

**Lonely Dell**  
by Darla Upchurch

The red dirt billowed up in small clouds over Rachel's feet as she walked back toward the main cabin from the Pahreah with a small bucket of water in hand. This time of year both the rivers were so dirty it didn't seem to matter which one you pulled a bucket from. It still had to sit a good little while before you could drink it. Rachel guessed it just depended what color of grit you wanted in your teeth. The Pahreah was more a creamy milk color, and closer to the cabin than the dark red swirling Colorado that was almost four times the size. The Lee family had been at Lonely Dell less than a year. They had already made some big improvements. It was John's mission to be here, and Rachel felt as his first wife, she had the duty to see it through with him. They would make this land work. They would save the garden with another dam across the Pahreah. The flood had blown the first one out yesterday, but they could build another within a week. Others would follow their example, and settle this place. It would be habitable, Rachel thought. She was just as determined as her husband to make it so.

She allowed herself a smile as the sun crested the eastern cliffs, turning the chocolate colored hills to her right a brilliant morning red-gold. If nothing else this land had plenty of color. The sky was dark blue overhead with only a few wisps of clouds. The red cliffs of the river canyon rose in front of her and wound back to her left. In between them ran the red Colorado and just this side of the cliffs was the Pahreah. It ran from behind her out to the cliffs at the left. Between she and it lay the garden plots. They had worked so hard to get them planted by March, she hoped the flood hadn't washed too much of them away. She turned her eyes back to the ranch in front of her and walked toward the cabins. She reached the main cabin, a small stone structure with willow thatching for a roof and dirt for a floor. Another day had come to Lonely Dell.

Emma's twins, Rachel and Ann, were sitting in the dirt with Jimmie, Belle and Willard. The girls wore light summer dresses and the boys wore short pants that came just past their knees. Emma had insisted it would keep them cooler in the summer and save a little material for other clothes. All under five, the children were satisfied to make a game with their rag dolls in the dirt. Jimmie and Belle had lost their mother during childbirth last year, and Emma had taken them in as her own. Willard was Rachel's youngest, she smiled at him, thinking how much he looked like his father, with blond wavy hair and a square face.

"Morning," their little voices chimed as Rachel passed through them.

"Morning," she said in reply to them and in greeting to Emma as she stepped inside the cabin.

Emma was already kneading the flour for the biscuits. Her thick strong hands knew the routine without a thought. She worked the dough at a sturdy wooden table and gazed out the glassless window toward the Pahreah. Her round face, accentuated by her tightly upswept hair, glowed lightly in the morning light filtered through the two small windows and opened door. She watched for her sons, Billy and Ike, to return with the river soaked blanket. When hung over the cabin entrance it helped to cool the room from the exhausting summer heat. She looked over as Rachel entered and nodded good morning.

"Did you see the boys?" Emma inquired.

"No sign," said Rachel. "John up?" She asked, really meaning "Where is he?" She already knew he was up because he wasn't in the bed across the room. He had spent last night with Emma. Rachel and Emma were the only wives he had brought to Lonely Dell. His mission required him to bring two to this place. Rachel of course came, holding the position of first wife after the death of Aggatha. Her devotion was unfaltering. At first Brother Lee had chosen

Caroline to settle at Lonely Dell instead of Emma, who had already established a house in the region, but the task proved too harsh for Caroline. On the road to the Dell, she turned back after one of her wagons broke down for fear she would be stranded in her very pregnant condition. John ensured that she and her newly born child were provided for in Kanab. Then he had asked Emma to move to Lonely Dell with him. Emma gratefully accepted the invitation to join her husband at the new settlement. She would rather be with him in the worst of places than anywhere else in the world without him.

“Took a quick cup of tea, and headed out to check the damage. He was hoping not to have to start from scratch again,” Emma replied as she began to spread out the dough to cut.

“God help us, it took days to build that dam the first time. I hope something’s left of it too,” Rachel commented in her usual business-like manner as she reached for the kettle on the stove to pour herself a cup of tea. She seldom allowed time for anything but work and it showed in her terse mannerisms. She quickly took a potholder from the table and grasped the kettle firmly. She poured steadily to a quarter inch below the rim of the cup without splash or spill and replaced the kettle almost soundlessly on the iron stove. She was a stern woman, though slimmer and less stout of build than Emma. Her features were sharper. Her small eyes and thin line of a mouth displayed outwardly her inner resolve to fulfill her Mission, to support her husband and bring her children a good life.

“Well, all we can do is build it again,” Emma added. She often seemed untouched by the harshness of this land. Nothing damaged her cheerful spirit. Whether cooking a feast or fighting with the dirt to give her vegetables, she always had a lightness about her. Occasionally, she could be quick to anger but just as quickly return to smile. Rachel attributed Emma’s easy-going demeanor to her youth. After a few more years of bearing children and fighting this land,

her smile may turn more into a hard line of determination. But Rachel did not wish it on her. As the elder wife of the two, Rachel felt a bond of kinship like that of an older sister. She had tended Emma during her confinement in this cabin shortly after their arrival here. The birth of a daughter, Francis Dell, to Emma, had given the women cause and plenty of time to acquaint with one another. Previous to Lonely Dell they had little interaction, but they had become quite fond of each other during Emma's confinement. Rachel felt encouraged by Emma's never-ending good spirit. Often Emma felt the same inspiration from Rachel's determination. The two complemented each other well, and Brother Lee was blessed to have such wives accompany his Mission at Lonely Dell.

Rachel seated herself on the bench opposite Emma, "I suppose we'll have to build it again. I just hope we haven't lost much of the garden. The onions and parsnips we planted in March were ready to harvest."

"The good Lord will provide for us," Emma said placing the biscuits in the stove.

Rachel grunted in affirmation, then asked with a lilt of worry in her voice, "Was that the last of the flour?" The wheat would not be ready for harvest for another month or two.

