

CHAPTER 1

The cold, biting, wind of the last week of November, 1933, chilled twenty-two-year-old Tom MacArthur to the bone. He'd been at sea for four days and was now half way across the Atlantic on his way to a new life in Canada.

"My God, Bill," he said to his older brother as the stern of the small cargo ship dropped down into a deep trough, "just look at that. You'd expect it to wash over us any moment now."

Bill looked up at the green water towering around them. "Aye, it is quite a sight," he replied. "Never been in anything like this."

Bill was quite tall, a couple of inches over six feet, with a bushy, reddish-brown, moustache and beard and grey-blue eyes. His face was angular with high cheek bones. Tom was two years younger, about an inch shorter, and clean-shaven. They were both quite good looking and they'd had no trouble at all getting one of the lassies to dance with them on Saturday nights at the community hall near their father's small hill farm in the north of Scotland.

When the stern came up out of the trough, Tom looked across the vast choppy ocean surface again ... for about a minute. And then they dropped back down again. He was glad the ship wasn't rolling from side to side as it had done the day before. His bacon and eggs stayed down that morning.

He turned to his brother, standing beside him holding on to the rail at the stern of the small cargo ship. "I hope we're doing the right thing, Bill."

"I think we are. Had to find something better than living in that loft and shitting behind the horses."

They'd spent the last two years living in a loft above a stable on a farm in the north of Scotland. They had no heat in winter other than the little bit that made its way up through the floorboards from the animals down below. When they had to shit, they squatted beside one of the big Clydesdale work horses and wiped their bums with straw. At night, they could hear the rats scratching away at the corners of the roof. In the winter mornings, icicles hung suspended from the nails on the inside of the roof as they kneaded the frost out of their work shirts.

"Well, it's a bit late now," Tom said with a chuckle. "We're in the middle of the Atlantic. Can't swim back. We'd be as well to make the best of it."

On the afternoon of their seventh day at sea, they were sailing through the Cabot Strait that runs between Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island. "If you look over there on the left you'll see Cape Breton," a crewman who had joined them at the bow said. "That's the northern tip of Nova Scotia. A lot of Highlanders moved there. Still speak Gaelic, they do, right down to this very day. Even got the Scottish coat of arms on their flag."

"So, that's Canada," Bill said as he looked at the Cape Breton highlands from the left side of the ship. "Shouldn't be long now."

"Actually," the crewman said, "we've got about another two days to go before we dock at Montreal."

"Two days?" Bill exclaimed. "How big is Canada?"

"She's real big," the crewman said rather proudly. "Like I said, it's about another two days to Montreal and you and your brother 'll be on a train for about four days after that before you get to Calgary. And, if you want to go all the way to the west coast, to Vancouver, that'd be a little less than another two days on the train."

"My God," Tom said. "Eight days between here and the west coast, you say. That's an awful long distance. And to think that Hadrian built a wall all the way across Britain."

"Who's Hadrian?" the crewman asked with a puzzled look on his face.

"Emperor of Rome he was. Built a wall all across the narrowest part of Britain around 120 AD, about seventy miles of it, to keep my blood-thirsty ancestors from coming down into the territory the Romans occupied."

“Blood-thirsty, eh?” the crewman said with an amused smile on his face.

“They certainly were that,” Tom replied. “Picts, they called them. Painted their faces blue and ran around in animal skins. Pretty fierce bunch of savages they were. The Romans were awful fearful of them. Some parts of the stone wall Hadrian built across the whole width of the country were nine feet thick and about twenty feet high.”

“Well, he’d have one helluva time building a wall across Canada,” the crewman said with a chuckle. “Canada’s almost three thousand miles wide. From Victoria to Halifax, that is. I’d like to see him try and build a wall across that.”

Their ship sailed on between Anticosti Island and the northeastern tip of the Gaspé Peninsula and entered the broad mouth of the St. Lawrence River. They passed Sainte-Anne-des-Monts on the south shore and then Bai-Comeau on the north. The river started to narrow a bit at Rivière-du-Loup and they sailed on past La Pocatière and Montmagny and down the south side of the Île d’Orléans.

