

**from *In the Scatter of the Moonlight*, a novel
in progress**

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**Army of Utah, Camp Scott, Utah Territory,
November 27, 1857**

I have one hundred and forty-four horses, and have lost one hundred and thirty-four. Most of the loss has occurred much this side of South Pass, in comparatively moderate weather. It has been of starvation. The earth has a no more lifeless, treeless, grassless desert; it contains scarcely a wolf to glut itself on the hundreds of dead and frozen animals which for thirty miles nearly block the road with abandoned and shattered property; they mark, perhaps beyond example in history, the steps of an advancing army with the horrors of a disastrous retreat.

—*Philip St. George Cooke, Lieutenant-Colonel,
Second Dragoons, Camp Scott, Utah Territory,
November 21, 1857*

Carl Heinrich carried the carcass over his shoulders. He had dressed and skinned the deer, and had removed its head and forelegs to lessen its weight. His musket

lay on top of the glistening meat.

“Do you see that soldier there, packing the Colonel’s supper?” Nathan Slater said.

Carl Heinrich walked by the dragoons where they settled in at Camp Scott, on the timbered river two miles from Fort Bridger, Utah Territory. It was not a post so much as a windbreak, tents set in the cottonwoods at river’s edge. Carl Heinrich had been detailed as one of the hunters charged with providing fresh meat to lessen the number of oxen the army would butcher.

“Hey, soldier!” Moses Cole called out from tent side. Dragoons milled through the campsite to gather branches for firewood. Their trails traced through the snow to scatter in the cottonwoods, as if defining a migration of mice. “You can stop right here, footman! Put your feet up while we cook that deer for you!”

Carl Heinrich smiled and walked on.

“Won’t cost ya but a hindquarter!”

Carl Heinrich passed by.

“We’ll spare you the embarrassment of makin’ the Colonel eat deer meat!” Moses Cole shouted after him. Carl Heinrich walked toward Fort Bridger with the deer over his shoulders.

“Didn’t understand a word I said. Just another Dutchman who fell off the boat.”

“That Dutchman was a sergeant over there in Dutchland. He won the Iron Cross, for God’s sake.”

“The Iron Cross. I saw one of those once’t. Made out ’a horseshoe nails.”

“The highest decoration they give in Prussia. Some general with gold-laced epaulets pinned one on him for bravery in action.”

“What’d he do, send you a newspaper?”

“When the lieutenant sent me to Fort Bridger yesterday I talked to some infantry. They pointed him out,” Nathan Slater said.

“I’ll bet he can’t talk American. I’ll bet he’s just another immigrant misfit,” Moses Cole said. “I’ll bet he talks in one ’a them foreign-made accents you can’t tell is French or Chinese.”

“They have a real army over there,” Nathan Slater said. “Not one of these cobbled together outfits that can’t keep its crackers in the same box.”

Nathan broke the smaller branches with a foot brought down sharply. They waited their turn for a saw to cut the larger ones and to buck-up tree trunks that rotted in the quack grass. “He was in a mounted regiment, where they’re schooled by Prussian dragoons.”

“He prob’ly needed schoolin’ by them Prissians,” Moses said. Moses sorted the firewood pile, twigs from kindling from branches to saw. “Why’d they put him ’a horseback? He’ll gather-in half an acre to the pace.” Moses wiped his moustache and watched Carl Heinrich stride off with the meat and the musket prone on his shoulders. “He could outrun a horse, on

them legs.”

The horses and mules grazed guarded by dragoons herding in half-day shifts. In the wane of day herders hazed the animals back to the cottonwood bottom to shelter for the night. The riding stock that remained in camp waited its turn for duty tied to high-lines strung in the cottonwood trees.

“Them tall guys fall off too easy,” Moses said. “You wouldn’t think so with all them legs to wrap around and hook-up underneath, but By God they do.” Moses watched the tethered horses nod, sleeping standing. “Top heavy, them tall ones.”

“He can probably ride better than we can,” Nathan said.

“Then what’s he doin’ a-foot? Ought ’a crate ’em up and send ’em back, Iron Cross and all. We don’t need them foreigners tellin’ us how the world works.” Moses propped a larger branch on a rock and jumped on it. It wouldn’t break. “What good’s an Iron Cross anyway? Can’t eat one.” Moses retrieved an axe and broke the branch. “Shove it down a barrel and shoot it, maybe.” He threw both pieces on the branch stack and grabbed another to cut.

