

CHAPTER 1

Two Paso's

“ I gotta have a woman!” sharply said the man. “ Whatta I look like Mister? Didn’t you just pay two Paso’s to find out!” asked the Cantina girl Patty. The man was Johnny Crawford, a rough looking thirty year old ranch hand. Johnny replied, “ Yeah, ain’t no doubt about that but I need a real woman. You know a lady like one, I can take home with me. I’ve got two little girls that need tending and they need a Mother type. Gotta Mex woman staying with’em now, while I’m in town, but I need somebody there all the time. Reckon I’ll have to marry some woman. Kinda hate to do that, but Florence ran out on me. Hooked up with a slick talkin gambler. Left the country. Couldn’t stand me any longer, I reckon. I cain’t stay at home all the time. Gotta get a woman.”Patty said, “Mister . you’re a real case, you are. Do you think some woman is just gonna jump at the chance to marry you. You’re ugly, don’t look like you’ve got two dollars to your name and stuck with a couple of kids. You sure ain’t no prize. What else is there? You gotta home somewhere?”

Johnny said, “ Yeah gotta small ranch just outside of Sierra Vista across the Border. What’s a white girl like you doin here in Nogales. I expected a Mexican girl. Big surprise when I saw you here.” Patty replied, “ Like you I’ve got problems, but they’re a hell of a lot worse than yours. I’d love to go back to the states. Love to have a descent job too , but ain’t gonna happen. A single girl’s gotta make a living and if I wanted to eat , I had to sell myself. Everyone looks down on girls like me, but every one of us is often a tragic story and once you’re in my class, there’s just no gittin out. Nobody wants a Saloon girl. You say , you’ve got a Ranch in Sierra Vista. Man that’s just across the Border. I wish things were different , I’d take a look in your direction. By the way , names Patty, my working name.”

Johnny said , “ Patty , I’m Johnny Crawford. Some folks have called me Crawfish, but only once. You say you cain’t cross the Border. Why not? Seems to me you’re a good looker. Outta be a job for you in any town around.” Patty said , “ Forget it Mister , I talk too much. I better git back to the Cantina. One of the other girls might need the cabin.” Craw said, “ Ok

Patty, I'll walk back with you. I could use another drink anyway. Maybe I ought to git a bottle. You're quite a surprise to me and it's a long time since I talked with a white girl. Don't have nothing against Mexican girls. They're some of the most beautiful around here, but I have a hard time with Mex lingo. Do you reckon the owner would mind if I just sat and talked to you this evening." Patty replied, " Mister Craw, for a couple more Paso's you can talk all night. You're the first customer I've had this week." Craw said, " Patty you're pretty plain spoken ain't you. Sorta tell it the way it is. I like that. Tell me about this problem you've got in Arizona. I ain't nothing special but you've got me interested in you. Guess I'm a patsy, but maybe I can help."

Pat said, " Ok, lets have a drink first and I'll put my story on you. Probably would help if I was drunk. I think I drink too much anyway." After two drinks, Patty was getting a little more vocal and said, " Craw , I'll call you a liar if you ever say anything about what I'm gonna tell you. Did you ever hear of Raymond Byrd, the railroad guy outta Santa Fe and Harold Sawyer the railroad president?" Craw said , " Yeah, some fancy big men with the railroad. His wife murdered them . Lotta Federal Marshals came out for that one. Some folks still talk about it. His wife Elizabeth, disappeared. Never been seen again. I think there's a five hundred dollar reward out for her."

Pat said , " Guess I'm crazy for tellin you this Craw. You'll think I'm lying. I was living with my Dad just west of Santa Fe. Grew up there on our Ranch. I was seventeen when I first met Ray. He was so handsome and always wore store bought suits. He had made himself known to my Dad because he wanted to buy a right of way across our Ranch. Dad refused every offer. It was crazy but I found that the Tracks would go through our Ranch graveyard where Momma and my uncle were buried. Dad refused to have the remains dug up and moved"

" . Ray began courting me at that time and I was stricken with adoration for the man. I married him at eighteen, a dumb country girl that was too pretty for her own good. We had a wonderful wedding and I was so happy. We had only been married a few months when Ray began drinking heavy. There was some problem with his job. Something wasn't going right. About that time my Dad was shot and killed. The marshal determined it was a stray bullet that hit him in the head."

“ Ray had encouraged me to drink a little wine and many evenings we dined with his boss Harold Sawyer. The ranch now belonged to me and Ray. He encouraged me to sign a paper which would ok the right of way, but go north of where Mom and now Dad were buried. The ownership registration was still in Daddy’s name. I didn’t know about legal stuff. My girl friend Helen in Santa Fe was gonna help me change the title but everything happened so fast, I didn’t have the time. Later when I saw this move north wasn’t so, he swore that I had okayed moving the remains.”

“ I was upset and appealed to Sawyer at his office to not bother the graves . He tried to assault me there in his office. I tried to tell Ray but he blew me off saying I was imagining things. Les than a week later Ray and Sawyer spiked my drink and I wound up in Sawyer’s bed the next morning. Horrified, I couldn’t believe it. Ray swore that I did it on my own and he wanted a divorce and would take the ranch. I pleaded with him but knew that Sawyers wanted me and they had set it all up. I was so depressed, I wanted to kill myself. I grew tired of fighting with Ray and decided to keep my mouth shut. I tried to figure a way to keep my Ranch.”