“A French fella called Jacques Cartier named that the Island of Bacchus,” the crewman said, “because there was lots of wild vines growing all over it. But then, later, he changed it to Île d’Orléans after the son of the King of France who went by the name Duke of Orléans. He was an explorer, Cartier was. First came over here in 1535, I think it was. Back when the French first started to settle here.”

“The French?” Tom asked with a puzzled look on his face. “I thought Canada was a colony of Britain.”

“Lot of people think wrong like that,” the crewman said. “But, no, the French were here first. New France they called it. Ruled it right up until 1759 when they lost the big battle at the Plains of Abraham. Been British ever since.”

Tom was standing at the bow of the ship with the sun low in the sky dead ahead in the west. It created a marvellous sheen on the water for hundreds of yards in front of him. As the ship turned left into the big bay at Québec City, he could see the huge grain terminal straight ahead with the Chateau Frontenac Hotel dominating the steep cliff on the left above the lower town.

“Isn’t that a sight, Bill?” he said pointing toward the Chateau with the

turrets of the outside floors at its base and the seventeen-floor main tower with its green, sharply-slanted, copper roof rising tall in the middle.

"It is that," Bill replied. "Must have a thousand rooms in there. Never seen anything quite that big, quite that beautiful."

The passenger ferry from Levis crossed their bow and docked at the terminal directly below the Chateau Frontenac.

"Look up there, to the left of the hotel," the crewman said, pointing to a Union Jack flag higher up on the snow-covered cliff. "That's the Citadel of Quebec. There's a whole bunch of cannons on the walls up there. That was the biggest British fortress in all of North America. That fella Dickens, the one who wrote the books, once called it 'The Gibraltar of North America'."

"Those walls look pretty big, pretty thick," Tom said looking up at the Union Jack flying proudly in the wind. "And you've got to climb that cliff to get at them."

"They're thick all right," the crewman said. "Built strong. Real strong. Up at the corner there, that's where the big cannon is. See how it's pointing at an angle? It's aimed right at the point where the ships turn left after Isle of Orleans. Soon as they get their bow well out past that point, the cannon goes off. Bam, bam, bam. Three shots and they're done for. Quebec was Canada's main port back then and the British put the big cannons up there to deal with anyone sailing up the St. Lawrence from the Atlantic."

"I guess they figured the French might try to take the country back," Bill said.

"Actually, no," the crewman said. "The French really didn't have that much interest in Canada. In fact, when they lost the big battle right here at Quebec, back in 1759, the mistress of the French King, Louis the Fifteenth he was, said now the king would be able to sleep better at night."

"You're kidding," Tom said.

"No. She said the only thing Canada was good for was keeping her in fine furs. 'We can be happy without Canada,' she said. And then she said, 'Now that Montcalm is dead, the King will have some peace.'

"That's why the British worried more about the Americans than they did about the French. The Americans have always had their eye on Canada. They were here, right here, back in 1775. It was George Wash-

ington himself who sent the Continental Army up here. If they could take control of Quebec, he figured, they could prevent the British from getting their ships and troops down the St. Lawrence and into the Great Lakes. That was just at the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. The one where they won their independence.”

“Did the Americans take Quebec?” Tom asked.

“Nope. Tried hard but failed. And then, about thirty-six years after that, the Americans launched the War of 1812 and, once again, Quebec, with its control of the St. Lawrence River, was what they had their eye on. That’s why that Citadel is up there on that cliff today. The British put big cannons at the west end, too. That’s in case anyone mounted an attack by land from the Plains of Abraham. Those cannons, by the way, were on wheels on a circular base so they could fire east, west, north or south.”

“You’re a pretty well-informed fellow,” Tom said with a genuine tone of admiration.

“I reads the books,” the crewman said. “It’s all in the books. All you’ve gotta do is take the time to read ‘em. It’s all there. Didn’t know about that Hadrian fella and his wall though. Didn’t know a thing about that.”