“Looks to me,” Nathan said, “he can shoot better than you can.”

“That ain’t sayin’ much,” Moses said.

“If he’s schooled in the European cavalry he’s probably a horseman, unlike the glorified plowreiners

we are.”

“I don’t know nothin’ about that. But I do know that man there would wear a horse out at a walk from here to the Lieutenant’s tent. Look at the size of him. That’s why he’s packin’ meat like a mule, instead of a mule packin’ him.”

“He was assigned to the artillery,” Nathan said. “Probably because he was the only one smart enough to understand ballistics and windage.”

“Load it, point it, and shoot it. What’s so hard about that?”

Nathan Slater shook his head. “Moses, you’re hopeless. Your mama must have weaned you before she taught you to read.”

Moses split a branch and the pieces cartwheeled. “She didn’t know how to read,” he said. “She’d always wanted to read, so I learned enough to teach her.” Moses lowered his voice. He rested the axe. “As luck would have it, I taught her before she drowned.”

“I didn’t know she drowned.”

“Damn sure did. Chasin’ chickens off the river ice.” Moses looked at the woodpile as though he did not see it. “After I learned enough to teach her, I quit that punishment. Except for when I taught my wife to read.”

Nathan twitched as if he’d picked up a frying pan by its heated handle.

“My wife was real proud she could read. Read

them words off the hymnal page. Should ’a wore ’em out. Should ’a eyeballed ’em off, all that readin’ she done.” Moses stared at the woodpile. His voice stepped away, dampened as if deadened in a tent. “Till there weren’t nothin’ left, on them pages.” He looked at tethered horses, fingered the leather patch sewn with sinew on the cracked axe handle. “Every mornin’, every evenin’ she’d read them words. Couldn’t get enough of it.”

Moses looked at Nathan. His voice came back from inside canvas. “Didn’t know I was married, did you?”

Nathan’s mouth hung open.

“Married right up to the day she run-off with a Mormon.”

Nathan looked as if the panhandle heated in his hand.

“Got out of the army after chasin’ Apaches. Had a little money saved-up. Went home and married Isabella. Worked my daddy’s farm. Taught her to read and she read that Mormon book. Then she took up with the Mormons.”

Horses whinnied in the cottonwoods.

“Took to one of the elders. Thought him the Lord his-self, all that bible talk, and there she went, straight off to paradise in their land of Des-er-ret.”

Nathan stood still.

“I don’t know where she got that Mormon book.

Had to been that elder. Snuck it to her.” Moses raised the axe and split the chopping block. The axe hinged at the patch that splinted the fractured handle. He looked at Nathan. “Then I reenlisted, for to hook up with the Army of Utah, and here I am.”

Troopers walked paths through camp with armloads of twigs and sticks and branches to break. Voices wafted on tobacco smoke.

“I ain’t read a word since Isabella left. Figured I’d read enough. Didn’t do nobody no good, ’cept mama.”

Nathan stirred. “Well, I’ll say this for you,” he said. “You don’t look like the marryin’ type.”

“I expect I’ll find her in Salt Lake City.” Moses wiped his moustache. “I can’t wait to shoot a Mormon. For what they done, and for what they’re doin’.” Moses looked Nathan in the eye. “I might shoot two of ‘em.”

“You didn’t tell me any of this.”

“I told you now, and you don’t need to make it nobody’s business.” Moses stuck the axe in the standing half of the chopping block and the handle hinged again. Moses studied the bending axe. “Carve a new handle while you’re at it,” Nathan said.

“Leather,” Moses said. “Should ‘a made it rawhide.” He pulled his moustache. “Fetch the deer hide off that Dutchman, is what I’ll do. He’ll have it skinned-off and fleshed-out by the time my stove-up horse gets me there.” Moses retrieved his saddle and saddle blanket from their winter tent. “Make rawhide

and fashion a new patch, for to occupy my mind.”

“For to fix our axe handle,” Nathan said. He smiled. “Why patch-up the old when you can start new?” he said. His smile faded. “Start over, Moses.”

Moses looked at him, then carried his saddle to the high-lined horses.

**Seventeenth Ward, Salt Lake City,
December 17, 1857**

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

—1 *Timothy* 5:20

Isabella held the scissors, using the point to sever threads at a corner of the appliquéd apple tree and beehive and intricate signature spelling Sophronia Fox, gaining purchase for the blades to snip the patch from the quilt. She snipped, then passed the scissors to let another snip, and so on until each member present had done her part with scissor blades severing the stitched-in edges. Isabella handed the excised patch to Thankful Everett, President of the Seventeenth Ward Female Relief Society.