"It was." Emma paused to consider. "Should be enough biscuits to last through supper. Then I suppose we'll have to send some of the boys to the settlements for more."

"It's a hard road for certain, I hate to send the young ones," said Rachel with concern.

Thirteen children had made the journey to live here. They were all entrusted to the care of Rachel and Emma although some of them knew different birth mothers. They were all one family now, and Rachel felt responsible for them all.

"Sammy's almost a man. I imagine he and Ralph would make it alright," Emma suggested, feeling the same protective instinct over the children, but knowing the family could

not survive well on only vegetables from the garden and the few head of cattle. Flour was essential.

“We’ll have to ask John who he’ll spare in re-building the dam.”

“Yes, it’s his decision,” Emma said as she walked toward the window and placed her hands on her broad hips. A gentle warm breeze wandered in the door and ruffled her long dress. “I wonder where those boys are with the blanket. I told them to bring it right back.”

Rachel finished a sip of her tea and replied, “I’m sure they found something to get into. Those two are as curious as baby kittens. You’d think they would have explored the whole Dell by now.”

Emma grinned at the thought of her young boys poking around in the willows by the Pahreah, probably finding some new bug or weed to amuse themselves. They loved to bring lizards back to the house to make the younger girls squeal.

“Here they come,” Rachel said from the doorway.

Billy and Ike were strolling up from the left with the cool wet blanket wrapped around their naked shoulders. Out here in the summer heat there was little need to wear anything but trousers, which the boys had rolled up to just below the knee, exposing their bare legs and feet. Their little boy bodies were developing a strong frame from their labors, and Emma could see where they would grow into men in a few short years. Their light brown hair was moist, no doubt from a little dip in the river, and tousled about like they had not heard of a comb or the good sense to use it.

John followed shortly behind them. He was thin from toil, but there was a strong air about him. It emanated from his eyes. They were a fierce light green, and one look at them told you that he was a man of purpose and a man of power. His brow was ever-crinkled just above

his nose and his eyes lids slanted down at the outer edge. Together with the deep lines dividing his cheeks from his mouth, his features gave him the look of a man who has seen a good many hard years. But his gait was light for a man of sixty and his sandy-blond hair was tousled like his sons' giving him a certain boyish charm.

“Morning,” the boys smiled in unison greeting Rachel, who had stepped out the front door to meet them.

“Morning boys. How’s the river today?”

“It’s down from the flood,” offered Billy.

“But dirtier than ever,” added Ike while he peeked in the door to see if his mother had finished the biscuits. “Think we could build a whole house from the dirt in there.”

“Almost ready,” Emma replied to his curious little face. She cradled little Francis, who had begun to whimper in her basket.

“I’ll get them,” Rachel offered and started toward the stove. Then turned back to the boys, “Can you manage the blanket?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” replied Billy as he balanced himself on a large rock just outside the door and reached up toward the thin branch that Sammy and his father had rigged with twine to hold the blanket over the door.

John paused at the entrance to help the boys adjust the blanket. Then the three came inside. Rachel offered each a biscuit and they all took one with a quick thank you. Everyone looked to John. He bowed his head and they followed.

“Lord, we thank you for this food and pray that it nourish us so that we may continue to serve your will. We ask your blessing on this new day you have given us and ask that you guide us in your way. Amen.”

“Amen,” everyone murmured together.

Billy and Ike took a seat on the bench across the table from Rachel and bit into their biscuits hungrily without even reaching for butter. John stood by the doorway and chewed silently in thought. Rachel caught his eye.

“How bad is it?” she asked.

He looked over to the newest addition to his family and then down to the floor. “Well,” he began with an exhale, “Dam’s mostly blown out. That was a strong river yesterday.” He ran his left hand through his hair to comb it down a little and continued, “I think I’ll start Sammy on it today while I tend to what’s left of the garden.”

“What’s left?” Emma repeated as an inquiry, concerned about feeding the family without flour or vegetables.

“It’s mostly untouched. Just a small section got over-watered, I think. I want to replace some of the soil washed out by the river. Replant a little.”

Emma nodded in response.

“Where is Sammy? We should get started right away,” John asked of his two wives.

Rachel hadn’t seen him yet this morning, she looked to Emma who answered, “Oh, he and the older children took the buckets down to the Colorado. They should be back soon, I guess.”

“I’ll go look for him,” volunteered Billy as he jumped up from the table.

“Alright then, I’ll be in the garden. Just tell him and Ezra and Ralph I need their help.”

With that and a nod to his wives he headed out the door toward the garden.

Ike jumped up with half a biscuit in his hand to follow his brother down to the river. Halfway there they met six of their siblings carrying four large wooden buckets of water toward

the ranch. Billy and Ike eagerly ran forward to relieve some of the load and deliver their message. Billy reached the others first so Ike yelled, "Sammy!" wanting to deliver the important message first. Billy let Ike tell it, and Sammy said they would help carry the water back to Rachel and Emma first and then go to the field.

They were a motley bunch walking back to the cabin. Ranging in age from eight to seventeen, they were various heights of growth and maturity. All of the boys wore only trousers or bibbed pants, except Sammy who wore an old tattered dress shirt of his fathers. He had soaked it in the river, which turned the white to a pale orange-red tint, and put it back on to keep him cool. The two girls wore light dresses, which were wet up to their thighs, and tied their long brown curls up in loose buns atop their head. Once they reached the cabin, they placed the buckets just outside the door and the boys ran off to help their father in the garden.

By early afternoon Sammy, Ezra and Ralph were carrying dirt by the shovelful to the old dam site on the Pahreah to make a pile for the construction of the new dam. They had built the first dam more like beavers than men, using only what the natural world provided around them. One long log provided the center of it and then piles of branches, dirt, and stone filled the holes until the dam was in working order. Tomorrow they would work on finding a large log to lay across the silty river as the base for the dam and then build the structure around it with twigs, branches and lots of dirt. Their father had told them to just work on moving some dirt today and he would help them select a good log to begin the dam with tomorrow. It would be several hard days of work to block the river up again so it would flow into their garden and irrigation ditch. John had said the ditch looked like it needed a little work too, but they didn't need to worry about it until after the dam was replaced.