As they sailed on past the Citadel of Quebec, Tom’s thoughts turned back to the hill farm in the north of Scotland where he’d been born and raised. The farm was owned by Lord Hanover, an English stockbroker who inherited five of the small farms in the valley. In exchange for the use of the land and the buildings, their father paid Lord Hanover a fixed share of the profits from the sale of the crops and livestock.

Because the farm was too small to support them all, Tom and Bill had spent the last two years working at the large estate southeast of Inverness where Lord Hanover raised Aberdeen-Angus cattle. Several of his bulls and cows had placed first or second at some of the top shows in Britain. Lord Hanover lived in the huge stone manor on the edge of the river. Tom and Bill slept with four other men in the loft above the stable.

Lord Hanover had sold two champion Aberdeen-Angus bulls and six prize cows to a rancher in Alberta. Part of the sales agreement called for

them to be shipped by sea and rail to western Canada under the best circumstances possible. He asked the MacArthur brothers to look after them during the long journey. He also offered to get them both a job in Canada.

Tom and Bill had heard stories of Scots who'd made a good life for themselves in Canada. They were convinced that Canada offered them the chance of a better life than was available to them in Scotland. They wanted a fresh start.

Their mother had died of pneumonia just three years earlier. She was only forty-one. Father was still grieving for her when Tom told him they wanted to go to Canada. "We'd like you to come with us, Father," Tom said. "With Mother gone, you're going to be very lonely here. Come with us to Canada."

"It's tempting," Father said. "I almost went to Australia with your Uncle Harry. Like you, he wanted something better than what we have here. Did quite well, too, your Uncle Harry did. I got a letter from him just two months back saying he's got four hundred sheep at his place. And he owns it all. Paid the mortgage off last year. Doing very well over there, your Uncle Harry is."

"Why didn't you go with him, Father?"

"I was tempted. Dearly so. But, as you might have been too young to recall, your grandfather wasn't too well at that time. Had a bad bout of the pneumonia. If both of us left, Harry and me, he couldn't have carried on. I felt I owed it to him to stay here."

"But Grandfather is gone now. If we go, and we are going, Father, you'll be all alone. Come with us, please."

"I can't do that, my son. This is where I belong. My father worked this farm and his father before him. This has always been MacArthur land and that's the way it should remain."

"I mean no disrespect, Father, but this is not MacArthur land. This is Lord Hanover's land. Just like it was his father's before him. This land belongs to the English, not to us."

"That might well be so, but this is still where we belong. Where you and your brother belong."

"But, what is there for us here?" Tom asked. "The farm's just not big enough. That's why we've been sleeping in Lord Hanover's stable

these past two years. This place just isn't big enough to support us all."

Father took a couple of puffs on his pipe, looked up at the cattle grazing on the hill, and then down at the sheep in the lower meadow. "It is a bit small. I'll grant you that."

He paused again. Took another puff on his pipe. "I take it your mind is made up, both you and your brother?"

"It is that, Father. We are going to Canada. Lord Hanover has made all the arrangements. He's even lined up a job for us when we get to Alberta. We are going."

Father could see from the look in Tom's eyes that his mind was fully made up. And, as Tom was the dominant personality of the two, that probably meant Bill's mind was made up as well. While he regretted their decision, he could understand why they would want a fresh start in life.

"I understand how you feel, Son. If it hadn't been for your grandfather being so sickly, I would have left myself, along with your Uncle Harry. I can understand why you'd want to find something better than what we have here. But, I can't go with you. I belong here. This is my home and I'm a bit on in years to be starting something new with you in Canada. I've still got my health. I'm going to be all right. You'll have to go without me ... but ... with my blessing. I wish both you and your brother all the very best that life can bring."

"Oh, Father. I do wish you'd come with us. You've still got so much life left in you. You'd like Canada. I'm sure you would."

