

# Finders Seekers

*1856 - Missouri / Kansas Border  
Where the Pre-Civil War Began*

D. C. Yocum

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*Finders Seekers* is dedicated to past generations whose struggles and hard work have given us our heritage.



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## INTRODUCTION

As soon as the question of Kansas Statehood was considered in Congress, Kansans and Missourians found themselves in the center of a contentious debate. Many Missourians sympathetic to the South, including those in political power, wanted Kansas admitted to the Union as a slave state. To insure a pro-slavery Territorial Government, Missourians crossed the border during the Kansas Territorial election and stuffed the ballot boxes with pro-slavery votes. The vote was seen as an outright theft of the government by a powerful New England lobby.

The Boston based New England Emigrant Aid Company, whose sole purpose was to finance the abolitionist agenda, hired Dr. Charles Robinson, a well-known activist, to counter the slave interests in Missouri and the Territorial Government. He was assigned the task of creating an abolitionist stronghold by any and all means. He started by creating a town close to the Missouri border that eventually became known as Lawrence, Kansas. The fact that the land he selected for his town was already owned and occupied by legal owners, was of little concern to Dr. Robinson. He simply bought out those who would sell and drove off the rest.

After two years of Dr. Robinson's defiance and unlawful actions, the Kansas Territorial Government at Leecompton had had enough. U.S. Marshall Israel Donaldson was ordered to arrest certain ringleaders and eliminate the fort (also known as the Free State Hotel) and the newspapers.

Around noon on May 21, 1856, Nathan Boyer was one of five hundred armed men who surrounded Lawrence. Arrests were made, buildings burned, two printing presses were destroyed and, although there were injuries, not one inhabitant of Lawrence was killed.

Two days later John Brown and his sons hacked five pro-slavery men to death at Pottawatomie Creek in Missouri. The killings were said to be in retaliation for the raid on Lawrence, but the men who were killed had no part in that raid.

Congress was embroiled in the debate much like the citizens of the region. But unlike Congress, the dispute along the border was more than words.

After the secession of six Southern States in February 1861, President Abraham Lincoln ordered the army to reinforce a small island fort manned by Union Troops off the coast of South Carolina, but the order was too late. Fort Sumter surrendered to the Confederacy on April 12, 1861, the official beginning of the Civil War.

The declaration was of little consequence to the people of Missouri and Kansas who had been fully engaged in the terrors of war five years before the taking of Fort Sumter.

Nathan and Janet Boyer and their slave, Sam, arrived from Kentucky to settle on Missouri's western border in the spring of 1846. They settled on the very edge of the frontier and a day's ride from Fort Scott. The growing unrest up north had not reached them yet, but that would change when the Marshall came to call.

## *South West Missouri along the Western Border*

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Recruited by the Law 1856**

Joshua and Gabriel Boyer were following their pa and his plow, removing rocks and roots from the plowed furrows. The two hounds followed them, exploring the freshly turned soil with their noses. Their mother, Janet, stirred the stew for the noon meal while Sam spaded the garden not far from the cabin. Nathan walked behind his mule guiding the plow in preparation for the spring planting. He planned to make one more round before breaking for the midday meal, when Ruckus and May started trotting toward the road. The two hounds began barking as they picked up the pace. Then the mule lifted its head and faced the road with ears erect. Someone was coming.

Nathan laid the plow over on its side and went to his sons. "Josh, you and Gabe need to hurry to the house," he said as he rushed past.

The tone in their pa's voice got the boys running for the cabin as Nathan reached the tree where his rifle waited, primed and ready. He cradled it in his arms as a rider came into view.

Janet heard the barking and went to the door and saw the rider on the road. She hurriedly wiped her hands on her apron and grabbed the pistol from the shelf. She saw her sons running toward her, and beyond them, her husband was leaning against a tree with his rifle.

Sam also heard the barking. He dropped his shovel and ducked behind the woodpile. He saw the boys run to the house and a rider turn from the road onto their lane.

Since those eastern invaders settled up north in the Kansas Territory, tensions were running high. There was a time when a stranger was a welcome source of news, but now a stranger could, just as likely, be trouble.

Josh and Gabe, breathing hard, burst through the door. They watched the stranger rein his horse to a stop and raise his hand. They couldn't hear what was said but saw their pa crossing the narrow strip of plowed earth, his rifle at the ready. The hounds continued barking and circling the horse and rider until their pa was close enough to call off the dogs. The rider then dismounted.

After a few minutes, Nathan signaled to his family that all was well. The two men continued visiting together as they looked over papers that the man pulled from his saddlebags.

Janet returned the pistol to the shelf and tried to compose herself while the boys continued watching their pa and the stranger. Lately, every rider that came by was cause for alarm and she didn't like it. She took a deep breath, and went to the stove to stir the stew.

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That night, after the boys were asleep, Nathan sat on the edge of the bed watching Janet. She was in her rocking chair stitching a patch on Gabriel's shirt. After two children and years of hard work, Janet still retained her youthful beauty. Her blond hair was longer and her blue eyes looked tired after the long day, but her smile was as warm as ever and he thought how lucky he was. He gazed at her and wondered how to begin. He reached over and touched her arm.

"Are you ready to tell me what the marshal wanted?" she asked. "You haven't said much since he left."

Nathan began slowly. "The man that stopped by was more than just a marshal, he was Israel Donaldson, a friend of my pa's. They

served together in the Kentucky Militia and he remembered Pa as a man he could rely on. I remembered him when he reminded me of his visits.” Nathan paused. “He says that things have gone from bad to worse, so the government issued warrants, and ordered him to arrest the ringleaders of that bunch in Lawrence. That’s why he came. He’s gathering enough men to show those eastern squatters that the Lecompton Government<sup>1</sup> means business.”