“Let the declaration now be made,” President Everett said. “In accordance with the bylaws of the Seventeenth Ward Female Relief Society, by majority vote Sister Sophronia Fox is hereby expelled from the

Society for unchristian-like conduct.” With the scissors she reduced the patch to pieces, strode from the sewing circle and put the pieces in the stove, lifting the lid to the firebox with a horseshoe bent for the purpose and fitted with a wooden haft secured with wound wire, the original lid-handle lost when the wagon flipped from oxen panicked by prairie lightning.

Thankful Everett held a piece of weatherworn canvas cut from a wagon cover. “We will now stitch this plain white cloth into the quilt, serving to remind us all of the blemish of unchristian behavior. I ask us all to pray that Sister Sophronia regain her good sense and her love of the Lord, and be forgiven by Him who judges all.”

Thankful Everett lifted the piece of canvas overhead for all to see, as a priest blessing a communion wafer.

“May we all remember that the careful work one may do may be undone, or should I say, that remarkable achievements can be obscured by poor judgment, or disrespect for the commandments.” Thankful shook her head. “Sister Sophronia’s sewing . . .,” her voice trailed off. She looked at the canvas patch she held, then rested her hands in her lap and looked off. “Such exquisite attention to detail. Such a lovely signature sewn in those bold letters. And now, in this quilt it is forgotten, replaced by this empty and coarse fabric. May she and we learn from this, and be the better for it.” Thankful

Everett surveyed the faces of the Society’s members. They looked as if they’d received word that a church had burned. “The Lord’s will be done,” Thankful said.

She handed the canvas to Isabella and took her seat in the circle. Isabella snipped it to fit the hole where Sophronia’s work had been, threaded a needle, and took the first few stitches. Each member stitched in turn until the canvas was patched-in. When finished, the quilt looked like a smile short an incisor.

Isabella said, “I mean no disrespect, but we’re trying to raise money, so I don’t know why we’re disfiguring this quilt. It will only make it sell for less. I mean, what is our purpose here—to chastise Sophronia, or to feed and clothe the brethren in the passes?”

“It’s both. And it’s more.”

Isabella frowned.

“Isabella, if we have learned anything, we’ve learned that whatever we do must be done as the work of the Lord or it is done in vain.”

“Amen,” Emma Taylor said.

“We patch this quilt. We raise money in doing so for the good of our militia, whose purpose is to protect the Lord’s new Zion so His work may be done. We also, with God’s help, give Sophronia a lesson she needs so she may grow in spirit. And we also create a visible symbol, if you will, that moral transgressions have consequences.” Thankful looked as if she turned her words in her mind, not looking at the circle so much

as looking inward, as though reading from a hidden blackboard. She continued.

“This quilt is for all to see, including people who have no idea who Sophronia is or what she did, but the message is there if they care to discern it. This is how we do the Lord’s work while tending to our daily chores.”

Emma Taylor, Secretary of the Seventeenth Ward Female Relief Society, said, “I understand.” She chuckled. “The Mormon version of the scarlet letter.”

“Something like that,” Thankful said. “Even if forgiven, and the spirit evolves through penance, the deed remains. We learn and we grow and hopefully we become, let me say, less imperfect as Christians. We heal, yet the scar stays. This reminds us of that.”

Isabella said, “I still say this quilt would raise more money if we had left Sophronia’s patch in. She does such beautiful work.”

“Isabella, the Lord will put it in some man’s heart,” Thankful paused. “Actually, he needs to put it in the hearts of two men,” she smiled, “to bid on the quilt because of its reminder of human weakness, and the endless vigilance required to improve as a Latter-day Saint. And, of course, to clothe our troops who guard us against the invaders.” Thankful Everett smiled.

“The army of the Pharaoh,” Emma Taylor said. “May the winter swallow them like the Red Sea.”

Thankful continued. “I believe that, Isabella. Not

everyone does, but I do. As long as we do the Lord’s work, the Lord will provide.”

“I must admit,” Isabella said. “You are a blessed speech maker. Where did you learn that?”

“Why, from Mr. Everett, of course. Our husband, the Bishop.”