"You're probably right about that, my son. But, no, I won't be going with you. I was born here, just like my father and his father before him, and this is where they're going to bury me. Down there by the burn alongside your mother."



Tom remembered the feel of his father's grizzled cheek pressed against his as they hugged each other goodbye. He really did wish that Father had come with them. But, that was not to be.

He wondered if he'd made the right decision. *What's going to happen to Father? All alone there. Maybe we should have gone to Australia*

like Uncle Harry. Father would've liked that. Being with his brother and his nephews and nieces. He'd probably have come with us if we'd gone there. Gone to Australia. What's it going to be like in Canada? Don't know a soul here. Not a soul.

Early in the morning of their tenth day at sea, the MacArthur's ship docked at the big port in Montreal. After clearing customs and immigration, they transferred the cattle to a freight train and continued their journey to western Canada by rail. The animals were in three pens on the floor of the boxcar, bulls in the middle pen and the cows at either end. Planks were laid across the width of the boxcar, about six feet from the floor, extending back from both sides of the sliding door. Hay, grain, straw, molasses and other stuff for the animals was stored on this plank platform. There was also room for two steel army cots so Tom and Bill could sleep, or at least attempt to sleep, during the bumpy, terribly cold, train ride to Alberta. The boxcar was made of steel but the insides had been lined with wood.

Three large water barrels in the centre pen by the door were refilled whenever the train stopped to take on water and coal. As they were travelling in the first week of December, the boxcar door was open no more than was necessary to let in air for the MacArthurs and the cattle. The door was on the left side of the train and they were able to see the United States on the other side of the St. Lawrence River just past Prescott, about three hours after the train left Montreal.

"That must be America," Bill said, pointing to a building in Ogdensburg, New York, with a big American flag on the other side of the wide river. "Over there like the crewman said it would be. Good thing we're not going to America. We don't know a soul there."

"We don't know a soul over here either," Tom replied with a chuckle as he mixed some oats and molasses for the animals.

They didn't see much of the St. Lawrence from that point on. Then, just before Cobourg, they got their first full view of Lake Ontario. "My God, but it's big," Bill said. "It's like being back on the Atlantic. I can't see the other side."

"Neither can I," Tom said. "We don't have any lochs like that one."

The train pulled into Toronto about nine hours after leaving Montreal and their boxcar was hooked up to a freight train that was going

all the way to Vancouver. It only took a couple of hours to make the switch and they were on their way again just before sundown.

They got their first real feel of the biting cold of the Canadian winter as the train rolled its way through northwestern Ontario. By the time they got to Sioux Lookout – where Ojibway scouts used to keep a lookout for Sioux war parties — thick ice, like candle wax on a bottle of wine, covered the sides of the water barrels.

“Lord, Bill, but it’s a big country,” Tom said, as he stuck his head out the door, the rattling of the wheels on the steel rails below ringing in his ears. “It just goes on and on.”

“Aye, it does do that,” Bill replied as he rolled himself a cigarette. “Not much you could do with it though. Mostly scrub and rock out there. Desolate looking, it is.”

Once past Winnipeg, they started to fully appreciate the majestic expanse of the Canadian prairies. “My goodness,” Bill said, “I’ve never seen this far across land.”

“It is big,” Tom said as the train angled its way northwest from Brandon towards Regina, through wheat fields a mile wide. “Must be a thousand miles from here to the sunset and there doesn’t seem to be a thing in between. These must be the prairies. Where they grow the wheat they ship to that big grain terminal beside the Chateau Frontenac.”

By the time the freight train pulled into the railway yards at Calgary, they’d been in that boxcar for four days and three nights. Dust from the hay and the grain chop encrusted their faces and matted their hair.

“You really are a paleface, Tom,” Bill said. “The Indians ‘ll have no trouble at all picking you out.”

“Aye. We’d best find somewheres to wash this stuff off. I’ll be damned if I’m going to use that icy stuff,” Tom said, pointing to the ice-crusting water barrels.