Janet put down her sewing. “He ought to arrest them all,” she said. “They’ve caused nothing but trouble since they got here.”

“I know,” Nathan agreed. “Donaldson told me that a few weeks back Sheriff Jones went to serve papers, but a mob forced him out of town. So a few days later he returned with a small squad of federal troops and, he and the troops, got sent packing. Then the sheriff decided to try again the next day, only that night someone shot him while he was bunked out in his tent. You got to hand it to the sheriff, he’s persistent.”

“Is he all right?” Janet asked.

“Marshal says the sheriff was only grazed in the shoulder and he’s doing fine now. He’ll be riding against Lawrence and leading the militia. Anyway, shooting the sheriff was the last straw for the officials. The marshal showed me his orders issued by Chief Justice Lecompte himself.”

“Those Jayhawks<sup>2</sup> have been ignoring the law since they got here,” Janet said, her ire rising. “They’ve been claim jumping and running decent folks off their land. It’s about time the government did something about it. I just worry that the trouble up north will come down here.”

“The marshal asked if I’d join up, and I told him I would.”

Janet dropped her sewing and stared at her husband. Nathan continued, “He needs enough men to convince those Jayhawks not to do to him what they did to the sheriff. He asked me to help

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<sup>1</sup> Lecompton Government – The pro-slavery territorial government of Kansas, elected by Missouri ballot stuffing.

<sup>2</sup> Jayhawks – A derogatory term for Kansans generally and the citizens of Lawrence specifically.

keep some of the hot heads from getting out of hand. He doesn't want martyrs." Nathan sensed Janet's concern as he continued, "He wants me to be there in five days. I think I can have the east field planted in three, but planted or not, I'll have to leave."

Janet voiced her fears, "How long will you be gone? What if you get hurt, what if you get . . . get . . .?" She couldn't finish as her fear overwhelmed her.

Nathan pulled her up from the rocker and held her in his arms. "There's no need to fret. I have too much work around here to let myself get hurt. No one has been killed serving papers yet." But Sheriff Jones had been shot, a fact not lost on either of them.

Janet looked her husband in the eye. "Nathan, I saw you hiding behind a tree today with your rifle because a stranger turned in our lane. Our boys ran to the house in fear. Sam hid himself behind the woodpile. I stood in the doorway with a pistol in my hand. Is this the way we have to live from now on?" she asked. "When we first settled here, all we worried about was getting through the winter. But even before that bunch got here, things were changing."

"The marshal believes he'll have close to five hundred men. It's not likely that anyone will even notice me." Nathan thought for a minute. "Anyway, I'll be working with the government not against it."

Janet leaned against her husband. "So far, the government hasn't slowed down those Jayhawks much."

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Four days after the marshal's visit, the horse stood saddled and ready. Sam slipped a nosebag full of oats in one of the saddlebags as Nathan stepped through the cabin door. He stood there a minute taking in the dawn. "Not a cloud in the sky. Looks like a nice day for a ride."

"Looks like you're ready for more than a ride," Sam observed.

Aside from his rifle, Nathan wore his grandfather's leather shirt with beadwork down both sides of his chest. A thick leather

belt held a tomahawk on one side and a beaded scabbard, with his grandfather's antler-handled knife, on the other. The tomahawk, shirt and scabbard were gifts presented to his grandfather for allowing Chief Blue Feather and his people to winter on his land. On his head, Nathan wore the flat brimmed hat his father wore while serving in the Kentucky Militia. A turkey feather was tucked in the band.

"I like the feather, it goes with the shirt," Sam said with a chuckle.

Nathan looked at his friend with a sheepish grin. "I'm only wearing this stuff because it needs airing out," he said. "It's been in that old chest since the harvest dance last fall." In truth, Nathan never missed an opportunity to wear the Indian attire his father and grandfather had worn. He could almost feel them in the beaded deerskin shirt that covered his chest.

Sam knew it, too. "At least you won't be lonesome. You'll have your daddy and granddaddy traveling with you."

Nathan changed the subject. "Sam, after chores, go ahead and plant that corn seed." Nathan looked at his friend and said in a serious tone, "Be careful. Keep the dogs close. If a stranger comes by, stay out of sight if you can, but if not, then . . . well, you're just a slave. Understand?"

"Why, sho' nuff mas'er Nate," Sam said as he toed the ground. Sam stopped his performance and gave Nathan a big grin.

Nathan smiled. "Don't overdo it."

-- ----- --

Sam was born into slavery on the Boyer's Kentucky Plantation. He was barely six-years-old when his mother, Lucy Jeffers, died. She had been the Boyer's housekeeper and a valued part of the family for years. It seemed only right that Sam should stay with the family and serve as their houseboy. A year later, Nathan's parents assigned Sam the job of keeping their four-year-old out of trouble. In no time, the two became inseparable. When Nathan had lessons, Sam got them. When Nathan learned to ride, Sam was at his side. At first Nathan's parents were pleased

that their only son had a trustworthy companion. But as he grew older, Nathan didn't seem to notice the obvious differences between them, and his parents grew concerned. The other slaves also took notice, which did not bode well for young Sam.

After fruitless hours of discussion, James Boyer finally decided he had no choice but to sell Sam and save his son from a deplorable lack of southern decorum. But he'd waited too long. When Nathan found out what his father was planning, Nathan and Sam slipped away. They only returned on condition that Sam would not be sold. James decided the only way out of a bad situation was to transfer Sam's title to Nathan.

When Janet married Nathan, she was unaware of the special bond between Nathan and his slave. At first she was thrilled that her husband owned such valuable property but soon realized that Sam was more friend than slave. That was unacceptable to one of her station and was the one area of conflict between them. That is, until Joshua fell in the spring behind their house.

