

Flo,rence

“ My god ! Bill, do you see that? It’s a black woman! What is she doing out here on the Oregon Trail? ‘, the wife Margaret exclaimed, Bill replied, “ First black woman I’ve seen west of the big river Ma. Saw a lot back east , Don’t know what the Hell she’s doin out here. She ain’t with no wagon. I’ll ask Captain Ron about her. I just betcha she’s in some kind of trouble, being alone like that. Looks like all she’s got is a back pack. Reckon we’ve seen every thing now. Those two men with the wheelbarrow was a new one on me, but they passed us up and went plumb outta sight ahead of us. I been thinkin for days , we never should have left home, but it’s too late now to turn back. Wake Butch up will you, He needs to exercise that leg some. It’s been a month since he was shot.” Butch was awake saying, “ I’m up Bill, I’ll get out and walk a little.”

They were the Wakefields of St. Joe Missouri. Bill and,Margret a married couple in their early thirties had decided to go to Oregon and homestead. Butch was a wild and bold younger brother of Margaret, recently shot in a saloon brawl where he had killed two outlaws trying to rob the owner, a friend of his. Unfortunately the Sheriff wanted him outta town. Didn’t want a killer in St Joe. Butch had nothing but a doctor bill that the saloon owner agreed to pay. Being in a crippled state he agreed to go with Bill to Oregon. Anything was better than laying around St. Joe and running up a big debt. They had just passed Fort Laramie where an army doctor had given him an Ok on the leg.

Stepping down from the back of the wagon, his leg gave way and he sat down in the dirt. Quickly getting to his feet , He noticed the Black woman coming toward him as if to help. He said “ Thanks, but I’m Ok.” The woman nodded and went back to the side of the trail where she didn’t have to walk in the heavy dust kicked up by the wagons. He wondered about her, but she was none of his business. He had his own problems to worry about his leg was still pretty weak and very painful if he stepped wrong.

Every day it reminded him of that gunfight at the Longhorn saloon. Joe Adams, a long time friend of his owned the saloon and he had stopped by for a drink, when three men came straight to the Bar from the doorway and all three jerked their guns out. One of the robbers facing away from the bar with a drawn gun to warn off the

others in the Bar. The other two threw down on Joe demanding his cash box. Butch surprised looked up from the table where he sat enjoying his drink and right into the muzzle of a gun. Butch had always been too handy with a gun and this was not new to him. He was well known as a hot head and had been in a number of bar room incidents where bullets were thrown. Unfortunately these outlaws didn't know this and as they dumped Joe's money box on the bar, the man facing Butch swung his head around to see the money . Butch came alive like a snake drawing his gun and fired at the man facing him. He missed, but his bullet took one of the others in the back .The man facing him opened fire and Butch's leg caught a bullet .The table top took a couple of hits as Butch rolled to the floor and kept shooting and at ten feet he didn't miss. He was quickly out of it ! His gun was empty and Joe was now standing behind the bar with his shotgun out. There was no need . All three robbers lay on the floor. Two died and the third was put safely in Jail when Doc finished with him

The local Town Council felt the gunfight was unnecessary. The robbery would have only netted fifty two dollars. Joe cussed them out , because it was his money and there was no guarantee they would have stopped with just his money. Butch was asked to leave town and now here he was; a few possibles in a saddle bag, his bedroll, the clothes he was wearing and his guns, a Henry rifle and his forty four belt gun. His horse was gone, sold to cover his living debts. His bum leg still preventing him from being of much help, but everyday it was getting better.

Almost two weeks had gone by when the Black lady walking was going through camp asking for any food she could work for . She was gathering buffalo chips and trading for meals. It was dirty work but she kept at it. Butch had seen her out a number of times and had urged Margaret to help her out, but Margaret was adamant, "No!" Butch felt he would like to do something for her, but he had nothing himself. He did manage to get a small cut of bacon and slip it to her. Her eyes said her thanks.

Things took a very bad turn for the Black lady when the Boris Chandler family joined the wagon train. Chandler was from Tennessee and had no respect for a black slave ; as he called her. Chandler had insisted on getting his family near the front to protect his family from the dust. Capitan Ron had been strong armed into allowing it. His

wagon was placed in front of the Wakefield's. Butch and Bill both had some harsh words to say about it. This really rankled Butch and Chandler over heard him complaining to Capitan Ron. Chandler made a point to come over and say, " Little man , I have a delicate wife and she cain't handle the dust." Butch replied, " Maybe you should have followed at a distance. We have delicate women too." Bill could see where this was heading and intervned saying, " Let it go Butch. Let it go. I don't want any trouble." Butch was not at all happy with Bill folding the way he did, but knew his sister would be really upset if he carried it any further. He turned his back and walked away.