Donald Morgan, the Alberta rancher who had purchased the prize cattle from Lord Hanover, was waiting for them when the train stopped. He’d had the number of their boxcar telegraphed ahead so he’d know exactly where to park his stake truck.

“And how was it, boys?” Morgan asked as the MacArthur brothers peered into view covered from head to toe in grain dust and straw.

“You’d be as well to ask the beasts,” Tom replied. “At least they had the straw to lie down on. I’m telling you, sir, our cots didn’t lie still for more than two miles at a stretch. And it was cold. Even though we had the thick army blankets, we almost froze in there. I much preferred the boat and the ocean.”

They got the bulls and the cows out of the boxcar and into the truck without any problem. Morgan inspected them carefully and told the MacArthur brothers they’d done an excellent job of looking after them during the almost six thousand miles they’d travelled since leaving Lord Hanover’s estate in the north of Scotland.

“And what do you boys plan to do now?” he asked.

“We have an arrangement with a Mr. Stafford,” Tom said. “Perhaps you know of him. He has a big dairy in Calgary and we agreed to work on his farm for one year. That’s how long the Canadian immigration people said we’d have to have work guaranteed for. Then, as I understand it, we’ll be free to do whatever we want. Is that not how it is, Bill?”

“Aye. That is my understanding,” Bill replied. “That is the agreement.”

Morgan offered to drive them out to the Stafford dairy ranch but they said they wanted to spend the night in Calgary and get a good night’s sleep. He thanked them again for the splendid job they’d done looking after his cattle. Then he suggested they should look him up when their year with Stafford was over.

The MacArthurs checked into a rundown hotel alongside the railway yards. Their room had a badly-sprung brass bed covered by a green spread with cigarette-burn patterns. A stained, yellow, armchair occupied the limited space not taken up by the bed, the dresser with the cracked mirror, and the leaking radiator. They got out of their grimy clothes and sat naked on the bed waiting for the bathtub to fill up.

“Lord God!” Bill exclaimed enthusiastically. “We’re in the new land.”

Tom got out his tobacco pouch and cigarette papers and started to roll himself a cigarette. “Aye, that it is,” he murmured. “A new land. A new life for us.”

The dismal, tacky, surroundings of that new-land flophouse were quite depressing but the MacArthur brothers were in an optimistic mood. “I think we did the right thing,” Tom said after he got his cigarette lit.

“There wasn’t much for us at home. Here at least we’ll have a chance to get a place of our own. If we work at it hard enough.”

“We’ll see,” Bill said as he got up from the bed. “We’ll see what the future brings us. Although, I really didn’t like leaving Father like that. You should have persuaded him to come with us, Tom.”

Tom felt guilty about that. He’d tried ... tried hard ... to get Father to come with them. But Father was adamant that he was going to be buried alongside Mother down by the burn. *Would he have felt so strongly about it if we were going to Australia? I don’t really know.*



There were about three hundred and fifty cows at the Stafford dairy ranch and they had to milk them three times a day — at six in the morning, at noon and at six at night. They had to be up at five every morning and seldom finished before seven-thirty at night.

After supper, they went back to their cramped, poorly-lit, quarters over the milking barn for a game of poker or cribbage with some of their mates before crawling back into their cots again at ten. That went on seven days a week for every week of the year they worked for Jack Stafford. They seldom got away from the place.

They went to work at Don Morgan’s ranch after that. He had an enormous operation just north of Cochrane – eight thousand acres and twenty-five hundred head of beef cattle. Morgan had only one-quarter the men Stafford employed and it was a much better situation for the MacArthurs. No milking three times a day. No cows’ tails to wash. Hardly any time at all caged up in the barn. They were much more satisfied with their life at the Morgan ranch.

But it wasn’t enough for Tom. He left Scotland because he wanted more out of life than toiling and sweating over another man’s soil. And now he realized they didn’t stand much of a chance of getting a place of their own in Alberta. Because the soil wasn’t nearly as rich as the soil at Lord Hanover’s estate, they’d need so much more land to run a successful operation there – two or three times what they would have needed in Scotland. And that meant a great deal more money than the amount

they were able to set aside from their wages.