Rachel and Emma were tending the younger children back at the cabins. The day had gotten pretty warm, so the women decided to take the children into the dugout cabin for their afternoon nap. The dugout cabin was the coolest place to shelter on these hot summer days. The back wall, and most of the two sides were encased in the hillside. You had to walk down a couple steps to go in the front door. The dirt kept the cabin cooler than the outside air. The floor was made of flagstones which held their cool without the summer sun beating on them. The family, like the animals, burrowed down to survive the scorching midday heat. While the younger children slept, Amarah and Amasa sewed on a quilt together.

John was in the garden with Billy, Ike, and Frankie. The boys were all around ten, so not quite strong enough to help the older boys with heavy labor like building the dam, but they wanted to be. John understood. He was proud to have such devoted, hard-working sons, and tried to keep them busy with the small tasks he knew they could accomplish. That afternoon, he had them replanting some of the vegetables that had been mostly washed up in the flood the day before.

Rachel had left Emma to feed Francis and rest with the other children, while she went to gather vegetables for the evening meal and ask John about the flour. They hadn't had a chance to mention it at breakfast and he would want to be thinking about it before dinner, in case he wanted to send the boys off tonight to ride in the cool evening. As she reached the garden, she saw the children working happily in the dirt. John was humming his favorite hymn while he steadily turned dirt over with his hoe. His back glistened with sweat and the top of his trousers were soaked with it. Rachel opened her mouth to speak and froze. She saw three men walking toward them from the right as if they had just come out of the Colorado River.

“Hello, there,” one of the men yelled as they came closer.

Startled, John looked up from his hoe to see the men walking toward him. A sudden rush of fear shot through his entire being. What if they were coming to arrest him. Why had he been singled out of the group of men that had been at Mountain Meadows to take the blame for the incident. It had been a horrible day, he would never forget, but he was just following what was right for the Church. He still remembered the shock on the man's face as he shot him. Looking around to see all the other Saints shoot the settler beside them. And the screams of the women up ahead as they desperately clung to their children with their last breath. Strange men landing on his desolate shore made him nervous. He tried to show no sign of it, as he eyed them up and down. None of them carried weapons. They were dressed as gentlemen. Two of them looked quite young, they couldn't be much more than twenty. They had tan faces and strong strides. All of them had a mustache covering their upper lip, but they seemed to be smiling. They would be on him in no time. John decided the only thing he could do was greet them. Rachel however, had already turned back for the cabin. The rifle was by the bed in the main cabin. She was a pretty good shot and could see the garden from the cabin windows. No one was going to take her husband that easily.

"Afternoon," John nodded as they came within speaking distance.

"Ah, Mr. Lee is it?" asked the stranger on the left.

"Who's asking," John wasn't about to just give himself up before he even knew who was taking him.

"Jack Hillers," the oldest looking one in the middle offered his hand for a shake. John hesitated then took it. "And this is Fred Dellenbaugh," motioning to his right and then left, "and James Fennemore."

"Hello," John nodded to each still uneasy with their unexpected presence.

“We’re friends of Major Powell’s. He said he had met you a year or so ago while and exploring out here, and told us we might find you and your family settled here now. See we’ve run quite low on our rations. We thought someone would be here to meet us with more provisions. We’ve got plenty of flour and coffee to share, but we’ll still waiting for the Major to meet us to continue our expedition down the river. We wondered if we might camp here for a night or two, until the Major comes. We’d be happy to share what we have in return for your hospitality.”

“Well, welcome, welcome,” John shook there hands relieved that their intentions weren’t to capture him. “Of course you can camp, there’s a good site just across the Pahreah to the north there.” John motioned behind him. “It’s plenty flat and a little sandy for good sleeping.”

“Thank you, Mr. Lee,” Jack smiled. “We’ll just get some things from the boat.”

“My boys and I can help you with that.” John looked over at the three now standing beside him. “This is Billy, Frankie, and Ike.”

The three smiled at their father’s introduction, pleased that they were the first to meet these new visitors. The group headed down toward the river and Rachel watched them walk away from her perch inside the cabin window. She lowered her gun and moved to put it back by the bed.

“Is it alright then?” Emma asked, holding little Francis nervously in the corner.

“I think so,” Rachel replied. “They all shook hands and John took the boys with them down toward the river.”

John brought the men by the cabin, before taking them across the Pahreah, to meet his wives and the young children, who had woken up from their naps. John proudly introduced each child and told the men that they could meet the oldest three boys working on the dam on the way

to their camp. Emma and Rachel offered the men a snack of bread and sweet butter. The men gladly accepted and left a bag of flour and coffee with the women, who praised the Lord for providing.

The men met Sammy, Ezra and Ralph busily piling dirt for the new dam. Jack offered their services on building the dam and John was only too happy to accept. The Lord really did provide, he thought. They might be able to build the dam by tomorrow night with three extra men helping out. John invited the men to supper then left them to set up their camp and went back to work in the garden a little more.

A couple hours before sundown John could smell a good stew brewing in the cabin. He walked over to the dam site and convinced the boys to stop work for the evening and take a quick dip in the Colorado. The swift red current washed off the day's sweat and they headed back toward the cabin to see how the stew was coming along. Emma had already sent Billy and Ike to fetch the men for supper.

“Smells excellent,” John complemented as he walked through the door.

“Well, thank you,” said Rachel stirring the contents of the large pot on the stove.

The girls had set plates all around the table and pulled a couple stools to the ends to make room for the guests. Water glasses were all filled and little napkins laid out. John was pleased that even out here, his family could have a dinner party like they used to host for Church occasions in Salt Lake City.