That evening a number of wagons used the same campfire for cooking and things exploded when the black gal came to fry some bacon. Chandler erupted yelling that she was not to use their fire, 'Get the Hell away from here! I don't want no stinkin black around me while I'm eatin!" Chandler was big and burley. He grabbed the woman's arm jerking her back and her metal pan went flying , her bacon falling in the dirt. Butch had all he could take , and was going to help the lady. When Chandler walked over, it appeared he was going to kick her as she tried to pick up her bacon and Butch put a bullet in the ground in front of him and yelled, "'Don't you touch that woman you son of a bitch! She has more right to be here than you do! I helped build this fire . If you don't like it go build your own. Damnit, You had no call to treat her like dirt. Get away from her. Get your gun if you don't like it." Butch grabbed a canteen and poured water on her meat to wash off the dirt. All the while he kept an eye on the mad as hell Chandler., but Chandler had all of Butch he wanted. That bullet in the ground had made an instant believer in him.

Capitan Ron came running, demanding to know what happened. He got many versions of the incident and the following day he made the decision to leave the black woman at the next water. She could no longer stay with his train. Butch was fuming mad, when even his sister Margaret sided with the decision. He couldn't believe the folks of the train would side with Chandler and leave this black woman out here alone with nothing but her few belongings. He begged Bill to take her in as part of their outfit, but Margaret put a quick stop to that. No, she would be given some small amount of food, mostly bacon that folks wanted to get rid of and that was all. Two more days travel and there

was supposed to be a small creek where they would hold up a day and get water.

The creek was there but the crossing was blocked by a wagon with a broken front axel. There was no way to get the wagon out and the train was held up two days while they worked around it two teams had been hitched to it , but they couldn't get it to shore. They had turned it around but that was all, the front wheels turned sideways and they couldn't pull it out, Butch and Bill recommended taking the front wheels off, but every one was in a rush to leave. By noon on the second day all of the wagons had crossed and Capitan Ron hustled every one to get going. There was a rush to get horses hooked up and Butch saw the defenseless black lady standing in a small tree grove forlorn , alone facing Indian capture and watching as the train pulled away from the creek. Suddenly he asked, "Bill, have you got an extra flint? " Bill handed him one and Butch said, " I'm sorry you two, but I cain't ride off and leave that woman stranded and alone out here. I'm taking my stuff and leaving the train. Sis , maybe I'll see you in Oregon. I wish you and Bill good luck and a safe journey." Against their pleas, he threw his bedroll and pack with his rifle off the wagon, jumped down and waved good bye.

Walking back, he saw the woman and went to her saying, " Ma'am I hope you don't mind, but I'll travel with you. I cain't do much walking for a few days. Bad leg , but you don't need to be out here alone. I've got a couple of guns. My names Butch." The woman replied, "Whatta you want Mister. I ain't got nothing." It was obvious to Butch that she didn't trust him and he said, " Look I'm not gonna bother you at all. I just couldn't ride away when I know you wanted to help me some time back when I fell. Lady get use to me . We're gonna try to get you to a safe place somewhere, that's what I want. What do they call you and why are you out here on the way to Oregon?" She replied , "They named me Flo that's all I know. Mister Williams , my owner died in Missouri. He gave me this paper I cain't read. Said I was a free woman. Whites took almost everything I had. One man wanted me, but I got away with just what I've got and what some wagon folks gave me. Thank you for helping me the other night. Some whites are good to me . Some are not. I'm going west. Everyone says it's a wonderful place. I can find a family to work for. Why are you doing this, staying with me?"

Buck replied, “ Flo, I really cain’t give you a good answer. Maybe I made a big mistake, but I cain’t see treating another human the way they were treating you. I guess it was just something I couldn’t live with. Any way here we are and we’ll hope another train comes we can tie up with. In the mean time Miss Flo we have to make do until another train comes along. I know you don’t have much food so I’m gonna take a walk up this creek a ways. See if I can scare up a rabbit or something.” He returned two hours later, “ No game” , he said, “ This whole area has been hunted out by the wagon train folks and I cain’t walk that far. Can you shoot a rifle? No? I didn’t think so. Well Miss Flo, you’re gonna have to learn. Can you get some of that bacon going if I light a fire.” Butch was glad that he asked to get a flint from Bill.