That's why Tom decided to take a course on selling real estate. While Bill and the other men were in Calgary on Saturday night drinking beer at the Noble Hotel or partying it up with some of the off-duty waitresses from the Old Mansion House, Tom was alone in the bunkhouse learning all he could about selling real estate by the light of a coal oil lamp.

About two months before Tom was due to write the real estate exam, he met Howard Foster, the only son of a successful Toronto real estate broker, at a seminar sponsored by one of Calgary's biggest real estate firms. They struck up an immediate friendship. Foster had been in Calgary for about two years trying, somewhat unsuccessfully, to make a living selling real estate. He had decided to return to Toronto, Canada's second largest city, and work with his father who, despite the fact Canada was still in the grip of the Depression, was doing rather well with commissions on bank foreclosures and power of sales. Foster invited Tom to come with him after he completed the course.

"When we get out of this depression, the big boom in real estate is going to be in Toronto and southwestern Ontario," Foster said one evening when they were having supper at a local restaurant in Calgary. "There's nothing here. I've proved that over the last two years. If I hadn't had a falling out with my dad, I wouldn't have been here in the first place. Toronto's where the action is going to be. Come with me and get your slice of it."

"But, what about your dad?" Tom asked. "How are things between you and him now?"

"We're okay. Everything's settled between us and he wants me back. Dad wants to open an office in the west end and change the firm's name to Foster & Son. I could use your gift of the gab in the new office."

Tom thought about Foster's offer as he drove back to the ranch that night in the old Model A Ford he and Bill bought shortly after they started working at Don Morgan's place. It was an attractive offer. The more deeply he got involved in the real estate course, the more convinced he had become that selling real estate was what he wanted to do. He didn't have the same attachment to the land and the animals that Bill had and was looking forward to carving out a comfortable living for himself in Toronto.

“Come with me,” he said to Bill after he got back to the ranch. “You can get a job in Toronto and we can still be together.”

“Live in Toronto? I wouldn’t give it so much as a second thought. That’d be even worse than living in Calgary. Too crowded. Too many people. No room to breathe. No, this is the life I want. Right here. I need to breathe fresh air. Drink water drawn from the river. Ride the horses. Break them. Can’t do that in Toronto or Calgary.”

Tom tried, two or three times over the next few weeks, but he couldn’t persuade Bill to move with him to Toronto. He made one last try on their way to Calgary to hook up with Howard Foster. It was a bitterly cold morning in February, 1936, and they had trouble with some patches of deep snow on the road. At one point, Tom had to get out and give the car a push.

“It must have come down hard overnight,” he said as he got back into the front seat of the Model A. “Not sure you’re going to make it back to the ranch without me here to give you a shove every now and then.”

“Nice try,” Bill chuckled as he eased the car over an icy patch near the bridge. “I’ll be okay.”

“You’d be more okay if you came with me to Toronto. Really don’t like leaving you out here all by yourself.”

“Then don’t go,” Bill said with a grin. “Give up fame and fortune in Toronto and stay with me on the ranch.”

“You know I’m not going to do that.”

“And you know I’m not moving to Toronto. Like I said, wouldn’t give it a second thought. This is where I belong now.”

When they got to the rooming house on 17th Avenue SW where Howard Foster had been staying, Tom introduced Bill to Foster and put his suitcase in the trunk of Foster’s 1934 Ford coupe.

He turned to Bill and gave him a big hug. “You take care of yourself. You hear? I’ll come back for a visit once I get on my feet out there. This isn’t the final goodbye.”

“I know it isn’t,” Bill said, as he kissed his brother on the cheek. “We’ll be together again. Aye, we will do that.”



Bill stayed on at the ranch. Farming was the only life he knew. And he enjoyed it. He liked riding the range, breaking the horses, herding the cattle and bringing the near-frozen newborn calves into the cookhouse in the very early spring so they could thaw out by the pot-bellied stove. Sometimes there'd be as many as five of them spread out on the kitchen floor.