In the style of the Baltimore Album, the quilt was a patchwork of floral patterns and fruit, birds and butterflies and honeybees, signatures and mottos and symmetrical designs. The idea had been to create a quilt to sell at auction to raise money to split evenly between recent emigrants destitute of food and clothing, and Lamanites pushed from their native lands yielding to the encroaching Mormons, and the Perpetual Emigrating Fund to bring Later-day Saints from around the globe to the new Zion. With the advance of the United States army, however, the purpose shifted to raising funds to buy supplies for the Legion wintering in Echo Canyon guarding against the onslaught of the army. The Seventeenth Ward Female Relief Society would sponsor an auction and a dance, with food and enough homebrew to make the men bid when the auctioneer shouted.

“Sister Sophronia,” Isabella shook her head. “Does anyone know where she is?”

Emma Taylor said, “Her husband away on a mission sent by President Young himself, and she runs off with a grocery clerk. Thank goodness her sister wives

were there for her children.”

Isabella pursed her lips. She studied her stitching.

“To leave a good man like Truman Fox who is doing the work of the Lord.” Emma Taylor shook her head. “The Lord has His work cut out for him this time. Sophronia will take a good deal of effort.”

“I’m sure the Lord is up to the task,” Thankful Everett said. She rested her hands in her lap, holding needle and thread and a section of quilt, and looked at the women seated in the sewing circle. “Now ladies. We must be careful not to judge. We have acted in accordance with our bylaws, not to condemn Sophronia the person, but her action that is not in accordance with Christian principles. I ask all of you to pray for our sister who loved this Society, and gave it her best work.”

“Pray for me as well, sisters,” Isabella said. She looked as if she’d been caught stealing. “I too left a husband.”

“Isabella, we know that,” Thankful said. “You left to follow the command of the Lord, and you left a husband who was deaf to his call.” Thankful smiled. “Dear sister. You really had no choice.”

“I know, but still,” Isabella’s voice trailed away. “He was a good man.”

“Of course he was a good man. He married you, didn’t he?” Thankful Everett patted her sister-wife’s hand. “But he was not doing the work of the Lord. The world is full of good people who misspend their lives.”

Thankful returned to her sewing. “We came here to have a hand in correcting that.”

Emma Taylor said, “Thankful is right, Isabella. You did what you had to do. But Sophronia, and may the Good Lord forgive me, has the faith of a snake. To think of it, at her age.” Emma made a tscking sound with tongue to teeth. “Forgive me, Thankful, but she was an embarrassment to the Church and a disgrace to our Female Relief Society, and I’m glad she left. May the Lord give her what she deserves.”

“Emma, you surprise me.” Thankful looked at her. Emma stitched, her attention directed to her work. Thankful’s hands were still. “You must let go of your spite.” Emma reddened. “Truman Fox would ask that.”

“Thankful, I appreciate your leadership as the Presidentess of this Society, but I hear the word of the Lord as well as you, and I don’t need you to tell me what He says.” Emma stitched quickly, her work showing the skill of a practiced seamstress.

“Oh dear me,” Thankful said. “Let us pray.” She bowed her head and folded her hands, not waiting for a response. The sewing circle did likewise. “Lord, please be with us as we do Thine work in Thy new land. Guide us, strengthen us, help us discern the paths Thou hast for us. Please be with Sister Sophronia and Sister Emma, and help us all to grow in Thy love and understanding. Help us to be the people Thou want us to be. Help us to grow in forgiveness, and to do the work Thou want us to do. In

Jesus' name we pray. Amen.”

The women echoed Amen and resumed quilting. Isabella started to hum, then softly sang a hymn and the sewing circle joined and the song swelled in the circle.

Second Dragoons, Henry's Fork near Fort Supply, Utah Territory, March 10, 1858

. . . the teamsters while drunk would knock the heads in the [liquor] barrels with an axe, and, because the mules refused to drink it, flog them for their foolishness.

—*William Drown, Second Dragoons, Utah Territory, February 25, 1858*

South toward the mountains, on the benches where wind stripped off snow cover, where grass had its back bent, bared and beaten by an ill-tempered wind, dragoons herded horses so the horses could feed. On the benches where the wind bit, where it picked up snow as a thing of play and left it for coulees to keep, dragoons herded mules and the mules turned always leeward. Where snow calloused over they herded oxen, clustered to break snow crust, and the oxen fed in the broken snow. With teams too weak for draught work, dragoons drew wood wagons by hand to haul in cordwood that grew further away. At the end of

day they gathered the animals by the coulee where the Regiment encamped under canvas. They herded at night, growing colder, guarding against Mormons and their raiding ways. Inside tents troopers kept fires alive, cooked oxen or mule meat, tough as tent pins, no salt or coffee. Their tents were the circular Sibleys, walls steep as teepees, sleeping ten or more men.