“ Not being too much up on legal things, I went looking for help. The Marshal thought I was crazy. He didn’t believe me at all . I didn’t know what to do. Many nights I cried myself to sleep. My whole world was lost. On one occasion Ray and Sawyer were drinking heavily and they had no idea that I overheard them talking and learned the most terrible thing in my life. Daddy had been killed deliberately, murdered; and Ray had planned this all along . Marry the girl , kill her dad , take over the ranch and get rid of the girl. The Railroad would then go through as planned.”

Craw said, “ Oh My God! How could anyone do such a thing. They both deserved to be hung .” Patty said, “ Hanging would have been too good for them. I was now afraid for my life. Getting rid of me was all they needed. I began to hide things because I had to get away with what I could. All of my Dad’s papers are still in my bags in my room. Once again Sawyer assaulted me at our home and I screamed for Ray but he was outside and ignored me. Sawyer had his way. I didn’t have the strength to get away from him and he hit me with his fists until I didn’t resist. Bruised and battered, I planned on getting away that night. They both passed out drinking and as I filled a bag

with clothes and food.”

“ I thought about killing them , but I didn’t have the nerve. I had my horse saddled and the bags packed as I rode into Santa Fe. I went to see Helen , told her of my fight with Sawyer while Ray ignored it . The next day , I found shocking news. My house had burned to the ground killing Ray and Harold. Since there was no sign of my body , I was charged with their murders. That day I said goodbye to Helen, and rode to the Border. The Marshal said that he believed that I had deliberately set fire to the house before leaving. I knew no one would believe me and later I remembered moving the kitchen lamp as I took food off the food cabinet shelves. Probably set it close to the kitchen window curtains. Maybe I did kill them . I don’t regret it, but everything I had is gone now.”

“ I had no money and finally sold my horse for food. I had no way to earn money in Mexico. I was a Gringo and alone. A target for every man in town. I couldn’t speak Spanish and gave men the wrong impression. Too many times I was a rape victim. That was over a year ago when I met Rosa and was offered this job as a Saloon Cantina girl. A puta a Mexican prostitute. So here I am Craw winding down my life with nothing ahead for me.” Craw said, **“ You are Elizabeth Collins then, the wife of Ray Byrd and the murderer they’re all looking for?”** Patty said, **“ Yeah that’s me . You wouldn’t recognize me now, I’ve change a lot in these last two years.”** Craw asked, **‘What name are you using now?’** she replied, **“Just Patty, Cantina girl Patty Gringo.”** Craw said, **“ Patty ,how would you like to change that name to Patty Crawford? I think you’re just what I need to help raise my girls.”**

Patty exclaimed , “ Damn you Mister! I don’t need joking. I’m leaving!” As she stood up Craw said forcefully, **“Sit down girl! I wasn’t joking. I’ll do anything for my little girls and as my wife no one will hook you to, Raymond’s wife. I think the way you were raised is just what I need for them. Where can we get married?”** Patty sat in shock! Surely he would burst out laughing at any minute. When he sat there waiting for an answer, she finally realized that he was serious. He really wanted to marry her. She burst out laughing saying, **“ I don’t believe this! You want me for your wife after what I’ve been doing . Mister you’re crazy.”**Craw said , **“Maybe so, but I know a lot of Squaw men that took Indian girls for wives that had been sold many times for whiskey.**

They made good honest wives. No, let's find a Padre and get to it. I've gotta get back to the Ranch."

Patty was in a daze. It had to be a dream or maybe too much Mascal cactus whiskey. The chapel was closed but the Padre performed a quick service for them and the next morning , they went looking for a horse or mule she could ride. Craw said, ' You're just skin and bones Patty, but my horse won't carry double." Patty said , "Thanks for the compliment. I'll try to fatten up for you." Craw laughed; it was his first since they met, she liked the sound. Riding horses were expensive, but they found a young Mustang in a group of burros. The Mexican owner wanted to get rid of him. The horse had never been ridden. Craw said , " Still pretty young, but for two Paso's he'll do just fine. I'll get you a saddle." Patty said, "I can't ride him. He ain't been broke to ride. And all I've got is a dress to wear."Craw said, "We'll get you some pants and a shirt. Probably need a hat too. Craw was a whirlwind getting things together, but all packed to go . He had put everything of hers in saddle bags, but how was she going to ride a bucking horse? These were her thoughts, but Craw had a plan. She should have known. He ponyed the Mustang's head right up to his leg and after a few jumps and pull backs , he said, "Ok Patty get on him." Craw held him very close as she mounted and once again he jumped and thrashed around , but finally moved out with his horse. Patty sat half scared and clung to the saddle horn. Craw's big horse easily took all the steam out of the mustang.

Three miles down the trail ol' Mustang led along pretty calm with only an occasional fit of fighting. Patty was a good rider, having been raised on a ranch, but she'd never seen a horse mastered this way . She had no fear of being bucked off, ponyed; as her horse was. She didn't know what she had married, but he treated her descent. He said, " Don't go to sleep on that little horse or you'll be on the ground. He ain't no where near broke, but this way you've got a ride and I think he'll make you a good horse. Ain't much for looks, but looks don't make the horse. Kinda like people." Patty had to agree with that, " Craw was mud fence ugly but made a good man, so far anyway."

Half way back to his Ranch, they camped overnight. Both had bedrolls. Patty wondered if it was going to be a real marriage and asked , " Do we share your bed roll Craw or do I use my own." Claw said , "Use your own

,you'll sleep better. We've got a good ride ahead of us." Patty was glad. This gave her time to lay awake thinking of her rescue from the Saloon work. She hoped and prayed that Craw wasn't just bringing her back to collect the reward. Finally drifting off as she resigned herself to what ever lay ahead. She would face whatever it was.

