lore, and there are no men around. Barbara’s husband was killed by the Indians in a raid, and Maria Luisa’s husband disappeared one morning, never to return.

As if admitting defeat, Antonio says, “I suppose you are right, Pedro. It just doesn’t seem right, particularly after all we have done for them. It seems like the least they could do is to honor my father’s words.”

“Can I ask you a question, Antonio?”

“Sure, what is it?”

“What would your father tell you to do if he was still alive? I know that not only you, but all of us admired his ability to keep his cool in the most difficult circumstances. What would your father’s advice be.”

Antonio shakes his head slightly. A brief smile flashes across his face as he remembers his father. Then turning serious and nodding his head, he replies:

“He would tell me to get on with my life and turn the page, but it’s much easier said than done.”

“That’s exactly my point, Antonio! Don’t be so concerned about who said what to who. Instead, make your daddy proud, get over it, and let it go. It does you absolutely no good to hold onto the past.” Then turning to face Miguel, he adds with a touch of laughter, “Besides, Miguel is perfectly able to fend for himself, and if he does get in a bind, he has us to help him out.”

## Believe in Today

### The McKees

October 1784

Miller's Run, Pennsylvania

Fall is in the air and the weather is turning. A cool breeze cools the air as John McKee, his father-in-law, David Reed, and his uncle by marriage, John Reed, drink water and rest under a large cottonwood tree next to the river after a long day of work harvesting the fields.

“Uncle J,” John asks, I have a question for you.”

“Sure, tell me son, what is it?”

Despite being his nephew, the elder man often refers to John as his son, having built a close relationship with him over the last several years since John's arrival with his wife, Lydia Reed, and their children from Ireland.

“I'm a little confused about why General Washington is so set on his ways to make us move from where we live. Wasn't this land deeded to you and Papa D, long ago when you first moved into the area?”

The elder Reed, takes a deep breath and shakes his head slightly as he recalls his journey from Ireland to colonial America along with his brothers David and Henry, more than ten years prior. At the time, along with a host of other Irish Presbyterians, on a leap and a hope they took the risk of moving to a new land of which they knew little, wanting only to live in peace with their beliefs and customs.

“That's a good question, John, and I don't know if there is an easy answer.”

“Well then, Uncle J, tell me the difficult one,” he answers with a smile, to which his uncle responds with a healthy laugh.

## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

“We’re done for the day working, so I suppose I can give you the long version of why I think General Washington is so intent on taking this land as his own.”

For the last several weeks, all anyone can talk about is the desire of George Washington to oust them from these lands, claiming them as his own from a payment received from war debt years prior.

“What you need to understand, son, is that back then the little of what you see now here existed. Together with my brothers, we landed in New Castle, Delaware. At the time, there was little opportunity there, so David and I were, looking to make our next move. Our brother Henry, a printer by trade, remained nearby in Philadelphia, having been hired on by a local printer in the area shortly after our arrival.”

David Reed, the younger of the two brothers remains quiet as his brother continues:

“Shortly after our arrival, we met a man by the name of George Croghan, who assured us that not only was plenty of good land available to homesteaded in this area, but that he himself could arrange for us to purchase of the land at very reasonable terms. So, on a hope and a prayer, we decided to take him up on his offer. As you I’m sure you know, we over initially by ourselves, leaving our families behind in Ireland, until we could get settled.

“The journey here was difficult and marked with the constant fear of being attacked by the Indians in the area who weren’t taken kindly to our intrusion into they considered to be their lands. Nonetheless, we persisted until arriving here with little more than our names, the clothes on our back, some livestock, and a few bags of seeds.”

The younger McKee tries to imagine what life might have been like at the time. Now there were several families in this area and Pittsburgh, just down river, about a half a day’s ride was Pittsburgh. When they got there, they learned General Washington was supposedly given the land in Millers Run as a reward for his efforts in the war against France.

“At the time, if someone was to lay stake to a claim on land, they needed to make some improvement to the land. According

to Washington, he sent a man by the name of Crawford to build a cabin on the site.”

“And was there a cabin, Uncle J.?”

The older man laughs out loud.

“Yes, he built a cabin, but then abandoned it. No one ever lived in it. When we asked Croghan about the cabin, he told us no one had even been to it in more than two years, which according to him by legal rights relinquished all claims.”

“So, what did you do?”