The crowded tents kept the noise and stench of men: snoring and flatulence, the rank unbathed bodies, turning sleeping uneasily, hot and cold, choking on wood smoke, men going out, men coming in. Moses Cole stepped from the tent to breathe. He coughed. He looked at stars solid in their endless heaven and he watched one and then another one fall. He thought of a brace of wagons fired by Mormons pulled by panicked horses falling off a cliff. He wondered what he would do when he found Isabella. It had been two years and four months now, long enough for her to become a mother. She could have carried his child when she left, who would grow up calling a Mormon, “Daddy.” Or the Mormon elder could have made her a mother. Or it could be both. Did she live in the city at the Great Salt Lake, did she live on a farm? Did she live in a house or a homestead hut? Did she wear bonnets and walk on a tree-lined street? Did she plow with a yoke of oxen carving a field a furrow at a time?

Moses walked through camp passing the staggered tents. Twenty or more tents stretched through the coulee

looking like lanterns with their coned glow, dimming as night lengthened, flaring when restless sleepers fed the fires. When he reached the end of it Moses turned to return to his tent and the smoke that layered there.

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Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke tossed in his bedroll. He wondered where they would graze in the morrow, where they'd find feed for the oxen, mules, and horses, these mouths of thousands they herded for the Army of Utah. He wondered at the endless winter, the relentless windchill the thief of heat, and the snow, always the snow, as though the beast of winter were the General Commanding. He thought of Napoleon in Russia and the frozen soldiers.

"Push it away," he said.

He thought of his daughter, Flora, married to James Stuart, a lieutenant in the First Cavalry in Kansas. Like himself, Lieutenant Stuart was an officer of horse, a gentleman of Virginia, a graduate of West Point. Cooke chuckled thinking of the change the young man made after meeting his daughter—the beard the Lieutenant grew to hide a slung-under chin and to shed "Beauty," the moniker it prompted. At least when he grew a beard he grew a good one, he'd allow that. He thought of the wedding at Fort Riley, its military majesty and his beautiful Flora, so young and

full of promise, wife now to a life of waiting, wife to a husband's love of honor.

Beauty, Cooke thought. "For God's sake," he said. His son-in-law had carried the name, "Beauty."

At least he had the honor to drop it, growing the beard, using his initials for a nickname sparing Flora, daughter of a Lieutenant Colonel, the embarrassment of a husband called "Beauty."

"What gentleman would call himself 'JEB?'" he said.

Cooke chuckled at the choice his daughter made. Say what he may, he thought, the young man Stuart advanced faster than he had.

He thought of Rachael's radiance that day, so proud of her daughter following her footsteps and the validation it gave. The scars marred each cheek, constant reminder for all to see. Cook winced at the memory.

"God damn me," he said.

He placed blame on the relapse of malaria and its feverish thinking, the demented disease that picked up the pistol. Weak with fever the mechanism slipped and the ball knocked out half her teeth in the parlor.

"Shot my wife in the face," he said, shaking his head. "I deserve to be here."

Rachel looked more astonished than hurt at first, and then the pain came. The dental surgeon had done what could be done. That lovely, loving woman deserves better than me, Cooke thought.

“What an idiot,” he said out loud alone in his tent.

He remembered Black Hawk’s war, the dentist with a practice back east collecting teeth from the Indian dead before rigor mortis set in. For all he knew, Rachael carried teeth from a Sac brave scavenged at the Bad Axe River. He would never tell her what he had seen there.

Too much time to think out here, he thought. Too much time with too little to do but persevere. He thought of the passage from Romans that Rachael recited ever since the pistol incident: “We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.”

“Who the hell thought of that?” he said, and he turned under his buffalo robe. If hope is the best you can do, why bother? His life had been a trail of tribulation, he thought. The waterless marches of the Southwest desert and the oxen with bleeding feet. The Snively affair and those damned Texians. Fremont and his pompous posturing, the humiliating court-martial questioning. Those rumors of squaw killer. Cholera, dysentery, the impairment of malaria. Sick and dying dragoons and always horses breaking down. The slow promotions, detailed to desolate places while a war was won in Mexico. The prairie campaign’s perseverance and boredom. The deep snow and precipice edges pursuing

the Jicarilla Apaches. The Sioux at Blue Water Creek, the scalps of white women. It’s been a tiring and trying ride, he thought, from which I’ve gleaned tribulation, experience, and hope like the Bible likes. Not much of a life, he thought, if hope is the highest promotion.