“Good evening,” greeted Jack as he entered the cabin.

Fred and James followed. James looked a little paler than the others and seemed tired. Amarah seated the men at the table, then the family took seats along the benches. Rachel and Emma began to serve everyone stew and freshly made rolls. The family looked to John after

everyone had been served, and he uttered a prayer of thanks for the fine food and the blessing of guests.

“So, where are you men from exactly,” John asked as they began to eat.

Jack answered first. He had a strong deep voice and quick, kind eyes. His moustache ran over his bottom lip slightly so that when he spoke you never saw his teeth, you saw his bottom lip dancing underneath the stray hairs of his upper lip. “Well, Mr. Lee, I was born in Germany, but my parents brought me to the United States when I was ten. I’ve lived and worked here since. Even fought proudly in the civil war. I was in the Union army until just two years ago.”

“What brought you down this river,” Rachel asked.

“Well,” Jack began, “I happened to be in Salt Lake City and met Major Powell, who was looking for a boatman for an expedition he was going to take. It sounded like a once in a lifetime adventure that I couldn’t pass by, so I agreed to come along and see a part of the country that few have.”

“It’s a scientific expedition like none before. We’re going to map and explore this part of the country,” interjected Fred excitedly. He was young and quite a contrast to Jack, who seemed a little more experienced and a little more serious. Fred was on this trip for the pure adventure of it. He had a mop of jet black hair falling into his face, and a weak little moustache over his upper lip that seemed to hardly want to grow. He was a thin man, especially as compared to Jack’s sturdy build, but he was all enthusiasm.

Sammy was intrigued, “And so you’re all scientists.”

“No,” answered James. He seemed slightly more timid than the other two, but maybe that was just to be attributed to his illness. His skin was much paler than the other two men, and he hunched forward slightly at the dinner table, like his head was too heavy for his back to support

in a straight line. He continued, “some of us are along to just document the area. I’m a photographer myself. I met the Major in Salt Lake City also, while I was working in a photography gallery there. He said he wanted to have as many pictures as possible. I showed him some that I had taken before and he asked me to join his expedition. I’m afraid though, I didn’t know how rough the river would be to us. I haven’t taken it very well so far. I’ve fallen a bit ill lately.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Emma said as she offered him another roll. “Maybe a few days rest here will make you feel better again.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Lee,” James said as he took another roll.

“I’m also trying to pick up the knack of photography,” Jack interjected. “James here has been kind enough to show me a few of the tricks on our trip so far. But how about you, Mr. Lee, where are you from?”

“Well, my life is a long tale,” John smiled. “I was born in Illinois. In Kaskaskia, a little town right on the Mississippi River. I grew up there and when I was old enough took off to see the world. I ran mail for a while and eventually settled in Vandalia with my first wife, Aggatha.”

“And how did you come to settle here?” asked Fred.

“Well, we were living in Skutumpah. I had come down from Salt Lake City to run a saw mill there, and I received word from the Church that we should move to this place to begin settling the area. We are here on a Mission from the Church. There is talk of building a ferry to boat more members across the river to settle in the lands to the west. We’ve come to set up the first settlement here and make way for others to follow.”

“The Major told us that last time he was through here, no one was at this place,” Fred added.

“The last time,” started Sammy. “Has Mr. Powell taken this trip before?”

“Oh yes,” answered Fred. “A few years ago he came down the river without knowing much of anything about it. He’s got some tales from that trip for sure.”

“Tell us one,” asked Sammy eagerly.

Fred grinned. “The Major is pretty adventurous and always wants to see things for himself. We get out and camp on the trip at the side of the river and spend a couple of days sometimes just exploring the area. The Major likes to get on top of things, and one day, I hear he decided to scramble up a canyon wall. The wall was pretty steep, and he was all by himself. He went anyway. And he gets himself in this situation where he’s hanging on with his one good arm, with his feet kinda dangling underneath him halfway up the wall. Well, his party could see him from below and thought he was in for it for sure, but he managed to swing his feet around ‘til he got them back on a little ledge and then he could move on.” Fred paused to chuckle. “He’s damn fearless, I’ll tell you.”

He glanced around and realized he’d just said damn in front of the women and blushed, “Excuse me ladies.”

“Quite alright,” Emma laughed.

The conversation continued on light-heartedly through dinner. Amarah served coffee after the meal and the younger children started to fidget at the table as they grew sleepy. Emma excused herself with the children and took them to sleep in the dugout cabin, while she fed Francis Dell. The men, exhausted from their previous journey, excused themselves soon after sunset to retire to their camp. They promised however to help John with the dam early in the morning.

By mid-morning the following day, the men and older boys had chosen a good sized cottonwood to cut down and lay across the river as a foundation for the dam. The younger boys had split their efforts, half had spent the morning gathering sticks and branches from the trees along the river side. The other half had gathered as many stones as they could find and carry to the pile. They had a large a pile of both ready for construction when the men began. It was hard, wet work. John, Jack, and Fred stood across the breadth of the small river while the boys passed them branches to make a frame for the dam. Then they carefully placed stones within their structure to add some meat to the bone. Sammy busily threw shovels of dirt on the growing pile of branches in the river to solidify the dam. All of them were soaked with dirty Pahreah water and sweat from the back breaking work. They took turns swapping stories to keep the mood light. Jack and Fred had some tales about boats overturning and riding over rapids. John talked mostly about moving around the southern Utah territory and the Church.

James hadn't lasted very long in the summer heat. After a few minutes in the river, he felt much worse, light headed and faint. He slipped a couple of times and fell flat on his back in the rushing water. John suggested he go back to the cabin for some shade and rest. James didn't put up much of a struggle to stay and work with the other men. He made his way slowly back to the cabin, and Emma welcomed him with a glass of water and insisted he lie down on the bed. She dipped a rag in the bucket outside and placed it on his head. He was asleep in a matter of minutes.