The following morning Craw quickly got things in order and with a chew of jerky for breakfast, he said , " Get aboard Patty, how's your butt doing? I know you ain't rode lately. You gonna be Ok?" Patty replied, "Craw you're mighty plain spoken yourself ain't ya. A little sore, but I can take a lot more if it gets me outta a saloon. What's your girls names anyway. You said they were little." Craw replied, "Beve and Betsy, They're twins, four years old. Devils to watch, they're into every damn thing and talk like a mule skinner. I don't know where they picked up their way of takin. I Damn sure didn't learn the little Bastards that stuff." Patty said, "I'll just bet they must have learned it from your horse maybe. You sure don't hold off around me, and I can imagine what you might say if you were angry." Craw said, " They need a woman to see to'em. They're girls and I don't know how to handle'em. Now that'll be your job. I'm sure glad you married me Patty, now maybe I can get some work done." Patty said , " It's not exactly what a girl expects from marriage, but with you Craw, I'll take it . Thank you for getting me a new start." She wasn't sure he heard her. Didn't act like it.

That evening Patty met the two girls and fell in love with them. She was thinking, " It's gonna be a real pleasure taking care of them. Yes they were very plain spoken and sounded just like Craw. Maybe she could clean up their language a little." Patty was really shocked when little Beve asked Craw, " What's her name Pa? Do we just call her Bitch like the other one?" Craw replied a little concerned with her words, " Beve hon her name is Patty. Patty Crawford and that's what you'll call her or else." Betsy said, " I like her name Pa and she's pretty. I'm glad Bitch is gone. Never did like her." Craw looked at Patty saying, " We'll talk later, Ok?"

That evening Patty enjoyed getting supper together with the Mexican lady Maria that had been staying there with the kids while Craw was gone. Maria left after supper. She lived a little better than a mile down the road. Both girls gave her hugs as she left. They plainly liked her and she them.

Bedtime for the kids and they both went up a ladder to the loft. Patty was surprised and asked Craw about them maybe falling. He said, "Watch those two squirrels. If they did fall they'd probably get up and try it again. It's only when girls or boys get older that they try stupid things and get hurt, they'll be ok. Ben sleepin up there for almost a year now. Nice and warm for them up there when it gets cold around here.

Patty asked, " Where do I sleep Craw?" He said , "That's our bed in the back room. We'll sleep there. Better get used to me Patty. We're married you know." Patty said, " I'm getting there Craw, just give me a little time. I'm still having trouble believing it all." Craw said , " The girls like you. I guess I picked a good one this time. Brought home a woman from town to live with me. Worthless Bitch, lazy and dirty. That might be where the girls picked up the name." Patty said , "I'm sure they didn't hear it from you, do you think. ?" Craw's answer was a long snore.

Two weeks had gone by and Patty was happier than she could remember . Craw was out working his animals and large garden every day. Coming home late one night after pulling a heifer from a bog hole, he found Patty sitting by the supper table. His meal was there waiting for him, the kids were in bed and she was crying. Her face was wet with tears and he couldn't get an answer outta her as to what was wrong. Finally she muttered, "Nothings wrong Craw, I'm just so happy now and its breaking my heart to think of my Dad's murder and all that's happened to me. Then here you come with your two Peso's and make me so happy . I can never ever repay you and it's a joy to care for your two little angels. Craw, I guess I'm truly in love for the first time in my life. I'm sorry, I was going through Dad's things and it just breaks my heart knowing he was murdered. I guess I got on a crying jag and couldn't stop."

Craw said , " Gal, you scared me! Thought maybe you were hurt. I've gotta tell you, I never thought it would be this good for us . I was hopeful we could live together, but never figured on it being a real marriage. I'm glad I was wrong. You've become very important to me and I know you already feel the same about me. My little girls love you and it's just amazing to me that you went through all this terrible time and still kept your mind. You're a very strong woman and I cain't say I could do it myself. It's all behind us now and

we can make a life together.” Patty said, “ I’m not sure it’s all behind Craw, I’ve got Daddy’s papers here . The ranch is still in his name and if I could register it in my name as his daughter, I would own the Ranch.” Craw was surprised and asked for the papers. He wanted to see if they were the originals. Then he said, “yeah. They’re in order and your Father must have had some schooling. That’s beautiful hand writing where he signed his name.”

Patty spoke up saying, “ Craw that’s my writing Daddy couldn’t sign his name and when he bought the ranch . I signed for him . He always scrawled a “C” for his mark and he was ashamed of not writing. I signed everything for him. Yes, I went to school and I can read and write. I did all of his writing for credit and everything.” Craw said, “ Too bad you can’t take the ranch. If you don’t show to pay taxes, it goes to the Territory after five years. Cain’t have you showing up. I lose a wife and that’s not gonna happen. Sure is a nice Ranch though, it’s in a real great location. Not like this hard scrabble Homestead I’ve got here. We’ll just have to pass and let the territory have it. I’ll bet the railroad is pushing every official to let them have that right of way.”

Patty was having a wonderful time with the twins. Craw had trained her Mustang and she rode often helping him with their small herd. The Twins always had to go along if it was any distance from their cabin. Craw was always worried about Rattlesnakes the girls might come upon playing around near where they were branding or doctoring cows. Being four years old with the Devil in their eyes, he was always worried with them walking everywhere and traded a baby calf for two Jackasses. Patty insisted he should call them burro’s. Craw said, “ Yeah, I know , some folks call them burros, but they’re Jackasses.” Patty just shook her head. Both girls had been riding with her everywhere and on some occasions , she had led the Mustang while they rode. The burro’s were perfect for the two girls because a burro would kill a rattlesnake. This gave Craw and Patty a little ease and also permitted a better working arrangement. Craw said, “ We can get more work done without keeping a constant eye on the girls and their jackasses.”