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Nathan Slater pulled the buffalo robe up and over his shoulders and closed it with an overlap under his chin, the buckskin underside over his coat, hair-side to the outside. It was pliable, brain-tanned Indian style, and it was warm, the heavy hair of the buffalo’s shoulders over his shoulders moving as the wind blew as though living still, as though in kinship with the gathered animals guarded on a bedground bigger than a farm, the hair of the buffalo robe waving in the starlight. Nathan did not know which was noisier—a tent full of men, or bedded oxen. Among this many animals there was always movement. An ox would stand to defecate or stretch. Another would shift, extend a front leg and lay his chin on it. Another would roll to his side while another reversed that movement, righting from a side-lying pulling legs underbelly. Oxen chewed cud as if in dreams of green fields. Others groaned and twitched as if they spoke from dreams like the men in tents did, haunted by what had passed and what was to come. The horses were more composed. Some lay down and

some stood, a hind foot cocked, head hung sleeping. Nathan paced the perimeter watching other herders ride the edges of the bedded herds. He'd ride his stretch and ride back again, walking on occasion to warm his feet leading his saddle mule. The guards placed their fires marking the ends of the collected herds as points of reckoning for the nightriders. The Lieutenant called them "watch fires."

"That's right," he'd said. "Watch those fires so the Mormons don't steal your wood. Don't worry about the herd. They won't bother them."

The herders would stop to warm up at the fires and they took turns tending them. Then they'd walk and ride coaxing their shift to pass.

Alone under starlight, a March night cold as Christmas, Nathan remembered he'd left the life of a farmer. Young and restless and captured by the romantic notion of the mounted soldier and the name itself, dragoon, as though there were something princely about it. The knee-high boots and black tack, sash and sabre, the grace of the gentleman the recruiter posed. There was the freedom from the farm and its drudgery and the chance to ride rather than drive horses. He remained a farmer at heart, as earthy and intricate as the soil that grew him yet restless for something better that books and splendid houses suggested. Something pulled him, an inquisitive itch that farming couldn't fix. The dragoons he could do, their payroll pay and

promised adventure, the horses and the riding of them.

The hardship marching surprised him. He'd marched for weeks at a time, often riding far enough to cross a Pennsylvania township five times to a day. He'd seen country he'd seen in dreams and the more he saw the more he missed wooded farmland. Distance didn't end here but kept growing, this prairie as open as oceans, mountains remote as islands. This marching confirmed no yearning for the sea and yet he seemed like a prairie seaman. At least they had this relief, camped near the mountains as though finally finding harbor.

Funny, he thought, he had joined the army but didn't expect death. Horses by the hundreds, mules that fell in singles and teams, farriers pulling their shoes to use again. Rations adequate to fend off starving but nothing they wanted to eat. Fingers and toes black from frostbite, the wind steady as time. He had it better in Pennsylvania, the comfort of the forest and the close hills, the fieldwork and the meals, the warm bed of a farmstead. The grit required to survive here had astonished him. There had to be something at the end of this that would make the journey worth it.

This too was new, this herding of animals like the drovers in Kansas did. At home they had a handful of cows and plow oxen, but nothing like this expanse of animals. It would take an hour to ride around this herd on a horse at a walk, and then the Mormons might get him. He'd yet to see one herding

but rumor said they were there, patient as Indians, ready to kill guards and stampede the transport power of the Army of Utah. Through a mitten he felt the muzzleloader move with the mule's gait and wondered what good one shot would do other than to mark the time of his passing.

He'd see the Great Salt Lake at any rate, which the freighters had said was as big and devoid of life as the desert it lived in. He'd see the city the saints had built, and he'd watch over Moses to keep him from doing something foolish.

Echo Canyon, Second Dragoons, Utah Territory, June 20, 1858

Everything here today is hurry and bustle, drawing horses and ponies from Captain Marcy's herd, getting them shod, ready for the march tomorrow. He did not bring enough to fill up the regiment and the light battery, and we were forced to draw sixty mules in order to mount all our men. I happened on a very large horse, white as milk, and I think he is a good one.