“We built another cabin which blocked the initial one. We figured that whenever the other owner came around to claim their cabin, they would have to go through us to get them.”

The old man roars with laughter, thinking about what they did.

“When the person who built the cabin did show up, it turned out to be none other than George Washington.”

John knows much of the rest of the story. Not more than a month prior the famous man came to recuperate what he believed was rightfully his as payment for his war efforts. As far as Washington was concerned all the families in this area were squatters. When they told him they believed they had rightful claim to the land, including bills of sale, and improvements on their properties, Washington insisted they were on his land.

John knows that his uncle was one of the main people involved in the situation. The first night Washington was in the area, he had dinner with his uncle.

“What was it like for you to have Washington come to dinner at your home, Uncle J.?”

His uncle takes a long sip of water. “I was honored, yet also on my guard. I knew what he was coming for, and I knew that because of his stature, and success as a war hero, we might have a difficult time making our case. Nevertheless, we were armed with not only proof of ownership, but more importantly time in the area where we had built web where we each helped each other as best we could. Times were tough, but we were determined to

be tougher. The intent of the law saying that to claim a piece of land, you needed not only to build a structure, but also live in it, seemed to be in our favor. A man in Pittsburgh told us we had a chance to win in the event of a legal battle, so we decided to take it.”

“And do you think you can win a legal battle?”

“I don’t know son, and truth of the matter is that I don’t care.”

“But how could you not care, I don’t understand. Won’t you be angry if this land is taken from you and the rest of us here?”

The older man considers his response carefully before responding. “I don’t think anger is the right word, son. If we don’t succeed on keeping this land, and are instead forced to leave, I will likely feel disappointment, but not anger.”

“I don’t understand that, Uncle J, how could you not feel anger with everything that his happening?”

“In time, I have learned that the scales of justice don’t always tilt the way they should, and justice isn’t always served as I feel it should be. As Justice of the Peace for this area, I have had to make many decisions based on the information available, which wasn’t always complete. The innocent can sound guilty, and the guilty can sound innocent. I have heard people who couldn’t utter two words in a court of law who couldn’t hurt a fly, and others who were criminals who could weave a web of lies so long it would make your head spin before you knew which way was up. What’s right and wrong often has many shades of gray.”

“I still don’t understand why this action against you doesn’t make you mad both of you mad,” he says addressing both his uncle and his father.

For the first time in the conversation, John’s father speaks up. “What you have to understand about us son, is that we were brought up with a set of beliefs where we believe the laws of nature and of God are much greater than we control.”

“That’s right, brother.”

“This is the reason we can be cordial with the man, without getting angry. General Washington believes he has a legal claim to the land, and in his mind, it is his, just as do we. He hired a



## 1784: Holding on to Yesterday

man to put a cabin on the property but doesn't recognize our presence on the land. If we bring it down to brass tacks, we were both sold the same land.

“We believe we have a legal claim to our stake in the land, but if in a court of law we are defeated, we will carry on somehow. The land will never be ours or Washington's. The land belongs to powers that be which I can't say I fully understand, but whatever happens, will be for the better. If we cannot live here, we will live someplace else. I will be disappointed if we have to lose what we have here, but I will be grateful to have learned what I have learned in order to rebuild our future someplace else. If it is God's grace for us to move someplace else, then we will move.”

John, doesn't feel the same sense of calm he sees in his father and his uncle. He doesn't like to admit it to anyone, and least of all himself, it scares him to have to relocate to a new area.

“I'm not always able to let things go and forget about the past or forgive others so easily. How are you able to do so, Uncle J.”

His uncle bends down into the water, splashes his face to refresh himself with the cool water of the river and takes a drink before answering.

“Son, this right here, right now is living. Life isn't about yesterday, or about what might happen tomorrow. It isn't about where we live or what we do. It's not about the heartbreak of the past or worry about the future. It's about feeling a connection with a something greater in us which has somehow kept us living all these years. I can't tell you how it's done, but it seems to me a higher being is responsible for it all. Challenges drive us to get better, while disappointment can lead us to try harder. In the end, belief in a better way of living today, helps can help us to surpass any adversity that gets in our way.”