Things were moving along towards winter and gathering fire wood became a problem . There just wasn’t that much in the way of trees on his

homestead. Patty mentioned there was a lot of Red Oak on her Dad's Ranch, but Craw killed that idea right away . Too far to travel to get to Santa Fe, that would be crazy . The hills northeast would be a place to get a wagon load but no team to pull it. He had a big wagon that had been abandoned a few years back. He had worked it over, but without a team, it had set in his shed for two years collecting Spiders. Patty said, " Craw , what do you know about Oxen . We've got twenty head of steers you're gonna sell. Cain't you use some of them . We had a pair on the ranch . They would pull anything. Craw jumped saying , " I'll be damned! Pat you're right. Hadn't never thought of that. We could easy build a yoke and have them biggest ones pullin pretty quick. Them steers would be worth just as much after we get winter wood. They'll lose a little finish but they sell by the head anyway. Hot Damn! , girl you do come up with some good ideas." Patty said , " Craw I've been able to do lots of things since you picked me up and I love you more every day. There is one thing though, I'm still working on and that's the twins language . You ain't helping any." Craw went off muttering , " I'll be damn!" he didn't seem to hear her.

Everything stopped as they trained a bunch of steers to work a yoke. Wasn't that difficult to get them to pull, but tame they were not. Hitching up was dangerous anywhere near the back feet. Many times Craw sidelined one steer to hook the yoke, but finally getting underway. He planned two weeks away and had Jose, Maria's husband; keep an eye on his cabin while they were gone . The twins were excited and Patty enjoyed the fun. Craw didn't say anything but Patty heard him laughing as he used a light touch with the whip to get guidance . Hopefully this was going to be a fun trip for everyone. It became more than Patty hoped for. It was a big change from the Ranch work and after one week of cutting down trees , they had a full load. Craw had thought about splittin up everything , but decided to do that at home.

Getting back was not easy. Those steers were all pulling themselves hard to keep the heavy wagon going. It was a four up and Craw wished he'd made it six. He made short hauls and it took four days getting home. He said to Patty, " Gal we're not gonna sell any of our heavier steers, After the way we were able to make teams, we'er gonna start selling Oxen. I've been rackin my head to make some money for winter groceries and Oxen will do it. I'll keep two of the best and use them to train more." Patty was thrilled that

Craw had come up with that idea. It had been hard work , but satisfying getting a team together.

This plan when put into use became a challenge for them and the twins began to help out as each steer had to be tied up full time and hand fed. The two girls carried water and hay. Craw began looking for bulls to castrate and steers he could trade for to make teams . They were pretty rough and wild to begin , but daily work soon tamed them into submission where they could be yoked for work. Craw found there was no competition in the whole County and soon had a good winter business going. Oxen were cheaper than horses or mules and could always be butchered. When word got around, he found a lot of customers, soon he was trading his calf crop and pregnant cows for steers and bulls.

Patty was worried about that , but Craw said, “We’re getting out of the cow business and use what range feed I have for steers. A calf crop takes a couple of years to make money. Oxen steers , we can sell at auction any time and they bring four times the price of a butcher steer. Gal it was like a moment of fate when I met you, I don’t care two wits about what you were working as and what about the man that’s looking for a little woman pleasure. Ain’t he just as bad as the girl. Maybe he ain’t sellin, but he’s damn sure buyin. Luckiest day in my life when I decided to make a little two Paso trip to Nogales. Things in my life took a great change and if love is what we have for each other, it’s the first time in my life that I felt it.” Patty hugged him and said , “I love my ugly ol’husband .I can never thank you for bringing me out of that awful life. Someday maybe I can go back to Santa Fe and visit the grave sites of Mom and Dad.”

Craw said, “ I wonder what ever happened to your Ranch. I don’t think the Railroad would take a chance on laying track through your Ranch without the owner’s permission. It’s still in your Dad’s name you said, and it’s never been in your name. Ok that means you could register it, if you could prove you’re his daughter, but that would also get you arrested for murder. I know you’re innocent, but how are you gonna prove it. You have all the documents , but that won’t help you. Having them might be held against you and help get a conviction. No Patty , we could make a trip to Santa Fe some day and go visit the graves. I’m sure they’re still there. There’s gotta be a way to get

you that Ranch. Let me think about it.” Patty said, “ Craw, I don’t need the Ranch. I wouldn’t trade you and the kids for two like it and I won’t give you up to try and prove my innocence.”

Later that evening Craw said, “ Patty I’ve got a crazy idea that just might work without you being involved. Gimme those dates when your Dad died and when your home burned down. Since you signed your Dad’s name on all of the documents and it’s only been three years we’re gonna write up a Bill of Sale to me from your Dad and date it before he was murdered. I’ll take it and all the documents with me and pay the back taxes The new owners will be Pat and John Crawford. That makes us the owners and you get the ranch back. Elizabeth Collins disappeared years ago and married some guy in Mexico. That’s what I heard.” Patty looked at Craw in amazement. She couldn’t believe it, but then became excited. Yes she would sign her Daddy’s name to anything Craw wanted. Was it really gonna be that easy, or would they both get in trouble.