—*William Drown, Second Dragoons, Utah Territory, June 12, 1858*

A city of wickiups stood at the foot of the mountainsides that defined Echo Canyon. Many were built in the mountain faces as though huddled there. A construction of huts crafted with poles and woven willow gave the look of poverty and pride, a village replete with thatched roofs sealed with matted grass and a mud mix of clay and coarser soils placed to slow snow and its dripping through ceilings heated from the fires inside. Firewood piles stood by some of the huts to feed fireplaces cut in the banks of the canyon side. The comfort of the makeshift village surpassed that of the army's camp under canvas. Some of the huts had Dutch ovens cut in the clay bank next to the fireplace to bake bread oven fresh as if home had never left these defenders. Strung for more than a mile through Echo Canyon the thin village was freshly neglected, abandoned as though decimated by disease and left for the elements to dismantle.

Scouts had seen the canyon when the Nauvoo Legion was posted there and reported the certain annihilation of the Army of Utah if it attempted to bull its way through.

"I don't like this," Garrison Lloyd said. "Marching into this gauntlet before the dragoons do." He looked at the slopes and the rock walls of rifle pits spotting the canyon sides.

"Aye, to walk in their dust and the messes their horses make, is it? You march with dragoons now, you'll want the road first, me boy."

“I’ll take manure over this.” Garrison Lloyd motioned to the rifle pits and the perched boulders. “We’re easy pickins for a Mormon with a rifle or a rock.”

“Oh, me laddy me boy,” Sergeant McMurray said. “Tis us who will shoot the Mormons. They have their rocks and we have our cannons, you see.” Sergeant McMurray looked at the deserted works. “Don’t you know they’ve fled for the valley below now. Run to the women, they have. When it comes to killin’ a Mormon’s got no stomach for a soldier’s work.”

The canyon amplified the sound of the marching column till the soldiers sounded twice their size.

“Tis an easy thing to burn wagons and steal cattle that aren’t guarded. Tis another to face an army of United States infantry. You mark me words, laddy. We’ll have to hunt to find a Mormon to shoot.”

Like the country they’d covered since Fort Laramie, that masquerade of a grassland in essence a desert scarcely haired-over with prairie, this was a country to pass through traveling to somewhere less inhospitable. The huts were the exception, an attempt to tame an untrainable beast, as though weather could be gentled with a perception of order. This was tough country with its rock-sided mountains that seemed to fall through the canyon floor, hillsides suitable for seasonal goats, the ground that showed the work of wind. This would be a country where snow was born.

“They have their mounted militia, me boy. We have dragoons who will breathe the fire of hell itself.”

“The dragoons have done nothing but eat our rations, and now they ride in the back when the Mormons are up front somewhere,” Garrison Lloyd said.

“For the love of Saint Patrick, laddy. If the dragoons had ’a been with us instead of sent away by some general the Mormons would ’a got nothin’ from us. Tis the dragoons we needed.”

“Well, those lily-livered horsemen haven’t shown me much.”

“Aye laddy. But they are mad. A dragoon don’t like starvin’ and freezin’ like we do. He don’t like bein’ afoot and left to do a man’s work. Oh, they’ll make the Mormons pay they will.” Sergeant McMurray’s beard widened when he smiled. “Tis a thing of beauty truly, to see the horsemen charge.”

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The four hundred horsemen of the Second Dragoons halted at the mouth of Echo Canyon. All were mounted now with many on remounts from Captain Marcy’s expedition to New Mexico. At the mouth of the canyon Colonel Cooke ordered a regimental drill with maneuvers by platoon. Silver eagles glinted on Cooke’s epaulets when his horse turned, showing promotion to full colonel not yet one week old. Like the ring to a

bishop the insignia signaled an aura of authority, its hint of intimidation.

Officers shouted sounding like an army volleyed voices and the rocks volleyed back as though venting what lay within them. Bugles blew as if commanded by a drunken bandmaster and it was a wonder, Moses Cole said, that the canyon didn't collapse.

"Them rocks," he said, "a settin' up there mindin' their own business and here we come, stirrin' everything up. If I was a rock I'd smash me a bugler."

Somehow an order was sorted and the Regiment drew sabre and the canyon sounded as if it split. At the command to return sabre it sounded like train rail fell on train rail for the full defile of the canyon and then, for a moment, the canyon stood still. Then orders were shouted and the canyon shouted back and bugles blew moving four hundred horses and it sounded like the mountains switched sides. Colonel Cooke smiled and he turned his horse and the insignia glinted as though wishing to soar on the pinned wings and Colonel Cooke led the Second Regiment, United States Dragoons, toward Salt Lake City.