While pregnant with their second child, Janet went to work in the garden with her two-year-old son. She didn't notice that her toddler had wandered off until Sam came running to her with Joshua in his arms. They were both soaking wet and Joshua was crying.

"I saw him fall in the spring, Missus, but he wasn't under long," Sam said reassuringly. "I jumped in and pulled him out quick." From that day on, Janet saw Sam in a different light. She wasn't ready to see him as her husband did, but her attitude was changed to the benefit of all.

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Janet heard Sam and Nathan talking and wanted to see her husband before he left. She sat up, put her feet on the floor and suddenly felt queasy. She sat still for a moment, waiting for the feeling to pass. When she felt better, she wrapped herself in a blanket and stepped out. "You don't think you're leaving without saying goodbye, do you?"

Nathan turned. "I tried not to wake you," he said as he hugged her.

After a minute she backed away as she held his hands. "You just be careful, Nathan Boyer. Don't forget all the work you still have to do." Then Janet leaned forward and whispered, "And come back safe."

Nathan smiled his understanding as he stepped from the porch and mounted his horse. "I should be back in five or six days," he said. "Sam, try to keep the boys busy and out of Janet's way." Nathan reined his horse toward the lane, but before he reached the road he stopped and waved.

Janet waved back. In spite of the danger, she knew Nathan had to go. Still, she didn't have to like it.

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The first fifty settlers from Massachusetts arrived in the Kansas Territory during the spring of 1854. The next group, led by Dr. Charles Robinson, arrived a few weeks later. After scouting the area, Robinson selected the site for the future town of Lawrence. He ignored the land claims people had already established and the Territorial Laws as well. Groups of like-minded settlers continued to come, and by fall there were over a thousand new arrivals settled on city lots purchased or confiscated from the original owners.

Russell Higgins moved from Tennessee and staked his claim three years before Dr. Robinson and his abolitionists arrived. When Higgins refused to sell, Dr. Robinson directed his followers to surround Russell and force him off his land. His sod hut and well became the property of Yankee squatters. Higgins appealed to the territorial authorities for justice but their slow response left him angry and bitter. Now two years later, his land and that of his one-time neighbors, were still in the hands of Eastern abolitionists.

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On the morning of May 21, 1856, Nathan approached the encampment established on a ridge a few miles west of Lawrence. As he looked over the camp, a man rode up beside him. His name was Russell Higgins. "Folks call me Rusty," he explained. He was a young man, slender built with blue eyes and a straw hat over his unruly red hair. His cropped red beard parted with a broad smile when he asked, "Y'all part of the militia or the posse?"

"Don't know for sure. Marshall Donaldson asked me to come, so I came."

"I'm part of the militia myself. I've been here for a couple days scouting things for Sheriff Jones. I got a camp set up. If you want, you could set up next to me," Rusty said smiling.

"Thanks. You think this thing will take more than a day?"

"Might," Rusty said leading the way through the men and horses.

Rusty reined in next to a tent. "Here we are," he said. "You make yourself at home while I go report."

Nathan watched his companion approach a group of men standing in front of a large tent. An American flag, fluttering in the morning breeze, was posted next to the tent. Nathan recognized one of the men as Marshall Donaldson. The man next to Donaldson was talking when Rusty slid in and stood beside him. The conversation continued even as Rusty dropped to one knee and began drawing in the dirt.

Nathan decided to have a look around the camp. For an hour he wandered from group to group listening and watching. By the time he returned to his horse, he'd learned that not everyone was here to support the law and realized why the marshal was worried. The comments he heard worried him, too. "No abolitionist is gonna take my slaves that's been bought and paid for." "They crowded me off my land. I say we drive them back to where they came from." "I think we ought to kill every one of 'em."

When Nathan returned, Rusty met him at the tent. "You know, I don't think you ever told me your name."

"Nathan Boyer, but you can call me, Nate."

“Well Nate, good luck,” he said as he mounted his horse and rode off toward the wagons.

Marshall Donaldson heard Rusty’s comment as he approached Nathan. “We’ll need a whole lot more than luck this day,” the grim faced marshal remarked.

Donaldson studied the young Kentuckian. “In that getup, you remind me of your pa.”

Nathan, who, like his father, was tall and muscular with an authoritative bearing, said nothing.

The marshal continued, “Is that the same garb your pa used to wear?”

“It is,” Nathan said proudly.

“Looks good on you.” Then Marshall Donaldson got to the business at hand. “Nate, I have something a little touchy I’d like you to do. When we have the town surrounded and the cannons in place, I’ll be going in to serve papers and arrest some folks. Once I make the arrests, I’ll have to leave and take the prisoners to Lecompton. When I’m gone, Sheriff Jones and the militia will commence the bombardment on the fort, or should I say the Free-State Hotel, as folks in Lawrence like to call it. Anyway, he also has orders to destroy the newspapers. Jones will try to keep his men in line, but if some break loose, I want you to keep your eye on them. I don’t want things to get out of control. I hate to say this but I’m worried about Rusty and the men he has with him. They all have some pretty big chips on their shoulders.”

“Rusty?” Nathan asked in surprise. “The guy that just left? He seems so friendly.”

The marshal nodded. “He is, but he’s carrying a lot of hatred for those folks in Lawrence. He’s said a few things that gave me pause. Anyway, if there’s such a thing as luck, I encourage you to use as much as you need.”

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Around noon the town of Lawrence came into view and the encirclement began. By one o’clock the town was surrounded

with over 500 riders and several cannons. Marshall Donaldson and Deputy Marshall Fain, along with their posse, entered the town.

The leaders of Lawrence, realizing their situation, had issued orders that no arms were to be used against the attackers. As a result, the marshal and his posse had little trouble rounding up the men, named in the writs, at least the ones they could find. After the leaders were arrested, they were taken to Lecompton, leaving Sheriff Jones in charge to carry out his instructions.