Following a short meal of bacon, Flo said, “Thank you mister Butch for staying with me. I don’t know what I would have done. I was scared.” Butch said, “ Anybody would be. Some people are the worse things you’ll ever meet. Look I know you don’t trust me or my intentions, but lady I know my place; it’ll be over here and yours over there. I’ve never done anything like this before, but I guess getting shot in the leg sorta woke me up to the fact that I ain’t no more than anyone else and it burned me wrong the way you were treated by even my own sister. Make it just Butch, Flo, I don’t need no mister.”

It was the following morning when Flo heard a strange braying animal, but Butch said, “No Mis Flo, that’s the brayin of a jack burro and you know something. Burro is great eating! You come with me and we’ll see if we can get close enough for a shot. Flo was happy to go along and see him shoot a stray Jack from a small herd. After a full day of work skinning and hauling meat to their camp, they both sat beside a fire smoking strips of burro while they feasted on the best meal they’d had since St.Joe.

Flo was amazed at the ease with which Butch was able to get things in order for living by that little creek. She was dearly thankful he had stayed for her. They had food now and he was over taking anything left in that busted wagon. There were some tools , an ax and hatchet and the wagon jack was still there, too heavy for the owners to take along. Other things were underwater, but Butch was unable to get to them to see what they were. After a one hour search of the wagon , he came to Flo saying, ‘ Flo I have an idea. We may be able to

get that wagon out of the water far enough to get what's in it. If you'll help me , I think we can do it there's a couple of kegs and a water barrel in there. The kegs would be food but I cain't get'em loose where they are. Just a few feet and they'll be outta the water. Gimme a hand with this jack. You'll have to get wet. Flo was a strong woman and although small , she jumped in and held the wagon jack in place. By late afternoon they had the front wheels off and on shore. Tired and beat they quit for the day. Butch built up the fire so they could dry out .

Later , Flo asked. “ What do we do next?” Butch replied, ‘ I'm not sure this will work but tomorrow we'll take the tongue off . I'd like to get that broken axel off too. I've unloaded the canopy and everything I can get loose, but I've gotta have those kegs and that water barrel. Flo, my plan is to use them empty to act as floats lifting the wagon, all three will seal pretty good. There's plenty of rope in that canopy. If we can get the floats to seal even for one day , that's all we'll need. I hate to do it but tomorrow I'll use that ax to free up the water barrel. I don't have the tools to get the clamps loose.” The large water barrel was easy and floated ashore once a lot of the water was poured out. Butch emptied it and strapped the lid tight then floated it back to the wagon . I took both of them to get it under the wagon , but success came quickly. The size of the float partially surfaced the front of the wagon and the creek water flow spun the wagon into shore . Almost everything was exposed in the shallow water. Butch was happy. He didn't need the other kegs and opened them to find both filled with trail foods. Wax seals had kept everything dry. Flo was speechless. They had food enough for a month or better even without the dried burro. In addition , she now had campfire tools and a dutch oven. The killer was a coffee pot. Butch couldn't wait for that. He said, “ Flo, I hope you can put up with me for awhile. I over did it with my leg and I've gotta give it more time to heal.” Flo replied, “ Butch you are everything to me . I'll stay here as long as you like, but what about joining another train? What do you wanna do about that? Butch said , “ We'll just have to pass Flo and we have no way to carry our food and bedding. I'm hoping for a quick healing , but there are still two good months of summer left. I think we'll make it but we'll just have to carry big back packs and I cain't do that right now. We'll use the wagon canopy to make a tent to live in and Flo I hope I can sleep in there with you and not become a problem for you. I'll use my own bedroll.

How old are you anyway?" Flo replied, " I know I look forty Butch and I wanna look that old. Men leave me alone. I'm twenty five and I trust you. As a young black girl ,I was attacked anytime white boys came around in a bunch while we were in the fields working . Most of the time I was able to run away, but not every time." Butch could see the tears and said no more.

They had been camping for two weeks when a wagon Train came through. The train Capitan came asking about a pair of wagon wheels. He had figured that Butch owned the wagon. Butch saw an opportunity to make a sale , but the family needing a wheel had no money and Butch gave them one wheel. The Capitan wanted the other and offered a dry milk cow in trade. He indicated that Butch could slaughter the cow for a little meat. Butch took one look and said , " Capitan that cow is just a rack of bones, I'll take her and half an eagle for it, otherwise I want a double eagle." They finally agreed on the cow and a slab of bacon. Flo immediately took the cow to a patch of rich green grass up the creek a way. Butch could see from the way she tenderly handled he cow, there would be no butchering.