About a month after Tom left for Toronto, a new cook arrived at the ranch. Helen Dodginghorse was a beautiful young Blackfoot Indian with soft, peach-like, skin and long, jet-black, hair that she tied in braids. She had been raised as a Methodist and sang in the choir at the Methodist church at the Big Thunder Indian Reserve, southwest of Calgary. She was quite slim, about five foot six, and she was a terrific cook. Bill took an instant liking to her. He'd never seen anyone quite like Helen. She had an exotic quality that drew him to her. The attraction was mutual and immediate.

Pretty soon, they were taking walks together down by the river in the early hours of the evening. She invited him over to the Big Thunder reserve one Sunday afternoon to meet her parents who lived in a two-storey log house snuggled against the shoulder of the foothills on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. There was a huge black bearskin on the wall of the living room and two pictures of Helen. The picture on the left showed her as a teenager in a traditional jingle dress holding an eagle feather above her head as she danced at a pow wow. The other showed her in a burgundy gown singing in the choir at the Methodist church. There was also a painting of a representative of Queen Victoria in a blue uniform shaking hands with an Indian chief in full headdress at the signing of the Blackfoot Treaty in September, 1877.

It had been a long time since Bill had eaten a meal in a family atmosphere and the experience brought back warm memories of his early days at home in Scotland when his mother was still alive. The warmth of the household enveloped him and made him feel human again — after so many years of living in stable lofts and crowded bunkhouses; squatting to shit at the heels of the horses; enduring the farting noise and smell of his mates in the bunkhouse; putting up with weird Harry who used to sneak into the barn at night and screw the calves. It had been such a long, long time since he had enjoyed as warm and welcoming an

atmosphere as that of the home of Gordon and Vera Dodginghorse.

“Helen tells us you’re from Scotland,” her dad said. “What brought you to Canada?”

“There wasn’t much for us back home,” Bill replied. “Me and my brother were living in a stable loft on another farm for the last couple of winters. My dad’s farm was too small to support us all. So, me and Tom decided to head over here and see if we could make a better life for ourselves.”

“And your dad?” Gordon Dodginghorse asked. “He’s still there with your mother?”

“Mum died about two years before me and Tom left. She had pneumonia. Took her away pretty quick. Only forty-one. That’s what my mum was when she died. Forty-one.”

“I’m so sorry to hear that,” Helen’s father said.

“Thanks. Anyway, we tried to get dad to come with us to Canada but he’s really tied to that place. Wants to die there.”

“I feel the same way. I’m going to be buried here. Right here in the land of my ancestors.”

He poured Bill some tea. “Helen says your brother’s in Toronto. Selling real estate.”

“Aye. He’s got a lot of ambition my brother has. He’s had enough of stable lofts and bunkhouses. Wanted more out of life than that, my brother did. And he’ll find it. If anyone’s going to succeed, it’s my brother Tom.”

Bill found it a bit odd that he didn’t feel strange eating supper there with a Blackfoot family. It really wasn’t all that much different than having supper with Tom and his dad back in Scotland. *These are good people. Proud. Obviously making a good living. I thought things would be different. A lot different.*

After that first visit, Bill and Helen got into the habit of driving over to Big Thunder just about every Sunday to visit her parents. The reserve was about an hour and a half away from the Morgan ranch. Helen’s sister Sarah lived close by her parents’ house and she and her husband Richard often joined them for supper.

Richard Eagletail was a lot different than Helen’s parents. He had an air about him. More proud than arrogant but there was an edge there.

Bill could feel it. Richard's father had been the chief at Big Thunder, as was his father before him. However, one evening when he was driving Richard's mother and two younger sisters home from a shopping trip in Calgary, a white cowboy driving a five-ton stake truck rammed them head-on. They were killed instantly, along with the cowboy who, an autopsy later determined, had a high level of alcohol in his system.