# The Griegos

|     | <b>Name</b>             |                                | <b>Spouse</b>                                                                       |                                        | <b>Children</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I   | Lucas<br>Lorenza        | (1540 ~ 1614)<br>(1536 ~ 1620) | María<br>Isabel de<br>García<br>Pedro<br>Herrera                                    | (1542 ~ 1566)<br><br>(1528 ~ 1598)     | *Juan (1564)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| II  | Juan                    | (1564 ~ 1628)                  | María<br>Romero                                                                     | (1576 ~ 1646)                          | *Juan II (1598), Sara (1601),<br>José (1604)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| III | Juan II                 | (1598 ~ 1676)                  | Carolina<br>de<br>Cantillana                                                        | (1602 ~ 1676)                          | Juan Antonio (1619),<br>Antonio José (1620), María<br>Inés (1624), María Isabella<br>(1626), *José Eduardo<br>(1629)                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| IV  | José<br>Eduardo         | (1629 ~ 1702)                  | Elsa Lujan                                                                          | (1632 ~ 1708)                          | José Eduardo II (1648),<br>Josefa Sara (1650), Samuel<br>(1654), María Eugenia<br>(1656), *Francisco (1665)                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| V   | Francisco               | (1665 ~ 1730)                  | María<br>Jiménez<br>de Enciso                                                       | (1665 ~ 1745)                          | Apolonia (1684), María<br>(1685), Juan (1689),<br>Domingo (1693), *Francisco<br>II (1699)                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| VI  | Francisco<br>II (Lefty) | (1699 ~ 1776)                  | María<br>Antonia<br>Jirón del<br>Castillo<br><br>////<br>María<br>Lorenza<br>Molina | (1705 ~ 1732)<br><br><br>(1714 ~ xxxx) | Manuel Gregorio (1722),<br>Juan Bautista (1724), María<br>Angela (1725), Francisco III<br>(1727), Micaela Mae (1728),<br>Salvador (1729), *Antonio<br>Miguel (1730), ////<br>Juan Ángel (1734), Antonia<br>Gertrudis (1735), Barbara<br>Antonia (1737), María Luisa<br>(1739), Antonia Margarita<br>(1741), |
| VII | Antonio<br>Miguel       | (1730 ~ xxxx)                  | Magdalena<br>Montoya<br>////<br>Pedro<br>Montoya                                    | (1748 ~ xxxx)<br><br>(1730 ~ xxxx)     | *Miguel Antonio (1765 ~<br>xxxx)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

# The McKees

|      | <b>Name</b>        |               | <b>Spouse</b>                           |                                | <b>Children</b>                                                                                                                             |
|------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I    | Hugh               | (1560 ~ 1598) | Mary MacDonnell                         | (1564 ~ 1652)                  | John (1582), Sarah (1583), Andrew (1585), *Samuel (1588)                                                                                    |
| II   | Samuel             | (1588 ~ 1676) | Lydia McVie Rose<br>Marie Alexander     | (1590 ~ 1640)<br>(1608 ~ 1682) | Samuel II (1606), Ruth (1607), *William (1610)////<br>George (1642), Mary (1644), Edward (1647)                                             |
| III  | William (aka Liam) | (1610 ~ 1685) | Hannah Kelly                            | (1612 ~ 1698)                  | William II (1630), *Alexander (1632), Lydia (1633), Edith (1635), Hannah Elizabeth (1636), James (1638)                                     |
| IV   | Alexander          | (1632 ~ 1680) | Anna Lloyd                              | (1633 ~ 1711)                  | *Alexander II (1650), Michael (1652), Anita (1655), Louis (1658),                                                                           |
| V    | Alexander II       | (1650 ~ 1738) | Elizabeth Miller                        | (1650 ~ 1737)                  | *Hugh (1668), Agatha (1669), Thomas (1672), Carolyn (1673)                                                                                  |
| VI   | Hugh McKee         | (1668 ~ 1739) | Mary Heron                              | (1676 ~ 1740)                  | *James (1695), Henry (1696), Hugh (1698), John (1700), William (1702)                                                                       |
| VII  | James McKee        | (1695 ~ 1780) | Margaret O'Reilly                       | (1698 ~ 1779)                  | *David (1712), John (1714), Hannah (1715), James (1718), Alexander (1720)                                                                   |
| VIII | David McKee        | (1710 ~ xxxx) | Margaret Patterson<br>Katherine O'Neill | (1714 ~ xxxx)<br>(1722 ~ xxxx) | James (1739), *John (1742), Hugh (1746), Margaret (1748), Thomas (1749), Richard (1751), ////<br>Alexander (1739), Ana (1740), Henry (1742) |
| IX   | John McKee         | (1742 ~ xxxx) | Lydia Reed                              | (1748 ~ xxxx)                  | John (1776), Jane (1778), *Hugh (1779), Letitia (1781), James (1783), Thomas                                                                |

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## ***About the Author***

I was born in San Antonio, Texas, USA, and grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I studied business administration at the University of Colorado at Boulder and international finance at the Thunderbird School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona, before embarking on a career in financial services.