Seeing her doubt, Craw said, “ Cain’t get us in any trouble. All we wanna do is register the sale and transfer title. No one can prove I didn’t buy the ranch, I had to leave New Mexico to take over a ranch in Arizona , but now I’m back and want things cleared up. I think your Dad was murdered for the money I paid for the Ranch and the murder was committed by your husband Raymond Byrd. That will get folks talking and justify your killing him. This will blow over any search for you. It’s all a lie ,maybe, but so is that murder charge against you. Little Gal, you have suffered enough, it’s time for a little sunshine in your life. Beginning tomorrow we’re going to start making plans for moving to Santa Fe and rebuilding your home. Las Cruces has a land office and I’ll ride over there to register the title. Once that is done we’ll wait for the title to clear and start packing our big wagon. It’ll take a good six weeks to make Santa Fe. We won’t have any trouble getting a six up of oxen to make the trip.

A few weeks later Craw loaded the Mustang as a pack horse and had everything together for his trip. Patty was going to have to make it on her own, but she had a pistol and a rifle. Craw had made certain she knew how and was willing to use them. Patty hugged him as he was getting ready to leave and said, “Craw, you’re a wonderful man and I couldn’t love you more.

Promise me you'll cuss out your horse every morning during your trip so you'll be cussed out when you return. Maybe I can clean up Beve and Betsy's language a little." Craw said, " Pat I know what you're asking and I'll damn sure try. This owl headed son of a bitch I'm riding needs a good cussin every day." Patty was shaking her head in resignation as she watched him ride out of sight. The tender tears she wiped from her face were shed in her love for her man and said a silent prayer for his safe return. She was now a full world away from the girl eating her heart out in desperation, depression and resignation in Mexico. Life had to go on and she grabbed a basket calling the kids to help her gather eggs. They never missed any.

Three days went by without anything unusual and Patty saw to the feeding and care of four big steers they were going to train for Oxen. Each day she worked with them, they became more tame and began to look forward to her brushing and feeding. This was the first phase of treatment to settle the animals and make them accept close human contact. Craw was a lot rougher than she and the steer progress shown. Since Patty had no horse, she rode one of the burros, delivering eggs to Jose and Maria. The twins rode together on the other burro or Jackass as Craw called them.

Returning one day at noon from a trip she was shocked to see her four steers missing ! Racing to the corral she could easily see they had not broken loose. Someone had stolen the steers while she was gone! Quickly going to the cabin, she grabbed her rifle and told the twins to follow her . Burro's will trot a little if you use a light switch on them and Patty could easily follow the tracks as the thieves cut across country. The thieves on the other hand were having a major problem dragging the steers along. They resisted the men every foot of the way. Topping a hill Patty could see the thieves out a few hundred yards fighting with her steers. The men were no match for the balky steers and struggling with them to go up a small hill. Patty rode around to the far side of the hill and came to the top looking down at the thieves. She stepped off her burro and took aim with her rifle. Craw had warned her about shooting downhill and she put three bullets in the ground closer to the Thieves than she intended. Both men stopped dead in their tracks, dropping the lead ropes and jammed their hands in the air yelling "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! We give up!"

Patty had the twins hold the burro's as she went down the hill. All four steers began grazing . Patty yelled , “ Damn you thieves! Yeah, I know both of you. James and Billings, I've seen you both at Auction. Craw will want to deal with you when he gets home. You try stealing from me again and you won't see Craw and I won't bother buryin you. Coyotes are bad around here. They clean up anything dead. You damn thieves get off my Ranch and don't ever come back! Git!” the two men were glad to get away from this mad woman with a rifle and immediately left at a run. Patty laughed, but quit when both girls began yelling in their high pitched voices “ Damn thieves Git! You damn thieves git!” Patty shook her head thinking, “ And I was trying to clean up the girls language. Guess I slipped a little.” She promised herself , she'd do better next time , if there ever was one.

Craw's trip was easy for him. Las Cruces was on the sky line when he came upon a wagon with a broken wheel. It was a four horse team Conestoga like his with a family blocking the trail. The man of the family was trying to prop the wagon up to remove the wheel . His wife and three kids were trying to help, but their efforts were not enough. Craw stepped down and without asking, helped in removing the wheel .He gave his name and the man was Russ Lancaster , his wife May and the three kids. One girl and two boys. Russ said, “ Thanks Crawford, it was just a little too much to lift”. Craw said, “ Russ broken wheels are a common problem with these big wagons. Most folks carry a spare on the left outside to balance the water barrel on the right. I know it don't help any when you don't have a spare. That wheel of yours can be repaired in Las Cruces I'm going there and I can maybe help you rig a pack on one of your horses to get you there and back again. You might also pick up a spare.” Russ couldn't thank him enough and as they rode out with the broken wheel , Craw said, “ Russ I know how it is with women. I'm married myself and I didn't want to tell you this in front of a critical woman, but if you ever have this problem again, prop the axel with rocks then dig a hole to remove the wheel.” Russ exclaimed , “ Well I'll be damned! That easy huh? Learn something new every day. Thanks.”