Richard, who was twenty-two at the time, was competing at a rodeo in High River that weekend and didn't learn about the fatal accident until after he got back to Big Thunder. The Band Council appointed Fred Littlelight to replace Richard's father as chief and he won the next election. The Littlelight family controlled the band's affairs from that point on. After the funeral, Richard continued to work the Eagletail ranch. He married Sarah, his high school sweetheart, in the spring of the following year.

Richard resented the destructive impact the white settlers had on his people. He believed their lands had been stolen and their way of life destroyed. The Blackfoot used to have the free run of the prairies and now they were boxed in at Big Thunder. The huge herds of buffalo they had depended on for their food, clothing and shelter were gone. Gone forever. An entire way of life had been wiped off the map.

As far as he was concerned, it would have been better if the whites had stayed on their side of the Atlantic. Mind you, after a while, he didn't act that way toward Bill. It was clear to him that Helen loved Bill very, very, much, and, on that basis, he accepted Bill as part of their family.

When Helen and Bill got married in October of that year, Bill moved from the bunkhouse to the cookhouse. It had a large kitchen, big enough to feed a dozen men, a small sitting room and two bedrooms. Bill found it to be a welcome change from the crowded, smelly, bunkhouse.

They named their first child William, after Bill and his father. Bill usually got up early to feed little William and dress him while Helen got breakfast ready for the other men. He also kept an eye on the boy while she served the men lunch or dinner. In the evenings, after a hard day's work in the fields, Bill would rock the baby to sleep in his arms. Helen got a chuckle out of that because, during harvest time, Bill would be so exhausted from forking wheat into the threshing machine all day long

that he would rock himself to sleep as well and she'd have to put both of them to bed.

About a year after William was born, Helen got pregnant again. Bill's life with Helen was all he could ask for. He loved little William. And he was looking forward to that first glimpse of his second child's face. Things had worked out well for him in this new land called Canada.

It had been a difficult pregnancy, especially during the last stage. But, even at that, they had not felt it necessary to take Helen to the hospital in Calgary. They should have. The Indian woman from Big Thunder who came to assist in the delivery realized that soon after she got to Helen's bedside. She did everything she knew how. But it was too late. She couldn't stop the bleeding.

The baby was all right. The midwife cut the umbilical cord, wiped the baby off, and wrapped it in a big towel. It was hollering away like crazy. Bill kissed it gently on the forehead and then he knelt by the bed and held onto Helen's hand as the life slipped out of her. He simply couldn't bear the thought of losing her. She had made such a wonderful difference in his life and it just simply wouldn't be the same without her. He hoped against hope the thick wet towels they'd wrapped around her would stop the bleeding and they would be able to continue their life together. But, that was not to be. Helen gave him a quiet, sad, smile, and then she was gone.

They took her body to the Methodist church at Big Thunder and buried her in the cemetery behind the church four days later. Her sister took care of little William and the newborn baby. Sarah had a four-month old baby which she was breastfeeding and she had enough milk to take care of the other little fellow as well.

On the night after they laid Helen to rest at the Methodist cemetery, Bill took little William in his arms and sat on the rocker on Sarah's front porch. The newborn was asleep in a cot in Sarah's bedroom. He wondered what the future held for them now that Helen was gone. He rocked gently with little William's head resting on his neck and thought the whole thing through. Now, he had two little boys and no mother to look after them. What, he wondered, could he, a common ranch hand, do? He couldn't be out in the fields all day and feeding and changing his

sons at the same time. They needed a mother's love and care.

He clasped little William to his chest and rocked back and forth in the dark night air. The little fellow felt so soft and warm and lovable and ... and vulnerable. What was he going to do now? How was he going to be able to hold on to this cuddly little bundle, this little son of his? "Oh, God," he whispered. "Why? Why, Lord? Why?"

The tears trickled down his cheeks as he thought about his Helen and their walks together down by the river. That first supper with her family. And the picnics ... the picnics they used to have with little William on Sundays. All of that ... all of that that would never ... ever ... be the same again.