Salt Lake City, June 26, 1858

On entering the city, we could see at a glance that everything was laid out in the most accurate manner, the city being laid off in

perfect squares, every street as straight as an arrow, and fifty yards wide. The houses are built of stone and sun-dried brick, and, as a general rule, one and a half stories high, each house having about four acres of land in the enclosure, which is loaded with grain, garden vegetables, and flowers without limit. On each side of every street runs a small stream of clear water. . . . Along all these little streams, or irrigating ditches, are rows of beautiful shade-trees; every dwelling nearly has a nice paling fence in front, and many of them apple and peach orchards in rear.

—*William Drown, Chief Bugler, Second Dragoons, June 26, 1858*

The streets [in Provo] are very wide, regularly laid out, and run at exact right angles to each other. Along the sides of some of them run small, rapid streams, in which great mountain trout, weighing ten or twelve pounds, can frequently be seen coursing along. The children have fine sport throwing stones at these beautiful fish, and trying to kill them.

—*Jesse A. Gove, Captain, Tenth Infantry, June 28, 1858*

Colonel Philip St. George Cooke held his hat over his heart as if holding the Mormons of the Mormon Battalion there. This cavalry is as tough as they, he thought, but no tougher. Whether pulled by their church and their faith or pushed by their fear of him or fear of bones desecrated in the desert didn't matter. They had followed, and they had marched on San Diego as an army tougher than any they would face. Colonel Cooke nodded at figures in the windows of homes and on porches, standing by straw or stacked wood with unlit torches, the simple weapons of a self-reliant people poised to ignite their homes in final defiance of authority marched from the United States.

Colonel Cooke thought of Lafayette Frost, Corporal of Mormons. He saw a shadow move. If he were here, he thought, he would be with their Legion standing at a home as if standing to horse, holding a torch as a sword of the Lord ready to immolate their city. Colonel Cooke shook his head at the memory of Lafayette Frost steady as steel as the bull closed with the momentum of a locomotive. Lafayette Frost had reenlisted, enticed by the new uniform and the addition of eighteen cents a day to occupy San Diego with the Mormon Volunteers and died there, disease taking the body the desert couldn't weaken.

Colonel Cooke muttered, "God bless these people" and he thought, their courage knows no boundary. He shook his head again and he said, "What

an army they made."

"Beg your pardon, Colonel?" The voice came from a staff officer riding behind him.

"Nothing, Lieutenant. Just looking for soldiers I knew." The Lieutenant looked as if he tried to comprehend a mathematical equation beyond his education. "The Mormon Battalion, Lieutenant. Extraordinary soldiers." Colonel Cooke rode at the head of the dragoons and watched with head uncovered.

Moses Cole watched also. Nathan Slater rode at his side in their column of horsemen four abreast.

"Look at the old fool," Moses said. Like the other troops Nathan looked at the houses with their yards and porches, fences and orchards. It looked as good as the best he'd seen in Pennsylvania.

"These people tried to starve us, and he takes his hat off," Moses said, as though not minding who heard.

The sound of horse hooves filled the boulevard then quit at the intervals that split the army by companies marching in parade formation. In these still intervals the creeks gurgled as though promenading water to trees standing sentinel and to the gardens and orchards of the citted homesteads.

"If it was up to me we'd camp right here. Move right in them houses. Eat off them fruit trees and gardens," Moses said.

Nathan had not seen houses like this since St.

Louis, and these people did not have the material or tools the craftsmen back east had.

“Them people owe us that much,” Moses said.

The yard fences and the shade trees and the open streets they marched on and crossed over blended the comfort of New England with a western sense of space. Looking east over the tops of the trees and the houses the mountains rose higher than Nathan thought possible.

“Whose side is he on, anyway?” Moses said. “He never give us a tip of the brim.”

“Hold it down, Moses,” Nathan said. Nathan

could not remember this much color, flower gardens brighter than a Pennsylvania forest full of fall splendor.

“Not once,” Moses said.

Nathan thought of framed paintings in a Philadelphia museum. “Appreciate what we see here,” he said. “Might be a long time before we see this again.”

Moses looked at the back of the dragoon riding in front of him. “I don’t care about the pretty,” he said. “Just want ’a give these people what they been askin’ for.” Moses bobbed in the saddle in cadence with his horse’s gait. “Just come to do a job, is all.”