Craw asked where they were headed and Russ said he was looking for a place near the town of Bisbee. He was a miner and knew of work there. Craw told him of Sierra Vista, a bigger town and it was also heavy into mining. If things didn't work out in Bisbee, come on over to Sierra Vista and

ask for directions to the Crawford Ranch. you can hang out there while you look around. Together they rode into Las Cruces and found a wheelwright at a livery barn. Craw wished Russ luck and went to the Land Office. The Register and Post office were together Craw got out the maps and documents for the Collins Ranch of Santa Fe. The young man looked at Craw and said, “ Collins Ranch of Santa Fe, that name sure is familiar. Seems the Railroad folks were real interested in that Ranch. I moved here a year ago and took over this Office. Came from Santa Fe, got a good promotion. Haven’t heard why they were interested, but it appears all of your papers are in order. Sierra Vista , that’s west a ways isn’t it?” Craw said, “Yeah about four days ride if you ain’t in a hurry. You can send the registered title to me General delivery Sierra Vista. Now what do I owe in back taxes, I know they ain’t been paid for a couple of years. I brought some money along, didn’t know how much I might need.” The registor said, “ Cain’t help you there, you’ll get a bill with the title. Should run about forty or fifty dollars a year. You’ll need a draft to pay the Territory. Unless you can make the Land office in Santa Fe, in person.” Craw thanked him and left looking for Russ to see if he got a new wheel.

Russ was standing outside the livery not looking too happy when Craw rode over there. Russ said “ Didn’t have enough money. Damn skinflint wants twenty dollars for a wheel Cain’t fix mine and I ain’t got twenty dollars on me. I’ve got sixteen. Thought that would be a plenty. No I’m stuck. Gotta ride back and get what little money I’ve got left. Hate to leave the wife and kids there alone overnight.” Craw said , “ Here’s ten , you can pay me back some day. I brought a little extra with me to pay Taxes. Didn’t need it. Take it and get your wheel. I’ll ride back with you.”

It was almost dark when they had the wheel on the wagon and Russ said , “ May’s got supper going Craw. Grab a spot and join us for the night. She makes a great pot of beans.” Craw stayed over. He had no idea that a rough bearded Trail man had been in the Post Office when he registered his Ranch title transfer The man was the outlaw Roy Cross, wanted in New Mexico and Texas for killing a man during a stage robbery. When Craw had mentioned paying his taxes Roy’s head popped up and he took note of every word. Crass followed Craw to the livery and couldn’t get close enough to hear the talk, but he did see the gold eagle that Craw gave Russ. Looked like

Craw was wearing a money belt. Cross should have noted the Forty four pistol Craw was also wearing. He questioned the Wheelwright and found the location of Russ's wagon. He had no idea that Russ and Craw were not traveling together and planned joining them for supper to rob Craw of that money belt.

Supper was almost in full swing when Cross decided to step into the fire light and demand, " Everybody sit! you men get your hands in the air Quick now! You Mister get that money belt off and give it to me. Do it! Get it off." Everyone was shocked including Craw, but he said, "I've gotta stands up. Cain't get the buckle sitting." Cross stood with his repeater pointed at Craw and said, "Ok , but one wrong move and you'll get a forty four bullet in your guts Ok get to it!" Then to everyone's surprise including Cross, Craw stood up with his feet spread a little and said, "Mister, I don't know who the Hell you think you are, but you're about the sorriest excuse for a robber I've ever met. Wait! Before you get yourself killed. That's a Henry repeater .You forgot to eject and reload there's no round in the chamber. Now you hear me you make one move to eject and load , you're a dead man!"

Cross was shocked and his eyes widened. Fear was taking hold . Craw could see he was hesitating and said , "Drop the rifle!"Cross said, " The hell with you and jacked a shell in the rifle as Craw drew and fired . Craw couldn't miss and the outlaw killer died in the hour. Craw said, " I sure hate to kill a man. Russ I'm gonna go get his horse if I can find it. I want you to help me load him on his horse. I'll take him back to the town Marshal You don't need a dead man laying around here all night." Russ helped him and said, " Mister I sure wish I had your nerve . I was scared to death." Craw said, " You can never mistake the sound of a shell being jacked into a repeater and you never carry a shell under the hammer with a Henry. He should have jacked a shell in as he stepped into the fire light, and things might have turned out different. ' Russ asked , " Craw, how did you know all this and have the nerve to brace him ". Craw said, " No man wears a brand unless he's crazy or wanting attention. I was a Texas lawman for four years and when they insisted I wear a ranger uniform , I quit. I didn't want to be a target for every outlaw in the country. I'll be back in the morning to get my pack horse."

Craw wasn't surprised to hear that Cross was an outlaw killer. The two hundred dollar price on his head was a surprise and would be sent to him in Sierra Vista. The following morning he was at the wagon for breakfast and felt the tension of being there. He understood people always had a feeling to stay clear of anyone that killed. He thanked them reminding Russ of his offer and rode for home. He hoped there would be no more reason to kill anyone. Just the thought kept you awake at night reliving the event. It would sure be good to get back to Patty and the twins.

Patty was horrified to hear Craw's story of Roy Cross. Craw was really concerned for her tale of the thieves James and Billings. He said, "Patty hon, I never want to kill a man, but sometimes it's you or him. These two are a couple of two bit thieves. It won't be long before word of me killing Cross is on everyone's lips. They'll ride way around our place. I don't think they'll ever be a problem again. How are the steers coming?" Patty said, "They're ready for the yoke and a work behind our little wagon. You put the yokes on'em and the girls and I will give them a two mile walk, they'll soon get the idea. They seem to be easy trained. Yeah, I understand any real balky ones go to slaughter. I'm hoping these four work out. The twins are making pets of them. I'm glad to hear there were no problems with registering the title. I still can't believe everything that's happened to me and I can never thank you enough for what you've done for me." Craw hugged her saying, "Gal, you have no idea what you've done for me. I'm gonna do my damndest to get that Ranch. We should know something in a few weeks. The Registor said we could move in right away. Everything was in order and we'd be getting a notice on Taxes. I'd like to begin loading our wagon and put the finishing touches on our oxen. This Ranch here is gonna be sold. I'll offer it to Jose and Maria first. We'll have to live in our wagon until we can throw up a place. I'm thinking a hill side Hogan until we can put up a cabin." Patty said, "We had a new Barn, maybe it didn't get burned. I don't know what happened to our livestock. There were some cattle and a few horses, pigs, and chickens." Craw said, "Probably all gone by now, but we don't have a lot here and with your ranch having good water and trees, it'll beat what we have. I started from scratch here and I can do it again."