In 1992, when I was 30 years old, I emigrated to Caracas, Venezuela with my family and have lived there since, with the exception of three years when I was based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 2002, I left the corporate world of high finance, to become speaker and a professor. This in turn led me to begin writing my thoughts and ideas to share with the participants in my events.

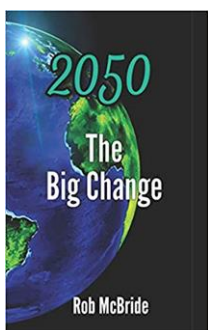
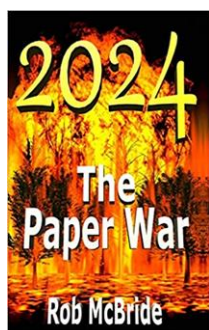
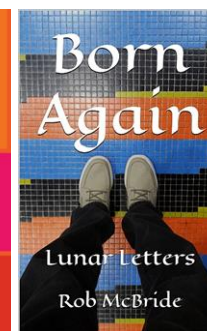
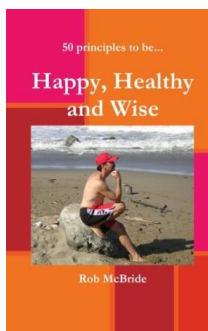
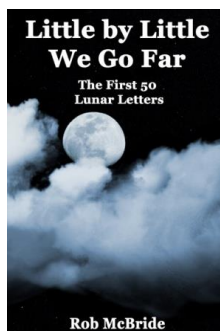
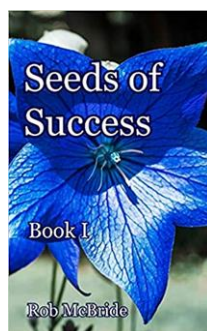
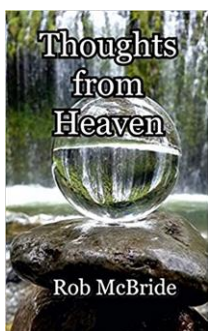
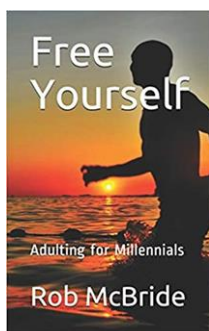
In 2006, my first book, *A Special Gift*, was published in Spanish under the name *Un Don Especial*, by Jupiter Editores in Venezuela. Since then, I have published several books and audios, available in in various formats, languages, and portals.

Besides my passion for writing, I love to read, garden, and learn more about the language of music. I believe there is a better way of living and being.

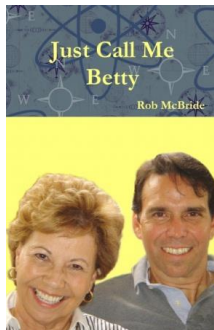
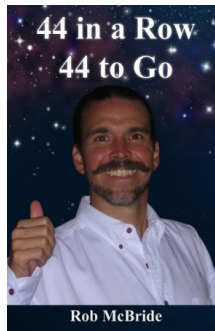
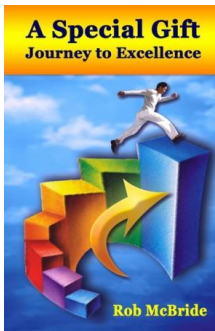
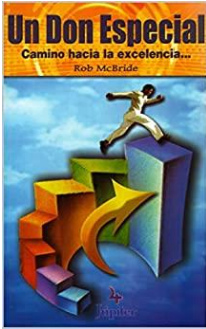
While I have held many titles and played many different roles during my life, right now, I identify most with being a:

**Lighthouse of Peace, Hope and Love**

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