Shortly after the train left, he and Flo removed the other two wheels . Flo said, " We can sell everything from the wagon or trade for something. " Butch said, " Flo, any other time I would agree, but we can't carry anything more than what we have already. I think you love that cow." Flo said , " Yes I've been around milk cows all my life and I named her Daisy like one I milked every day as a young girl."

Two more weeks went by and they had struck up a routine for living with each other. Butch was up creek looking for more wild burro's and Flo had taken the opportunity to bathe in the creek. Butch knew she was bathing and walked west of the creek to give her privacy. It was a big surprise when he suddenly came upon four horses! Indians! His blood ran cold! Where were they ?. Carefully peering around through the brush he saw them . They were near the creek in the brush. As he saw them , they saw him and quickly raised hands in a peace sign. He was carrying his rifle and it pointed at the Indians. No war paint and no weapons! They were peaceful if you could believe an Indian. Butch had a fair knowledge of sign language and quickly learned they were excited. They had been watching a woman bathe and she was all black! They couldn't believe it. Was she an evil spirit? Butch told them she was a child of the Great Spirit and

couldn't be evil. They wanted to know if they could touch her. Butch told them, " No she was his Squaw and not to be touched by another man. They understood then . This was a common Indian law. the Indians were jabbering about the black woman and Flo scared ,overhearing them and quickly came through the brush , She had her clothes on. Butch called , " Flo , it's ok. Friendly Indians come over here." All four Indians were scared. They couldn't believe she was real . Butch said, " Give them the peace sign and hold your arm across your breast, then hold both hands out showing they are empty." The Indians immediately relaxed their faces , talked with Butch a bit and went to their horses.

Later Butch explained, "you told them to be at Peace , you wanted to be a friend and that you had no weapon. Flo, I guess you gave them a real scare. They've never seen a black person before and I guess you gave them a good show. You'll be the talk of their camp fire tonight and if I know Indians, you'll be a goddess; the beautiful child of the great spirit." Flo said , " Butch I almost turned white with fear when I saw the Indians and didn't see you. I was scared to death. Mister, you are the sweetest man there ever was. Did those Indians see me naked." Butch laughed and said, " I think so, but darn it , I got here too late for the show." Flo was surprised with his comment, but made her feel good. She laughed. Butch was thinking, " Damn woman don't know just how good looking and desirable she really is . I damn sure better quit studying on it." He said, " Flo, the next time you decide to bathe, take my pistol with you. The next group might not be so friendly. You're where you can use that gun almost as well as I ,so take it along."

Daisy was beginning to look like a cow instead of a scarecrow and Flo said, " Too bad she won't give milk. She'll have to calve before she'll produce again. Butch said, "Flo, I've been studying on it and I think we need to be moving on. I've whipped together a riggin for Daisy and were're gonna let her pull a travois with our food and my rifle. You and I can wear a light pack. I think we can make a few miles every day, she's looking a whole lot better." He didn't tell her that it was getting difficult for him sleeping in the same tent with her. He had no idea that she was feeling the same.

Their concerns came to an abrupt end before they could get things together and pack out. A wagon train came in and the first thing

the Capitan did was threaten Butch saying, “ Mister , whoever you are, we’re not paying a damn toll fee to cross this creek .” Butch resented the attitude and swung around with hand near his gun and exclaimed, “ I don’t give a damn who you are mister, but I don’t like your way of talking to me. I’m not running a toll station, but for folks like you, maybe I should. No get outta my camp . Cross the damn creek anytime you want.” The Capitan replied, “Mister I’m Robert Tills, maybe you heard of me ; been over this trail a dozen times. Too many damn thieves out here taking advantage of folks. I’ll be sending our live stock up through your camp to the good grass above here they’ll be coming right away.” Butch sharply said, “ Maybe you’ve heard of me. I’m Butch Wakefield from St. Joe. Take’em around , you ain’t bringing them through our camp. It’s too dirty here already.” Till’s eye’s popped open and he said, “Ok Wakefield I’ll send them around . I don’t want no trouble you understand. Hey who’s the black woman over there? Didn’t know folks out here kept slaves. Is she yours?” Butch replied “ No she’s a free woman. Don’t belong to nobody.” Tills said, “ Never heard of such. Ok Wakefield we won’t make you any trouble and we’ll be moving on in two days. Gotta make ten or fifteen miles a day from here on out and we’re short on horses. Water’s about three days apart. I’ll be glad to take that black woman off your hands, if you like. “ Butch short answered, “ No I don’t like!” Tills held both hands up saying “ Ok, Ok !” and left .