For the rest of the afternoon and into the evening, cannons boomed over Lawrence specifically targeting the Free-State Hotel but with little effect. The men who watched the bombardment grew tense and restless. Many calmed themselves with cards and strong drink.

Finally, out of frustration, the sheriff ordered some of his men to charge the structure only to discover that it had been abandoned. Several barrels of gunpowder were placed in the basement and set ablaze. The resulting explosion and fire did what hours of bombardment couldn't.

After the cannons went silent and while the sheriff's men advanced on the fort, Rusty and his group slipped away. Nathan noticed them and followed at a discreet distance.

It was near dark when Rusty's men stormed the first of two newspaper offices. They grabbed the racks of type and threw them in the Kaw River, smashed the press and set fire to the building. The alcohol fueled frenzy of the men intensified as they went about their destructive work.

Nathan watched with satisfaction as the flames engulfed the structure. He'd read the lies and distortions of those newspapers and knew they were being used to incite Easterners against the South and slavery. Getting rid of those presses seemed perfectly justified and long overdue.

Nathan didn't realize he'd been noticed until Rusty rode up beside him. The two men watched the rising flames. "Now isn't that a pretty sight?" Rusty asked. But something in his tone

made Nathan uneasy. Rusty was not the affable companion that Nathan met earlier in the day. This Rusty smelled of whisky and looked almost devil-like with the flames of the fire reflecting off his red hair.

Nathan was careful not to betray his thoughts. "It certainly is," he said with a smile.

The two rode in silence following Rusty's men to the other newspaper office and printing press. When they approached the building, an elderly man in a printer's apron stood in the doorway. His arms were folded across his chest and defiance was chiseled on his face. A few of the men slid from their horses and approached the solitary figure. "You'd better move old man, we aim to have your press." The pudgy, gray haired man remained stoic and defiant and continued to hold his ground. More men dismounted and moved in. "Come on you old codger, all we want is your press. Get out of the way and you won't get hurt."

"Over my dead body!" he shouted through clenched teeth.

Rusty slid from his saddle and walked causally over to the old man. "That's all right with me," he said in an even voice and clubbed the man with his pistol.

Nathan leapt from his horse and ran over to Rusty, who had the unconscious man by the collar and was dragging him to the street. "What do you think you're doing?" he demanded.

With a sneer, Rusty said, "We don't want him roasted, do we?" As soon as Rusty had cleared the doorway, a mad rush ensued. During the destruction that followed, the old man groaned and started to get up. Rusty booted him in the ribs. "Stay down old man. You're not hurt that bad . . . yet."

"Rusty, there's no need for that," Nathan said.

Rusty stepped back and eyed Nathan with suspicion. "Whose side are you on, anyway?" he asked.

"Not this old printer, that's certain. But the marshal don't want martyrs," Nathan said.

Without warning Rusty's rage ignited. "What does Donaldson know about martyrs?" he yelled. "I'm already a martyr!" He

gestured toward his men. "All these men are martyrs!" Rusty raged. "Maybe we're not dead, but we might as well be. We've lost everything we've worked for to these squatters. This very land we're standing on is my land. I dug that well over there with my own hands, and I built the shack next to it, too. These people moved in and pushed me off, pushed us all off, leaving us with nothing! I went to the government for justice, just like the rest of these men, and all we got was nothing! My lawyer says he's working on it, still nothing! Well, now I'm working on it. This is for me, for my wife, and for these men, who just like me, got pushed aside by these Jayhawkers. We have nothing more to lose and we're here to stop their thievin'. Now! Are you going to stand with us or against us?"

"You tell him, Rusty!" came an angry voice from behind. "Yeah," several voices agreed.

The old man lay semiconscious while the two younger men eyed each other over his body. The building, now in flames, was no longer of interest as the angry mob gathered around the two men and the prone figure.

"Well?" Rusty demanded.

A man stepped forward. "I say we kill this old man and be done with it. He's nothing but a thievin' liar anyway." Then he stomped the old man to the roaring approval of his comrades.

"Killing this old man is not what we're here for!" Nathan shouted.

Rusty pulled his knife and pointed it at Nathan. "What we're here for is to rid this territory of lies. This old man prints those lies. If I kill him, I kill the lies."

Loud angry voices agreed, followed by more kicks to the prone body.

Nathan saw the rage growing in the eyes of the men facing him and knew the old man's fate was sealed if he couldn't stop it.

Rusty stared defiantly behind his extended blade, daring Nathan to make a move. Then Rusty, still staring at Nathan, slowly lowered himself to one knee by the old man's head. His

men pressed forward as Rusty lowered his knife against the old man's throat.

"Do it Rusty! Do it!" someone shouted.

Nathan knew it was now or never. He leaped in the air with an ear-piercing yell and landed straddling the old man's chest. Rusty rolled backwards avoiding the charge but regained his feet in an instant.

With his tomahawk drawn, Nathan glared at Rusty. "You'd better leave now!" he said.

But Rusty couldn't leave, and boldly declared, "Not till I finish him."

Now Nathan's rage came to the surface. He waved his tomahawk in Rusty's face and drew his knife. "You want his blood?" he shouted as he glared at the men. "You want his blood?" he repeated even louder. "Well, here's his blood!"

Nathan drove his tomahawk down on the old man's hand, sending two fingers skittering across the dusty road. The circle of men stared in stunned disbelief as Nathan faced them. He had his tomahawk in one hand and his knife in the other and yelled as he moved toward them, "Anyone else want blood?"

A mixture of shock and hatred marked Rusty's face as he stared at Nathan. "This ain't over," he promised. With that, Rusty and his men mounted their horses and rode off, leaving Nathan standing over the gray haired man with two severed fingers.