Amasa was helping Emma watch the young children while Rachel took Amarah to the garden to tend the vegetables and gather some for the evening meal. The women were planning a feast for supper tonight in celebration of their new guests who would probably have the dam in working order by the end of the day. The afternoon was hot, but the evening would cool off



again. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and Emma and Rachel had agreed that they would host the supper outside, so the family and their guests could sing and tell stories under the stars. On the way back to the cabin, skirts full of potatoes and parsnips, Amarah stopped short in front of Rachel making her almost dump her load of vegetables back on the ground.

"What..." Rachel started and then looked up to see a wagon approaching from the west.

"It must be Mr. Powell," Amarah suggested with awe. The men last night had made him sound legendary in their stories. A one armed man who arranged fantastic adventures down the Colorado River just to explore the place. She was excited to actually meet him.

"Let's get these to the cabin," Rachel determined. "Then we can welcome our new guests."

When they reached the cabin and laid out the vegetables on the table, Emma was excited to hear that more guests would be joining them this evening. Sometimes this place could be lonely with only the family. It was a welcome change to have visitors for a dinner party. It reminded her of earlier days with John. Before the Church had excommunicated him, they used to have very pleasant dinner parties all around southern Utah. Tonight would be like old times again. Rachel and Amarah went out to greet Mr. Powell and his company, while Emma remained in the cabin to wash and chop the vegetables.

By this time, the wagon was almost on the house. Rachel and Amarah didn't have far to walk. The driver smiled as they approached and the man in the seat beside him tipped his hat. A nicely dressed woman was seated in the back of the wagon among stacks of provisions and two other men rode horses alongside. All were nicely dressed in short coats and hats, but looked a little dirty as though they had been traveling for several days, as they would have had to. They probably came from Kanab, which was at least four days away by wagon.

“Welcome to Lonely Dell,” Rachel greeted.

“Much thanks,” said the passenger of the wagon as he stood to get himself down.

Amorah noticed that the right arm of his coat hung limply with no hand reaching out of it. This must be Mr. Powell she thought excitedly.

He dropped to the ground and came forward. He had a bushy beard and a rounded nose. His eyes were almost hidden under his large overarching brows. He grinned through his whiskers as he came around the horses. “Please to meet you ladies. I am Major John Wesley Powell. This is Professor Harvey Demotte,” he said swaying his hand toward the driver. “And this is Professor Almon Harris Thompson, and his lovely wife, Mrs. Ellen Thompson. And I believe you know Jacob Hamblin.”

“Of course,” Rachel nodded toward Jacob. He was a member of the Church who often brought them news of the outside world and mail. He was short and a little heavy around the belly. His hair was long faded from his forehead, which made his pointy nose stick out even farther. She had never cared for him all that much but John would have trusted him with his life. She turned to the rest, “it’s wonderful to have you all here. Please come inside and get yourselves cool. We’re just starting to prepare dinner.”

The men had dismounted and Professor Thompson was helping his well-fed wife out of the wagon. Major Powell went to the back of the wagon and pulled out two large sacks with the help of Professor Demotte.

“Ladies, we do not come empty handed. We were hoping to share some fresh venison and flour,” Major Powell said as he and DeMotte approached Rachel and Amorah.

Rachel was delighted. The Lord just kept blessing them. Fresh meat and more flour. They certainly didn’t deserve such luxuries, but what a feast it would make. She led them into

the stone cabin and introduced the small children playing outside on the way. Emma was pleased to meet them all. Amasa fetched them fresh drinks of water from the bucket outside. Mrs. Thompson was impressed with the way Rachel and Emma had taken to this desolate place. She was a plump, well trimmed woman, but she did enjoy the adventures she had outdoors with her husband. She was unsure however, if she would have survived long out here alone in this country. She commented that it was indeed a lonely dell, but complimented them on their house and dresses and asked if she could help them with dinner preparations. Being good hostesses they refused to let her work, but were delighted to have another woman to talk to. The men made their excuses to step out of the cabin and take a look around the little ranch.

In the evening the men who had been working on the dam all day went down to the river to wash again before dinner. The cool waters felt like welcome ice on their backs after the long day of labor, and they lingered for longer than necessary to wash off the sweat and dirt. On the way back to the cabin they heard other voices. Jack and Fred recognized Major Powell's gruff laugh, and smiled because they knew soon they would be headed off again down the river. As enjoyable as the Lee ranch was, they were anxious to get their explorations started again. No doubt the Major would want to leave as soon as possible. The two groups of men met just outside the cabin and there were introductions all around.

Jacob pulled John aside as the other men began to wash their hands in preparation for dinner in the buckets set aside by the cabin for just that purpose. The two walked to the right of the cabin and along the red hills to their left a little ways until they were out of the earshot of the cabin.

"I've brought a letter for you," Jacob announced as he handed John a tattered envelope from his shirt pocket. "I hope it brings good news to you."

John took the letter and as he began to open it asked, “Do you have any more news for me?”

Jacob, hands in his trouser pockets, looked down as he shuffled his feet in the dirt. “Well... the Church wants to build a ferry here, Brother Lee. A real ferry. They’ll send lumber from Skutumpah and all.”

John beamed. He tucked the letter back into its envelope and then his pocket. There was no rush to read it right now. His Mission had just gotten even better.

Jacob continued, “The Church wants to make sure there’s a route through here, ya know. For the settlements. And well, if there’s any unrest, ya know, the Church wants a way to get through here. To get away if it comes to that.”

“I see,” John said, letting it set into his thoughts. He was only too proud to serve his Mission, but more people, even good Latter-Day Saints, met more danger for him.

Jacob could tell from the silence that his message had brought a hint of fear with the joy. “Why don’t you think about moving a little to the north, a little more out of the way.”

“I’m not running, Brother Hamblin. I will carry on with my Mission. The Lord will provide for me and my family. The Lord will protect us just as he always has,” John returned determinedly.