Their plans were held up, when an important letter came for Craw. He thought it was his title, but no. It was an offer for his Ranch. The Atchison,

Topeka, and Santa Fe' Railway wanted his property. They indicated they had searched for over two years looking for the owner and had petitioned the Territorial Governor to authorize confiscation of the property and permit the right of way they needed. Craw said , “ Patty, it looks like some one notified the Railroad of my registration of title and they want your ranch. Here's what we're gonna do. Sell them a right of way across the north perimeter of the ranch and use the money to rebuild your home. I've looked at your maps and it'll cost them a little more track, but they'll have to go a long way around those hills to go west and I don't think they wanna do that. We'll make the offer and see what takes place. We'll have to delay our trip, but it's the best thing we can do. You'll get your house a lot sooner this way.” Patty said excited, “ Craw did I ever tell you how ugly you are? But you're the best and prettiest thing that ever happened in my life.”

Another month had gone by as they waited for the mail to come through on their property sale. Craw said, “ Eight hundred is a lotta money for a little bit of Juniper and scrub oak, but they wanna go that much. We can put up a big house for three hundred and use that reward money on Roy Cross to get some livestock. . We've got everything we need to start our trip, so get the chickens together sometime this week. I don't wanna leave any here to die for lack of water. We'll take along some of those young ones for trail food.” This is where he stopped talking, a wagon was coming down the trail to his place.

It was Russ Lancaster and his family. Craw went out with Patty and the twins to meet them. Craw made them welcome and soon the visiting was in full swing as supertime approached. Russ had found no work in Bisbee. Some of the mines were laying off workers and things there were pretty desperate for a lotta miners. Sierra Vista was now swamped with miners from Bisbee looking for work. Russ was worried and asked Craw for advice on what he might do to feed his family. Craw said, “ What kind of work besides mining have you done? Russ replied , “ Mostly farm stuff, garden , pigs and chickens , a few cows for milk and a couple horses for plowing. Sold everything to come west. Thought I could do better mining. Didn't work out and I'm about outta money.”

Later that evening , Craw said, “ Patty, I’m thinking of changing our plans a little. Russ and May need a break. You and I have a lot of good things going on and I’m going to see if Russ wants to own this place. Jose’ and Maria don’t want to move here. I could sell . Maybe get two or three hundred if I can find a buyer. Cain’t abandon the place . Mexican squatters will take over in two weeks if news get’s around it’s vacant. In a year it’ll be burned to the ground. Russ has three little ones to care for He can sell his rig for winter money and get set up with some farm animals. I’m thinking of letting him have this place for a hundred dollars . I’d give it to him, but he might tend to think it’s worthless. A hundred is pretty small , but the land title will go with it and he can pay me after he gets his feet on the ground.”

Patty with tears on her face, said, “ Craw you’re the best person I ever met. No one does what you do. You’re very special to me and I couldn’t love you more. I just wish I was the girl you deserve.” Craw said, “ Damnit quit cryin! You’re making me feel bad. Patty you’re dead wrong. I don’t deserve you. Look at my twins, they’re growing up like beautiful little girls, not ignorant mud hens. I know they talk a little rough at times but you’re just what they needed. Girl, we’ve everyone of us got a black spot in our lives. Don’t let brooding over that ruin your happiness, life is just too short.”

The following Morning Craw said to Russ, “ You and May come with me Russ, I wanna show you around the place, we’ll take the Jackasses and our little wagon .” Russ and May were impressed with everything and particularly the training methods Craw used for Oxen. At the end of the day Craw surprised them with his offer. Both were shocked! Take over a small ranch? It was unbelievable, that anyone would practically give them a Ranch. Craw said, “ It’s not all that easy May. It’ll take a lotta work to make this place support you, but Russ, you being a pig man, I’d say go to Auction and buy or trade for breeding stock. There’s just a lotta folks around that like bacon. We’re gonna leave most of the chickens so you’ll have eggs and there’s about thirty head of cows out there that go with the place They’re long horns, not worth a lot but you’ll get a few calves.”

Another week goes by and suddenly Craw had everything ready and it was time to say good bye. That day was the beginning of a lesson in living on the trail Patty had got a lot of information from May on making meals and

accepting the tough life style of travel by wagon. May said, “ I’ll never take another wagon trip, I’d just as soon be dead.” Patty soon found that it was a lot worse than she imagined. There’s nothing easy following six oxen and stopping overnight for a little sleep . Craw did all the hard and heavy work, but there was still an overload for Patty. Up at four to get ready for travel by daylight, getting eats for everyone. One day turned into the next and ten miles a day was good time. Supper was a little easier with more time to get everything done. Patty and Craw had looked forward to the trip as an adventure, but soon found it to be a hard grind from one day to the next. The twins were happy to ride their burro’s or walk along side. They really enjoyed no baths and dirty clothes. Patty wasn’t too happy and things got a little tense with the kids, but every time she looked at a tired and dirty Craw working hard to make everything work right and took a deep breath. She could make it if he could.