In the moments that followed, Nathan tried to regain his composure. It was hard to settle his rage. He was shaking and his whole body seemed to pulse with an uncontrollable energy. The old man moaned and tried to move. Nathan saw the bleeding stubs and took a rag from the man's apron. He wrapped the wounded hand as best he could with his trembling fingers. A feeling of guilt and shame stabbed at his heart as he watched the old man struggle to breathe. In spite of his earlier distain, he felt sorry for him.

Nathan was still kneeling next to the old man when he heard angry voices shouting at him. He saw someone run toward him

with a rifle. Just for an instant he thought he might talk to them, but even as the thought crossed his mind, he knew it was no use. Instead, he rode into the night just as the others had done.

From the back of his galloping horse, he heard the bullet whiz past followed by the report. He saw a crowd enter the fire's light and gather around the prone figure. He was sure the old man would soon die and his failure to save him settled deep in his soul. The image of those fingers found a permanent place in his memory.

He rode home knowing that trouble was close behind. Nathan had marked himself. *When the old man dies, they'll come looking for me*, he thought. Even if the old man lives, there was Rusty who knew his name and would never forget him. Janet's words, *What if this brings us trouble*, came to his mind. He spoke his own words out loud. "What have I done?"

-- ----- --

A "few days" can be a long time when you have news to share, but Janet's wait lasted longer than expected. She was well into worry when the deep-throated baying of Ruckus followed by the excited barking of May, alerted her. Both dogs were loping down the lane toward the road when Janet got to the door. Sam also heard the dogs and stepped through the barn door for a look.

A solitary figure came into view. It was Nathan, though Janet had to look twice. He wasn't riding with his usual bearing but was slumped over the saddle with his head down. Janet could tell something was seriously wrong.

Nathan came half way up the lane and stopped. He slid from his horse and stood there with the dogs dancing around him. He didn't acknowledge them but stared at the small cabin and the planted fields. He stared at the woods that surrounded his farm. He should have seen Janet coming and his boys running from the woods but he didn't seem to. He stood there, unable to move. He retraced his gaze over the place he and Janet and Sam had worked so hard to build. He felt old and used. The depression that held

him was rooted in the trouble he knew he was bringing to his family and his failure to save the old man. He could not escape the fear, the shame and the thoughts that held him captive – *We've lost it all because of me. Where will we go? What have I done?*

Janet reached him first. She threw her arms around him, but he didn't respond as expected. By the time Sam and the boys arrived, Janet's joy had turned to fear and tears began to flow. Nathan's stony expression and unblinking stare unnerved her. He didn't even seem to notice his boys clinging to his legs. "Nathan, are you all right?" she asked.

Sam circled Nathan. "No blood Missus, but that don't mean he's not hurtin'." Sam reached for the reins Nathan still held. "Nate, I'll tend your horse. You go on to the house and rest up. You've had a long ride."

Nathan blinked a few times then focused on Sam and nodded. He turned to Janet as if seeing her for the first time and drew her close and hugged her tight. Fresh tears wetted her cheeks as he held her.

Nathan dropped to his knees, bringing Janet with him and they wrapped themselves around their sons. Then Nathan began to sob.

Janet understood why her sons felt uneasy because she had similar feelings. After a few minutes, a concerned Gabe asked, "Momma, why's Papa crying?"

Before she could answer, Nathan composed himself and released his sons, stood and wiped his eyes. He gazed again at the land they cleared and planted, the makeshift barn built against the hill, the garden freshly planted and the cabin nestled against the forest beside a flowing spring. It was the perfect place to live and raise a family. After a few minutes, he squared himself and turned to his wife.

"I think I'd like something to eat," he said as he pulled her close and hugged her again. He laid his head on her shoulder with his mouth close to her ear. "It was bad," he whispered. "You warned me not to bring the trouble home, but it's coming and now we have to leave. I'm so sorry."

*D. C. Yocum*

That night they loaded the wagon and the next morning they left the only home their sons had ever known. As the wagon turned from their lane for the last time, Nathan looked back. Words unspoken came thundering across his mind. *What have I done?*

## CHAPTER 2

### Finding a Place in Moon Valley

As the carriage bounced through a rough stretch of road, the gray haired couple tried to maintain their balance. Their names were Maynard and Isabella Calloway. But to each other and a few select relatives they were Mage and Izzy, to everyone else they were Mr. and Mrs. Calloway. They left Lone Pine before sunrise, after attending funeral services for Izzy's sister, Cora, two days earlier.

Traveling since dawn, they were both tired and irritable. Izzy, fresh from her sister's funeral, kept up an unbroken diatribe about Mage's rudeness toward Cora, which prompted her sister to move to Lone Pine. When that subject had been well exercised, she focused on the funeral and the attendees. She was about to launch into another well-worn topic but the rough road intervened.

"Must you hit every hole in the road?" Izzy complained as her hat was crushed against the roof of the carriage. She was dressed in her finest riding clothes with a feathered hat crowning her well-coifed head.

Wearing his own version of riding clothes, his bib overalls, Mage rolled his eyes. He said in a quiet voice, "They're not holes, they're ruts and as soon as we get out of this low spot, the road'll get better."

When the jostling ended, Izzy took up another favorite topic.

“As I was about to ask, before you tried to bounce me out of the carriage, have you found any help yet?”

“How am I going to find help when we’ve been more than a week at your sister’s funeral? I’ve told you over and over, help is not that easy to come by,” Mage said as he urged the horse up the hill with a flip of the reins across its back.

“I saw you talking to those men at the funeral, and I thought you might have found someone,” she said defensively. Then she added, “If you hadn’t let those abolitionists run off our slaves, we wouldn’t be in this fix.” This was a subject worn threadbare by Izzy, and Mage was not in the mood to rehash it again. He sat stone silent as she went on, “I told you we needed a guard on the place, but do you listen to me? Noooo.”