Jacob shifted his feet again. It was a delicate subject with John. He was not a man to back down from what he felt was right, what he felt was the Lord’s plan. He would risk everything to fulfill what he deemed as the Lord’s purpose.

“I’m not saying run away,” Jacob began again. “I’m saying think about your family. I know you still have some cattle a ways up, to pasture by the pools. Maybe you could just...”

John interrupted, "I'll have to think it over." John squinted as he looked upstream. He knew what Jacob was suggesting. But he'd grown quite happy having a good part of his family all together here at the Dell. Rachel and Emma were close. Separating them would be hard, but he knew they'd do whatever he asked. It probably was a good idea to have a little more out of the way place up at the pools where he could lay low away from the Dell. Jacob was staring at his own feet kicking at the dirt when John came back from his thoughts. "I'll have to think it over," he repeated.

Jacob grunted in confirmation.

The two walked back toward the cabin. Amarah had set out two large blankets for everyone to take a seat on. The children were washed up, and dinner was ready to be served. Even James was out of bed now. John was hoping a day of rest would have done him some good, but he still looked pale and weak. Some men just aren't made for this country, John thought. Emma smiled as she saw the men round the corner and nodded toward the wash buckets when she caught John's eye. The two washed their hands as Emma and Rachel began to serve everyone generous portions of meat, green corn, squash, and fresh bread with sweet butter. When all were seated around on the blankets in the cool of the coming twilight, John bowed his head to pray.

"Dear Heavenly Father, we give thanks for this day and these guests. The finished dam and the garden it brings us. We praise your name in all we do and ask that you bless this food for the nourishment of our bodies. Amen."

"Amen," followed the crowd.

Then all began to eat and chatter. The men in Major Powell's party wanted to catch up on what had happened since their separation near the beginning of the summer. Jacob brought

news and gossip from the Church. Mrs. Thompson continued to question Rachel and Emma about how they survived on their own out here. After dinner, Rachel brought out the first watermelon of the season for dessert. The children's eyes lit up at the fresh red juicy fruit. As everyone was being served a slice, the conversations quieted into one. Professor Demotte had asked John, "When did you convert to the Mormon faith?"

"I'm glad you asked," John began. He glanced up at the emerging stars and took a quiet breath. All eyes were focused on him in anticipation of the story. His children and his wives had heard it before, but it was a powerful story that inspired them, so they looked on eagerly.

"It was back in Vandalia, in Illinois. I was living with my first wife, Aggatha Ann, in the town of her birth." He looked to Rachel as he began. Aggatha had been her oldest sister, and they felt the loss together when she passed on. "We had a good home. Surrounded by her large family it was a deeply warming place to live. We had lost our first child, William Oliver, before he was a year old. Aggatha mourned him greatly. And it broke my heart to see her in pain. Our second child, Elizabeth Adoline was just past two and had taken ill. I sent Aggatha to bed with Sarah Jane, our little baby girl while I sat up with Lizzie. Lizzie had been ill for a couple of weeks. She had a fever that wouldn't break. Her dark brown curls lay matted around her sweaty round face. There was nothing I could do for her. I sat beside her until I saw her take her last feeble breath. Her little chest had been heaving up and down in labored breaths and suddenly it stopped moving. She passed quietly without a groan of pain or desperation. My first little girl had slipped quietly into death right before my eyes.

"I hung my head in my hands. I looked up and laid my hand across her little forehead and swept it down through her hair. My little girl. I bent down and kissed her forehead, and then her nose. My tears dropped on her pale cheeks. I stood and pulled the sheet up from the

bottom of her bed. I paused and then pulled it over her head. I looked away. I couldn't look at my little Lizzie with a shroud over her face.

“My eyes fell on a book on the mantle. A wandering minister had given it to me six months or so earlier. He knocked on my door and asked to share his faith. I didn't see any reason to turn away an old minister so I had asked him in for tea, but asked him not to preach at me. He was considerate and we talked about the weather, but he left this book with me. I'd laid it on the shelf and almost forgot about it. I picked it up to read right before Lizzie fell ill. I did nothing but sit at her bedside for hours while she was sick, so I hadn't gotten far into it. That night I picked it up and devoured it.

“It was either read that book or stare at the white sheet covering Lizzie's little body. I couldn't bring myself to wake Aggatha and Sarah Jane to tell them what we'd lost. I threw myself into the book. I must of read most of the night.

“The fourth verse of the tenth chapter of Moroni is where the Lord spoke to me. It said, 'if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.' That verse was written for me in that moment. I felt it as I had felt nothing else before. The presence of God was keeping me. I prayed on my knees that he would manifest the truth to me. I promised to keep faith in Christ and follow him on the path he would lay before me.

“I sat back in my chair and looked at little Lizzie. Her death had brought me to the Lord. So I realized the innocent make the greatest sacrifices, and I vowed that hers would not be in vain.”

The crowd around the blankets was still as John finished his story. Tears glistened in Rachel's eyes. The night filled the space left by the silence as everyone thought over John's story in their own way.

"That was so touching, Mr. Lee," Mrs. Thompson finally volunteered. She was dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief. "I'm ... speechless."

"Let's have a song, then," Emma suggested. "In celebration."

"Delightful," said Mrs. Thompson.

"Amorah, dear, why don't you sing that hymn you've been thinking up," Rachel prodded.

Everyone nodded in agreement. Jack was hoping it was a light hymn after that tragic story. Amorah lightly coughed to clear her throat and then began. Her voice was soft and musical in itself. The tune was slow but happily placed in some major key. Her lyrics described the Dell and praised the Lord for bringing them together in such a place where they could worship freely and follow his will.

The crowd clapped as she finished, and Mrs. Thompson asked for another song.

"I've got a poem," volunteered Professor Thompson. He then recited some Tennyson.

Everyone had finished their melon, so Amorah and Amasa started to bring out some coffee. Then Fred spoke up to ask for another story.