Twenty five days on the trail and they were half way to Santa Fe. One thing was good. They had plenty of food. Craw had used Russ’s knowledge to prepare for the trip. When a few days later they stopped at a stream and everyone got a bath. They met a number of rigs on the trail , but Craw didn’t stop. He pushed on for that ten miles a day, dawn till twilight. He said, “ The more we make per day the sooner we get there. We’re gonna go through San Antonio and pick up supplies. It’s just a short ways north. We could stop there a few days Patty if you want to.” Patty replied, “ No Craw, if I stop now I’ll wanna quit. Let’s grab what we want and get on the Trail. Home is not that far.” Craw said, “Ok , I’m gonna spell the oxen a little and rotate them . We’re down over half our load and four can easily pull this wagon. They’re all looking a little off in weight. It’s been a tough trip with very little grass. I’m gonna take two out for grazing when we hit good grass. You and the kids keep on the trail and I’ll catch up by dark.” Patty asked, “Craw, maybe I should do that. This close to town we could have trouble.” Craw replied, “ Patty you may not think so right now but you’re a very beautiful woman. You stay with the wagon and keep your guns handy. I don’t think anyone will mess with you. Out alone with a couple of steers, would be a lot different.” Patty said, “ Dirty as I am and walking beside four steers in the dust all day and you think I’m beautiful. Craw you’ve gotta be blind.” Craw laughed as he

rode off leading the two steers. The problem was, Craw was right. Patty was a very desirable looking woman.

As twilight approached Patty looked for a camp area where they could get off the trail for the night. She had unhitched the steers and was tethering them when a freight wagon pulled into the area and stopped. Two men jumped down unhitching their team of horses and took all four over to where she had the oxen tethered. Patty called out, “ Hey don’t put your horses so close , my steers are ankle tethered, your horses will tangle with them.” The one freighter said sharply,” Pretty woman there ain’t no grass anywhere else. Your steers are just gonna have to make out on their own. Don’t worry they’ll make out just fine. By the way, where’s your man? Looks like she’s alone Frank. I see you’ve got two pretty little girls there. You wouldn’t wanna see them hurt now would you. Frank and I are staying overnight, maybe we ought to get together. You could at least be friendly and make a little supper for us. How about it?”

Patty knew they meant trouble. She wished Craw was there, but No, she’d have to handle it on her own. The two freighters were talking to the twins and looked like making themselves at home. Patty boiled over when one put his hands on Beve. She never remembered pulling her gun and planting a bullet in the ground between the two men she yelled for the girls to get in the wagon, then exclaimed, “ I’ll shoot for the belly next time . Get your horses and get the Hell outta here!” The freighter’s were scared; this pretty lady had turned into big trouble and they immediately put harness on their team as Patty stood with pistol following both men. At that moment Craw came racing into a sliding stop. He had his gun out ready to shoot. He said “ Patty I heard a shot! You Ok? These two bothering you?” Patty replied, “ Craw , don’t shoot’em , they were just leaving.” Patty asked, “ Where are the steers Craw? Go bring’em in . There won’t be any more trouble.” The freighters were anxious to leave before Patty explained and Craw got angry. They hitched up and left in a hurry.

Later Patty was still upset and Caw said, “ I never should have left you alone Patty. I’ll forget the steers and push for Santa Fe. They’re down some , but we’ll make it in a week or so.” Patty said sharply, “ No you won’t Craw! Those steers need grass. I can take care of any problem that might involve a

little shooting. We'll follow your plan , so get your stuff done and I'll have a good supper for you." Craw said, " I don't know. You scared the Hell outta me." Betsy spoke up exclaiming , " Mom scared the hell outta those two men Pa!" Beve said, ' That man jumped away when Mom shot Pa. She scared the hell outta him." Patty said. " Girls, I told you not to use that word . Craw it's a losing battle. These girls will say anything they hear from you or me I guess. We've got to clean up their language. Craw said , " Yeah it's a hell of a thing the way they talk." Patty just shook her head and got the fire going.

Two weeks later Patty was sitting by her Mom and Dad's graves as she talked to them about the wonderful life she had now and hoped they heard her. She was in tears again when Craw came putting his arms around her. The twins couldn't understand why she was crying. Craw had already visited the Rail road office presenting his papers and he and Patty were required to sign the agreement and present their Marriage Certificate. A big problem arose; their Mexican marriage was not recognized in the states. Patty feared that the right of way sale wouldn't go through and Craw assured them he would correct that as soon as he could find a Preacher. Craw immediately contacted the local church and the coming Sunday was set for the wedding following the church services. Craw mentioned, " Bringing the girls here would be a good thing. They could find a lot of other kids to play with and it might help their language a little. Tomorrow we order the material to build a new home." Both were excited and Sunday arrived with a beautiful blue sky as far as the eye could see it was a perfect day for a wedding The girls were wearing riding pants and pretty new pink blouses. They had all ridden to Church on the horses and burro's. Many folks from the community stayed over to see the wedding and meet the new family.

After the service a number were gathered outside the church and Patty whispered to Craw, "Do we pay the preacher ?" ." Craw whispered back, "I've got a couple of Paso's I could give him." Patty swung her bouquet at him laughing. Craw gave him ten dollars. They were leaving church to go home, all four on horseback . Patty was very proud of her two five year olds that had made her proud during the ceremony. The preacher had mentioned her two beautiful and sweet angelic daughters. He was standing with his Deacon at the Church doorway to say his goodbye and practically fainted on his doorstep. Patty was shocked speechless and horrified when the sweet little

Betsy asked , “ What the hell is wrong with that damn Jackass Beve?”
Sweet Beve replied, “This owl headed son of a bitch won’t go!”

The End.