He wanted to say, *That’s not how I remember it. And besides, it was you that complained we didn’t have enough money to guard slaves.* But instead he said, “You should be glad they didn’t burn down Moon Valley.”

As they topped the hill, they saw the east/west crossroad ahead. Mage guided the horse off into a grassy spot, “Whoa, boy,” he said. Then turning to his wife, “The horse needs a rest, and I need some peace and quiet . . . and a piece of fried chicken.”

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Moon Valley was their destination. In the spring of 1810, four years after the triumphant return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, young Maynard Calloway was a member of a survey crew mapping the tributaries of the Missouri River. It was while he was a surveyor’s assistant, that he discovered a secluded valley with flowing water and fertile soil, surrounded by forests of oak, hickory, walnut, persimmon and more. The creek was lined with dewberries and bush berries. Deer, turkey, rabbits and squirrels were everywhere. For the adventurous Maynard, still in his teens, it seemed the perfect place—a place to build a future.

A year later he returned to his home in Tennessee, only to discover that his father was ailing. His plans to move west were

set aside while he tended the family plantation until his father recovered. But his father didn't recover. He lingered for three more years, just long enough to see his son marry Isabella Templeton, daughter of a wealthy merchant and an aspiring socialite. The young couple continued living on the plantation two more years until Maynard was able to sell his inheritance to finance his dream.

Maynard was in his mid-twenties with drive and ambition. He left Isabella and their first child with her family while he set off to build a new home and a new life, north of the Missouri River. Maynard and his slaves worked hard, carving out an impressive farm in the southern tradition. They built a fine house for his family as well as a barn, slave quarters and a guesthouse for Isabella's older sister, Cora. They dug two wells, one by the kitchen door of the main house and the other by the guesthouse. Corrals were built to hold their stock. Fields were cleared and prepared for planting and by the spring of 1819, the whole place gave the impression of a southern farm with Missouri practicality.

Isabella and their two-year-old son, Harris, along with her four domestic slaves and several wagonloads of belongings, arrived by riverboat just as the crops were being planted. When she saw the place for the first time she was amazed. Her husband had exceeded her expectations by a considerable margin. Isabella left the unpacking to her staff and Harris in the care of his nanny. She was anxious to see everything.

Maynard was just as anxious to show his wife what had been accomplished. He took her up a winding trail to an overlook, giving her a panoramic view of the fields, the house, the barn, the corrals, the entire valley and the stream that shaped it.

After taking in the wondrous sight she noticed something unique. "Look Mage, the valley's shaped like a crescent moon," she said smiling at her discovery. "A crescent moon," she repeated. "We ought to call this place, Moon Valley." From then on, whenever she made introductions, she always referred to herself and her husband as the "Calloways of Moon Valley."

During the first day of travel, Nathan tried to maintain his usual persona but before the day was over depression overwhelmed his effort. He blamed himself for uprooting his family and leaving the only home his boys had ever known. He walked slowly by himself, behind the wagon, behind their cow, Miss Prim and her calf, behind his wife and his boys, even behind the dogs. A profound sadness hung like a black cloud over the travelers, but none more than Nathan. The pace was very slow, mainly because of Nathan who didn't seem to care. His mind was in torment. He vainly tried to make sense of the events that began with the marshal's visit. The image of those fingers lying in the dust a short distance from the bleeding stubs was branded in his brain. The horror of his own actions stunned and sickened him, leaving him awash in doubt and guilt. He wanted to believe he'd saved the old man, but he doubted that a man of his age could survive such a beating.

The same questions kept circling his mind like a merry-go-round. *Why didn't I refuse to help? Why was that old man so stubborn? Why not let Rusty have him? What have I done to my family?* All these questions, and more, constantly tumbled across his mind. But the most damning question, the question that reflected all his guilt and shame, regret and remorse was, *What have I done?*

For two days, the travel pattern was unchanged. Sam did most of the chores; feeding and watering the stock, setting up camp at night and packing up in the morning. An ailing Janet helped as much as she could, but Sam made sure there wasn't much for her to do.

Janet knew that something had happened in Lawrence, but she could only guess what it was that caused her husband to come home so horribly changed. The man with the drawn face and distant manner was not the husband she knew. He seemed to be in a faraway place that none of the family could reach. Even Sam tried and decided to "let him be."

On the third morning, young Joshua drifted back to his father. In a timid voice he asked, "Papa, are you all right?" At first Nathan didn't seem to notice his son, but Joshua continued walking beside his father. After a while he took hold of his daddy's hand and said, "Momma doesn't act well, I think she's sick. Could you go see?"

Nathan spoke as though coming out of a deep sleep, "What was that you said?" he asked, suddenly aware of his son.

Joshua looked up at his dad. "Ma's sick," he repeated.

"Your mama's sick?" Nathan spoke the words as he tried to focus. He blinked a few times trying to make sense of where he was. He stopped, knelt down and looked at his son, the young face lined with worry. For the first time since they started, Nathan felt the mental darkness lift. His son had pierced the blackness of his thoughts.

"Will you see what's wrong with Ma?" Joshua pleaded.

Nathan hugged his son and whispered, "I'm so sorry." Then he hugged his son even tighter and said, "Let's go see about your ma." Together they quickened their steps to catch the wagon.

Janet and Gabe were walking next to the horses to avoid the dust, when Joshua and Nathan joined them. Startled, Janet turned sharply to see her man beside her. They stopped and she held his face in her hands studying it. She still saw the pain in his face but his eyes were brighter now with a light that had been missing. She dissolved into tears as she clung to him; her husband was in her arms again.