"I enjoyed your last telling Mr. Lee, do you have another story for us," he asked.

"Well..." he thought about it.

"How about your first ferry ride," suggested Jacob. "Since you are going to become a ferryman, once the lumber gets here to build your ferry."

"I guess it was about a month after we got here. I was over by the Colorado collecting wood with Sammy to patch up the dam when we heard some yelling. We poked our heads out of



the cottonwoods and saw about a dozen Indians on the other side. I guess they had seen us and the boat on our side of the river and wanted help to cross. At first I wasn't so sure I wanted them to come over. A dozen Indians is a lot to handle. But they kept calling at us and waving at the boat. I tried my best to make them understand I needed to fix the boat before we could bring it across. I think they finally understood, when we started caulking the raft. When we finished, Sammy and Ezra didn't want to take it across, 'cause neither one of them swims very well. Rachel had come down to bring us some bread for a lunch bite, and she volunteered to help me get it across. The two of us got on and I pushed it off the bank with the big pole and she tried to steer while I pushed it across.

“The current was swift but we made it to the other side and the Indians helped us get the raft stable on shore. They had a lot of stuff with them. They seemed overloaded with blankets and calico material and horses. It took a few trips across to bring most of them and their belongings. The horses were a different story though. They wouldn't get on that boat for anything. I told the men left on the other side that they'd have to walk the horses upriver a little ways to where they could get the horses to swim across. There was an old Indian crossing up there I thought.

“It turned out pretty well. The men got the horses across upstream and came back to meet us. I traded a couple good horses and an old mule for some blankets and some good sturdy material to make work clothes out of. That kept the women busy with sewing for a good little while.” He finished with a smile.

Then Fred broke in, “We ran into some Indians just a couple days before we got here. Upstream a little ways. They were really nice folk. I traded them and got a feather plume cap. We made a fire and had a little dance. One of the Indians turned a kettle over and beat on it with

a willow root. It was a great sound and we sang and danced around the fire. Then one of the older Indian men told us stories about his people traveling. He had a fascinating voice. His speech was slow and rhythmic and the fire crackled beside us. It was a night you don't have everyday."

"We had a good adventure too, before meeting up here," piped in Professor Thompson. "After we left Kanab, Major Powell headed us down toward the Grand Canyon. I was as eager as a boy on Christmas to see the chasm I had heard about. I wanted to push my horse to ride faster so that I would get there sooner to see it. When I finally did, nothing I had imagined compared to what I saw. Layers and layers of canyon right on top of one another. It was deeper than anything I could have dreamed. I almost wept."

"Sounds fascinating," Amarah interjected with awe.

"It really was... fascinating," Professor Thompson said with a smile.

"Anyone for cards," Major Powell questioned.

"Oh, not me," Emma answered. "I think it's time for the little ones to go to bed."

Willard and Belle were already asleep, curled up beside each other on the blanket. Amasa helped Emma take them all off to bed in the dugout cabin.

John spoke up as he watched the children go off to sleep, "I played a fair amount of cards in my younger days, and lost a fair amount of money on it too."

The other men laughed.

"No money tonight then, just a friendly hand or two," Jack said.

Fred pulled out a deck of cards and began to deal among the men and the older boys. Mrs. Thompson engaged Rachel in some chatter once again about what it was like to live out here, virtually alone. She was truly intrigued by the wildness of this place.

After a while, yawns began to cross almost everyone's face and the breeze grew a little cooler.

Major Powell spoke up after losing another hand, "Well, if we want to ship out in the morning, we best get to sleep soon."

Fred and Jack nodded in agreement. The other men grumbled they guessed so too. The Major and his men thanked Rachel for an excellent meal, then headed off toward their camp. It was a wet walk across the Pahreah in the dark. The moon gave enough light that they could make out vague shadows of the ground on which they were stepping. Professor Thompson and Demotte stepped through the muddy stream first, then assisted Mrs. Thompson. Only the Major had enough forethought to remove his shoes and tramp through the mud barefooted. They all had a good laugh about it before they laid down for the night.

Back at the ranch, John was sitting at the table in the main cabin while Rachel started washing the plates in a bucket of suds.

"I got news from Jacob," he said.

"and..." Rachel looked up from her work.

"He gave me a letter," John said as he pulled the envelope from his pocket and opened it.

Rachel watched him read it and waited patiently to hear what it said.

He smiled and looked into her eyes, "It says that if I continue to be faithful and true to the Mission then I will be protected from my enemies and warned of any danger well before it comes."

"Blessings from the Lord," she said as she picked up another dish to dunk in the sud-filled bucket.

John watched her for a moment. Her wrinkled hands scrubbed the plates just as they had before they knew any lines, when they lived in fairer places. She was a strong, faithful woman to have come this far with him. Even after he was accused of orchestrating the massacre, she had stood by him. Followed him from their two story brick house in Salt Lake City, to a smaller, less welcoming place in Skutumpah. She even followed him here. And now he was going to ask her to start over again. To go to the pools with some of the children and build another house and raise another garden. This late in the season it would be rough, but she was a strong woman. It showed in every line of her face. In her thin, resolute mouth, her sharp nose, her small fierce eyes. She could do this.

“Rachel,” he said to get her attention.

She looked up again and saw a seriousness in his face. A question lingered there and of course her answer would be yes. Yes to anything this man would ask of her.

“The letter says there will be warning, but it may not always be safe to be here. At the Dell.”

Her mind rushed. He couldn't be asking that they all leave. That just wouldn't make sense. He wasn't a man to hide from his destiny. He accepted whatever lay in store for him. He wouldn't turn his back.

He interrupted her thoughts, “I was thinking...maybe you and some of the children would be better off at the pools. Then I would have another place to live if certain men came looking for me here.”

