

Chapter Six

In her first sixteen years of life Roselyn Stalworth lived with her Aunt Beatrice, on her father's side. A pioneering woman of stubborn stock, Auntie Bea had not required maintenance from any man, even the one brave enough to have offered his services. Beatrice bore the guilt of the Puritan. Life was bleak but bearable on Columbia's shores downriver from Astoria. The physical needs of food, clothing and shelter were met, and Aunt Beatrice's training provided Roselyn with the skills of self-sufficiency. She could catch, gut and cook the river's fish, thread and wield a needle and keep the cottage mostly watertight against Oregon's rain and mist. Her exposure to the world outside home was kept to Sunday visits to the roughhewn chapel, for prayer and bible study. Her playmates were restricted to those of the four-legged variety.

The harsh life and miserable weather along the Columbia took its toll on human beings, regardless of piety. God took Aunt Beatrice home at an age some would call middle. After seeing Aunt Bea's burial blessed as Christian and rebuffing attempts of adoption by well-meaning town ladies, Roselyn survived on her own for nine months. During that time she ventured from the confines of home and found the company of others equal in years but advanced in experience. Tolerating the banter of girls, she found the teasing by boys a mystery best solved using fists.

William Stalworth at last brought his sailing ship *Rosalie* home from voyages to the Arctic in search of fur and ivory as livelihood. Finding his daughter alone, but safe, he set about correcting the errors of separation. Determining, upon examination, her education to be short of the arts and sciences but heavy on the liturgical, he made the only decision open to him. He took her aboard *Rosalie* for a run down the coast to Yerba Buena, where his fur trade found wider markets with far eastern clients. There he would find Roselyn placement in any institution that offered liberal education, balanced exposure to spirituality and boarding, as haven for his daughter during his absence on long voyages hunting fur bearing creatures.

The journey south was enjoyed without sea sickness or complaint. Roselyn was thrilled by wave and breaking sea and delighted in the frolic of porpoise and the gracefulness of albatross. Entering the giant bay beyond the Golden Gate was exciting, but she found Yerba Buena itself not much greater in size and activity than Astoria, with the familiar collection of buildings and signage. Astoria, the town, outshined Yerba Buena, the village. Except for the hills! These rose from bay's waters in golden splendor, dotted with the olive puffs of native oak. Astoria's mountainous barriers were obscured by thick curtains of fir, hemlock and cedar. Familiarity with the green horizons that surrounded her for a lifetime had dulled their beauty.

Rosalie required hull maintenance. Having deposited Roselyn in the mission school, Captain Stalworth had the ship towed by a puffing steam tug to south of Rincon Point. There rudimentary shipyards had appeared in response to the increased maritime traffic, suffered with the influx of gold seekers. The trickle of immigrants threatened to become a rush, the village of Yerba Buena a full-grown town.

Trenches were dug and flooded. Wood and iron gates stood on tracks extending past the open end. His ship was hauled in by shore line and floated over landing blocks. When the gates closed, the water was emptied by use of pumps, powered by teams of muscular shipwright apprentices. Scaffolding, assembled from rough cut lumber with no regard for aesthetic, reached the ship's hull for scraping and caulking.

Three days after enrolling Roselyn in the mission school, she was returned to the ship in custody of a garbed Padre.

"*Senor* Stalworth, I am returning to you your daughter, the coin you gave for tuition and board and the blessings of the Prince of Peace upon you," spoke the clergyman in heavily accented but academically correct English.

"There was a problem I take it?" asked Stalworth.

"Fisticuffs, *Senor*! On more than one occasion a pupil suffered from your daughter's wrath. There has been little peace since her arrival."

"I'm sorry to hear that. You should enroll stronger girls."

"Girls? Girls, *Senor*? It was not our young ladies your daughter bested, but boys! We keep the sexes separated except at meal times and prayer. When together, your daughter took exception to their jests and teasing. Three boys

have suffered bloody noses. One, an acolyte, was assaulted during prayer. Also, our Prior has a blackened eye, suffered while stopping a fight!"

"I see. I'm guessing the lesson of turning the other cheek would not solve the problem. Well, thank you Padre. I apologize for the troubles my daughter has caused you. Please accept this as a donation to your order," said Stalworth, handing a few gold coins to the Friar. "Tell the Prior to try a beef steak on that eye," he said with a barely concealed grin.

"Good day to you, *Senior*." The Monk glared at Roselyn who glared back. The Friar hiked his robes to prevent trip while descending the planks leading ashore. Precaution proved wise but did little to preserve the righteous dignity of his exit. Stalworth and Roselyn watched as he waddled through the mud to reach firmer ground. As he disappeared over the crest of the hill, father and daughter turned to one another, their eyes meeting without flinch.

Captain Stalworth searched for an opening. "A bit long in the tooth to be fighting with boys, aren't you?"

Roselyn answered directly. "I'd say I'm sorry, but those boys were mean and nasty, and the Padres ignored any complaint from a girl."

Captain Stalworth scratched his head and beard. "Heard Mormons were thick as walrus here 'bouts. Maybe they've a school. Stubborn bunch them Mormons."

"Those Mormons and I don't need any damned school."

"Don't swear, it ain't lady like."

"Aunt Bea already taught me all they was teaching at that barnyard of a mission."

"Were teaching, and no, she didn't."

"I don't want to go to a school be it Mormon, Baptist or 'Prespertarian."

"Well then girl, what does 'ya want?"

"I want to sail with you. Go somewhere, see something."

"For Christ's sake, I can't bring you aboard a ship full of sailors 'n hunters."

"Why, 'a'feared for their safety?"

Rosalie sailed from Yerba Buena with a near water tight hull, an excited teen aged girl and a chagrined captain.