Sam noticed Nathan and Janet together and guided the wagon off the road. "We'd better rest the team for a bit," he said loudly. "Boys, come help me rub 'em down. Josh, grab the nosebags. We'll give them some grain." The boys were reluctant. They wanted to be with their parents. "Come on now," Sam urged.

Janet, still clinging to Nathan, smiled at Sam with a nod and guided her husband up the road. Joshua and Gabe started to go with them but Sam stopped them. "You boys come here and help me. We need to feed and water Miss Prim and her calf, too."

“But they might get lost. Besides Momma’s sick, I seen her throw up this morning,” Gabe’s voice was full of concern.

“Yeah, I saw it, too,” Joshua added.

“Don’t fret so. Besides, your folks need to talk, in private like. So you boys just stay right here. They’ll be back soon.”

It wasn’t soon, but their parents did come back. Gabe saw them first and ran to meet them. Nathan caught him up and hugged him tight then dropped down to receive Joshua. The three hugged each other as Janet looked on with fresh tears rolling down her cheeks.

The boys never knew what their parents talked about, off by themselves that way, but both boys could tell that things were different and a whole lot better. Sam was right; sometimes folks just need to talk *private like*.

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That night they camped next to a clear stream and the whole family took advantage. In late May, the water was not warm enough for a leisurely soak but it was good enough to scrub away the trail grime. The scrubbing also seemed to scrub away the doldrums. There was a lighter mood that night with a lot more smiles. Both boys noticed and were comforted for the first time in days.

The next morning with a swollen stream to cross, the boys were stationed in the back of the wagon and snubbed Miss Prim’s calf to keep its head above the water. Janet’s job was to drive the wagon, keeping Nathan and Sam free to jump off and push if they got stuck.

They started across the fast moving stream without incident until the water reached the hubs. Suddenly, the left front wheel dropped in a hole. The horse and mule strained at their harness but were unable to pull free. Sam, who sat next to the trapped wheel, jumped off, and Nathan stepped over Janet to join him. The swirling water almost swept the men away, but both hung on as the rear wheels began skittering downstream.

The men strained at the spokes, while the team leaned into their work urged on by Janet's whip-like handling of the reins. "Eeeiiaaw, get up there!" she yelled. Slowly the wheel climbed out of the hole and the wagon surged forward. The back wheels had drifted downstream just enough to straddle the hole and avoid getting stuck a second time.

The only mishap was the men getting dunked when the wagon surged up the bank. The boys jumped off the wagon and ran to watch Sam and their pa laughing and splashing their way to shore. The boys would have joined them, but last night's cold washing was still fresh on their minds.

Janet stopped the wagon and set the brake. She laughed when she saw the men splashing in the water. "Didn't you boys get enough cold water last night?" she yelled from the wagon. She turned and stepped on the hub of the wheel. "We don't have time . . ." Her words ended with a scream as her foot slipped off the wet hub and she hit the ground hard. The boys laughed when they saw their mother sitting in a cloud of dust. But the serious concern on their father's face stifled their outburst.

Janet, still stunned, sat there not moving until Nathan arrived. "Are you all right?" Nathan asked, looking anxiously into her eyes.

She returned his gaze and rubbed her stomach, "Everything's fine," Janet said giggling and a little embarrassed. "I think I scraped my shin, but other than that, we're both fine." A much-relieved Nathan smiled back.

"Let me check," Nathan said. "Sam. Take the boys down the road a piece. We'll be along directly."

When Sam and the boys were out of sight, Nathan pulled up Janet's dress to her knee to reveal a five-inch scrape along the shin that was oozing blood. "We'd better wrap up that leg," Nathan said as he went to the wagon. He found a clean rag and cut it into strips and bandaged her leg.

"How did it happen?" he asked as he helped her to her feet.

"My foot slipped off the hub when I tried to get down," she said. She limped around testing her leg. "It hurts, but I'm all right. I can

still get around. I think I'm going to be sore for a while though," she said as she rubbed her backside. "I'm probably going to have a bruise."

"More like two bruises, I'd say," Nathan said with a smile.

Janet arched her eyebrows. "Think you're smart, don't you?" she said as she playfully cuffed him on the arm. "Now help me up on the wagon."

"Yes ma'am," he said. "Are you sure you want to sit down?"

She was glad to have her husband teasing her again. She could tell he was still trying to shake off his despair, but at least he was with them.

The next day Janet's leg was swollen and she had a fever. When they saw a carriage parked at a crossroads, Nathan was relieved. "Maybe they'll know where we can find a doctor."

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"Izzy. Look what's coming."

Isabella stepped from behind the carriage where she was packing up after their lunch, "Looks like they've given up and are headed back."

Mage nodded, "I believe you're right."

Over the years they'd seen and heard of folks heading back to where they came from when frontier life proved too difficult or too dangerous. So many came west in search of new lives only to return broken and defeated.

Mage studied them as they approached. The wagon laboring toward them was driven by a slave, which meant they weren't broke. A cow was tethered to the back of the wagon, its calf being urged on by two young boys and their dogs. A man walked alongside the wagon. A white woman rode next to the driver. This was not a poor family who had lost everything, but for some reason they'd given up.

The man walking along side said something to the slave. The wagon rolled to a stop, as the man walked over to the older couple.

“Beggin’ your pardon sir, ma’am. I’m Nathan Boyer and that’s my family over there.”

Izzy looked at Mage and then back. “We’re the Calloways of Moon Valley. Looks like you folk are heading back.”

Nathan looked surprised. “Back, ma’am?”

“Back to where you come from,” Izzy explained.

“Well, yes ma’am, I guess we are. But right now I need to find a doctor. My wife fell off the wagon yesterday and scraped her leg bad. I did the best I knew how, but the leg is swelled up today. Do you know of any doctors here ‘bouts.”