“I see,” was her only reply. It hadn't occurred to her yet that he might separate the family. His Mission was to bring two wives to settle here. She was getting very fond of having Emma around to share the chores and the children. Even more it was like having a sister again.

In this place most of all, she missed Aggatha, and Emma had been a great comfort as only a sister can.

“I thought if the Major and his people are leaving tomorrow, then the next day we could load up a wagon and start to get you set up. The sooner the better, I figure. We need to get some crops planted for you up at the pools, and get a house built.”

She sighed. He had already planned it. She would be leaving in less than two days. Home was going to be somewhere else again.

“I’ll start preparing in the morning then,” she said not looking up from the dish in her hand.

The next morning, the entire ranch and guests were up and about early. Major Powell’s men were packing their provisions tightly away in the boats. James was sitting at the cabin talking with Professor Demotte and Mrs. Thompson. He had decided that because of his ill health, it would be best if he returned to Salt Lake City with them. He left a good deal of camera equipment with Jack. He knew photography well enough by now that he would suffice as photographer for the rest of the journey. Major Powell was at the table trying to finish off some paperwork he wanted to have done before their trek down the river. There was a certain chance that none of them would return, and he wanted to have his affairs in order. James offered to help him with it. The Major wrote slowly with his left hand, so he accepted the help, wanting to get it done and get on his way.

Fred arrived at the cabin door in the early afternoon to say they’d packed all the provisions away and the boats were ready. The Major said farewell to Emma and Rachel, then followed Fred back down to the river just to check things over one last time. By the time they

were truly ready to head off, most everyone had gathered by the riverside to wish them luck and see them go. Emma had stayed behind in the cabin to look after the children.

The Major reached his hand out to shake John's, "We are indebted to your hospitality."

"Not at all," said John taking his hand.

"I'd like to put this place on the map with the name you've given. Lonely Dell," said Major Powell with a smile looking over the land before him.

Lee was surprised and honored. "I would be pleased."

The rest of the men were in their boats and the Major turned to join them. They all waved goodbye and yelled many thanks to their hosts. Those on the shore waved and yelled good luck and Godspeed. And with that they were off. They wouldn't go far this evening. Maybe a mile or two, but they were back on the river where they wanted to be, where they had waited all summer to be.

Some of the children lingered to watch the party disappear around the bend and wonder what it must be like to explore great unknown places. When they were satisfied that they couldn't see the boats anymore, they made their way back up to the cabin where the other visitors were preparing their wagon to leave. Professor DeMotte was checking the harnesses to make sure the horses were secure. James was leaning against the cabin just outside the door. He looked like he could barely stand on his own. Mrs. Thompson's shrill voice, thanking Rachel and Emma profusely for their hospitality could be heard coming from inside the cabin. Emma emerged from the cabin.

"Are you sure you're alright for the trip," she asked of James.

"I will be fine, Mrs. Lee. Thank you. I think maybe I've had a little too much excitement on the trip." He smiled meagerly.

“All’s ready,” called Professor DeMotte as he took a last look over the provisions left in the wagon.

“It’s a pity we have to leave so soon,” said Mrs. Thompson as she followed Rachel out of the cabin.

“Yes, it has been nice to have you here,” agreed Rachel without much enthusiasm. She was anxious for the guests to be on their way. She had preparations of her own to make.

James shook John’s hand and then climbed into the back of the wagon. He thought it would be nice to let Mrs. Thompson have a seat, and he also thought he could get more rest reclining in the back of the wagon. Professor DeMotte helped Mrs. Thompson onto her seat and tipped his hat to everyone as he climbed into the drivers seat. Lee’s family waved from the side of the cabin and their guests waived over their shoulders as the wagon passed on to the west.

It was late afternoon, but with the few more hours of daylight left, John decided to take a look at the irrigation ditch and see how much work it would need. Most of the boys went off with him or down to the river to play like they were great explorers and scientists. Billy kept making Ike pretend to help him take pictures trying to mimic when he had seen Jack helping James take a photograph earlier. Emma sent Amarah and Amasa to lay the young children down for a nap. They were probably tired after all the excitement and she wanted to speak with Rachel. The two went into the cabin to get out of the afternoon sun and sat down at the table. Emma idly chopped a few radishes just to keep her hands busy.

“Why are you leaving tomorrow,” she asked.

“John said it would be best to start the other ranch as soon as we can. We need to get something planted so it will be ready to harvest before the first frost comes,” Rachel said matter-of-factly.

Emma stopped chopping for a minute and looked at Rachel's face. Her sharp features were crossed with lines of age. Her eyes were weariness overlaid by strength. Emma felt a little pity that Rachel was chosen to set up the new ranch. She also felt sorrow to see her friend go. They would see each other much less living twenty miles apart. It would be a good days ride by horse back between them and even farther with a wagon.

"I'm sorry to see you go," Emma finally said. "I feel selfish for wishing you could stay. I see that John is right and we should follow his decision."

"I feel the same," said Rachel as she began to chop the radishes too.

In the morning, Sammy and Ezra packed the wagon with the provisions as John directed them. Emma and Rachel had divided up the flour and some of the vegetables. Amarah, Sammy, and Ezra were to accompany Rachel to the new ranch. Ralph would stay behind today to help John patch up the irrigation ditch and then they would follow up the next day. Emma stood, swaying Francis in her arms, to the north side of the cabin. The smaller children played at her feet. John helped Rachel into the wagon seat, then kissed her hand and walked back toward the cabin. Sammy sat beside her. Ezra and Amarah were perched in the back among the flour and vegetables and tools. Emma felt a tear in her eye, and fought it back. She raised a hand to wave goodbye, and Rachel snapped the reins to start the horses.

The sun was fully over the eastern cliffs, and lighted the entire canyon valley. The green of summer shown brightly along the Pahreah banks in cottonwoods and river weeds. Rachel's wagon rode off with a short shadow in the near midday sun. The children waved to their family, but Rachel's eyes were straight ahead.