Mage started chuckling. “Mr. Boyer, you’ve come to the right place,” he said as he turned to his wife.

Mrs. Calloway stepped forward. “Young man, I’m not a real doctor but I’ve done more than my share of doctorin’ over the years,” she said. “Now, you go help your wife down and I’ll have a look.”

Nathan looked skeptically at the old woman.

“Don’t just stand there gapin’, let’s go,” Izzy said as she rushed past Nathan.

Nathan passed the older woman and was helping Janet down from her seat when Mrs. Calloway arrived. The first thing Izzy noticed was that the young woman was holding her stomach.

“Your man says you scraped your leg,” Izzy said skipping the introductions and going straight to the business at hand. She spoke in a direct, take-charge manner that surprised both Nathan and Janet, neither quite sure how to respond.

Janet felt compelled to at least introduce herself, “I’m Janet Boyer. Are you a doctor?”

“As I told your man, I’m Mrs. Calloway and for years I’ve done all the doctorin’ for miles around.” Then she turned to Nathan. “Now Mr. Boyer, I’ll need some hot water. Why don’t y’all get that going and we’ll also need some privacy. You can get what we have from the back of our carriage. Mr. Calloway can show you. If you have some pillows or blankets in your wagon, we could use those, too.”

Nathan looked at his wife who smiled and nodded assurance. At least Janet was convinced that she was in good hands.

While the men rushed around following Mrs. Calloway's orders, Izzy took Janet aside and was talking to her when Janet grabbed her stomach in pain again. Mrs. Calloway instantly realized this was more than a scraped shin.

"How long have you been expecting?" Izzy asked without a thought of being wrong.

Wondering how this stranger knew, Janet answered, "I'm not sure, but for the last week I've had the morning sickness."

"How long have you been spotting blood?"

Janet suddenly went pale, "How did . . . You don't think I could lose . . ." Her eyes widened with fear as words failed her.

Izzy turned her attention to the men making walls out of sheets. "We need that bedding now," she ordered. "And hurry with that water."

The urgency in her voice prompted Nathan to rush over. "What's wrong?"

"Your wife needs to lie down as soon as possible, now hurry with that bedding. Tell Mr. Calloway to boil up some bandages."

"But what's happening?"

"We're trying to save your baby."

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It was late afternoon when Izzy emerged from the make-shift shelter looking subdued and tired. She walked over to the fire where her husband had just added wood. "Where's everybody?" she asked in a weary voice.

"The man, Mr. Boyer, took his sons down the road. They were pretty upset when they heard the sobbing. Their slave is out gathering more wood. How did it go?" Mage asked.

"She lost the baby and a lot of blood, but I think she'll pull through. But she's not up to a lot of traveling. She'll need a few weeks to recover." Her statement hung in the air.

Mage knew where this was going. "Can she travel as far as Moon Valley?" he asked.

Izzy smiled at her husband. "How'd you know what I was thinking?"

"Years of experience, old woman," Mage said returning her smile with a sly smile of his own. "Maybe she'll need more than a few weeks. Maybe even enough to get a crop planted."

"Don't be planting your crop just yet, old man. You'll need to hurry home and get the wagon. You can pull the bed out of the guesthouse and bring a load of blankets and pillows. You should be back by midday tomorrow if you leave now. Then we'll be able to get her to our place where she can rest up. You can worry about planting after we have them settled. Oh, and take their slave with you, she needs her man and boys around her now." Izzy took a breath, "I'll stay here in case I'm needed."

"I'd better get a move on if I'm going to make the ferry before they quit for the day." Mage said.

Nathan and his boys returned to camp just ahead of Sam with his armload of wood. Mr. Calloway was hitching up the carriage while Mrs. Calloway laid out the plan. Nathan agreed and stayed with Janet through the night. The boys drifted in and out of the shelter, each time hoping to see their mother up and around, but all they got was a tired smile before being shooed away by Mrs. Calloway. As planned, Mr. Calloway and Sam returned the next day and that night Janet slept comfortably in the Calloway's spare room.

During Janet's recovery, Nathan, Sam and Mr. Calloway worked the fields and finished the planting. Joshua and Gabe did the chores around the house. For Nathan, the work acted like an antidote, and Janet noticed the change. Moon Valley was undergoing changes as well, thanks to the arrival of the Boyers. There was new life in the valley, and the Calloways couldn't be more pleased. When Janet was strong enough to travel, Mr. and Mrs. Calloway sat down with Nathan and Janet and made them a serious offer. The generous offer would have a lasting impact on the Boyer Family for generations to come.

## CHAPTER 3

### Taking Shelter

From the corner of a building, Luke saw the print shop in flames and watched his grandfather being beaten by a mob. Later when his grandfather was safe at home lying in his bed, Luke watched him struggling to breathe with broken ribs and a broken nose. The old man was barely able to see through the slits above his swollen cheeks. Luke knew it was his fault. If he'd gotten there quicker, if he'd fired sooner, if he hadn't been so scared and behaved like a coward, his grandpa Henry wouldn't be suffering. Luke's rage grew every time he looked at his grandfather. He wanted to kill that *Indian* for what he'd done.

Grandpa Henry assured him that the *Indian* saved his life. His sister begged Luke not to blame himself. His mother tried to reason with him, but Luke refused to listen to anyone and left a note the night he slipped away. In the mind of a fifteen-year-old, there was only one path to follow. Revenge!

Luke hadn't thought of that youthful reaction for quite a while. At twenty-four years of age, he was no longer a boy of fifteen, full of rage and bent on revenge or the marauder pursued by the law or a soldier in the Union Army. He was just a man who wanted to see his family again.

The Civil War had chastened him. He survived the cannons, the bullets and the bayonets. He had no idea how many Confederate Soldiers died at his hand and tried to forget the ones he