The next morning at daybreak Indians were everywhere around the wagon Train. They were friendly wanting to trade. The squaws were looking for pretty trinkets, especially mirrors. The men after food and whiskey. Tills came to see Butch saying, “ Chief Tall Bear of the Lakota tribe just north of here wants to see your Black woman. His braves claim she is good medicine from their Great Spirit. Some kinda rot Wakefield, but he wants to see her. Can you bring her along. We need some horses and they’ve got a few we can use on the wagons . I want to do some trading.”

Butch had no idea that the self serving Capitan had been talking of trading Flo for horses. Flo wanted to meet folks anyway and was pleased to go with Butch. When they arrived , Tall Bear came quickly to meet them followed by half of his tribe. They all wanted to see the black woman. Butch couldn’t understand the talk going on between Tills and Tall Bear, but finally Tills asked, “ Wakefield will you have

the black woman strip down. The chief wants to see all of her.” Butch said , “ You and he can go to hell! Flo ain’t stripping for nobody! Come on Flo we’re leaving.” Tills exclaimed , “ Damn it Wakefield what do you want for her, I’ll give you a hundred dollars! He’s willing to give twenty horses for her! Hell man , she’s just a black slave. It ain’t like she’s your wife! Come on man , I need those horses. How about a hundred and fifty? Ain’t no slave worth that kind of money!” Butch sharply exclaimed, “ Hell No! She ain’t for sale. Tell that Indian she’s my wife, my squaw!” Butch took Flo’s arm and quickly walked away. Tills was ready to shoot Butch , but thankfully he didn’t try.

Butch was still mad , when they reached camp and said, “ Flo, they’re crazy, treating you like a damn horse for trade. I should have shot the Bastard!” Flo said , “ No Butch, it’s that way every where. Most of the blacks I ever knew were slaves, but some like me have been freed by their owners. A lot of young men have just ran away to go on their own.” Butch said , “It’s a dirty thing Flo, but some day, I hope things will change.” Flo said, “ Butch you didn’t have to say I was your wife. No white man will want to deal with you.” Butch replied, “ They don’t like me already and you’re a better woman than any I ever met. I don’t see anything wrong with you as my wife and what other people think , I don’t give a damn. Every wagon train coming through here thinks you’re my wife or my squaw anyway.”

The following day here came Tills again , only this time he was a little less insulting. He wanted to purchase both wagon wheels. Butch was thinking , the man had money and for two double eagles , he sold the two wheels. Sale of the two wheels gave Butch a thought about the wagon. He went looking for the metal bows that held the canopy front and back. Here was a good piece of luck,. He could bend and shape them to make travois poles and they wouldn’t wear out like wooden ones. He began planning to leave after the wagons pulled out.

In the process of leaving, he had not considered Tall Bear’s desire for Flo, the black medicine girl. He had sent four Braves to steal her from Butch just as they would a horse. They had been on the trail two days when the Braves set up an ambush for Butch. He had brought their travois into a light grove of trees for an over night camp and was a little way off gathering wood for a camp fire when the four braves tried to grab Flo and throw her across a horse in front of a brave to ride off with her. Small but very strong, she kicked the brave trying to

get her on a horse and screamed for Butch, then went over the horse landing flat on her back. At the sound of a shot from Butch the Braves scrambled to leave. He had purposely fired high not knowing where Flo was. Quickly getting back he emptied his gun and sent some of the Indians off carrying wounds. Not knowing what they were doing, he shot to kill thinking, " Maybe now Chief Tall Bear would think the black woman was bad medicine and leave her alone.

Butch was grabbing his rifle, but the Indians were outta range and he hugged her as she said, " Butch they were trying to take me away. I'm not hurt, but I need a gun I can carry all the time. I was lucky to kick that one Brave in the face and scramble off the horse." Butch said, " I think I know what's going on now. Tall Bear wants you, but he'll soon know it's not gonna be easy. I know that I hit some of those braves. I hope they live. I know there's two that won't be coming back. From here on out we're camping in open ground where they cain't get close." Flo returning his hug said, " Butch I dreamed and prayed for a man like you. I just cain't believe you'd want a black girl." Butch replied, "Flo it's not the color outside that counts . It's the heart inside and when we get to Independence Rock we're not going to white Oregon. We're going south to mixed blood land where color don't count and feelings are more important. You and I could never be happy in Oregon. Too much hatred for us there."

As the sun was setting, Flo heard a horse whinny and said, " Butch maybe the Indians didn't leave. That horse sounds pretty close." He said " Here take my gun , and don't be afraid to shoot. I'll take the rifle and take a quick look before dark." Ten minutes later she heard butch calling for her to come. Shadows were heavy and she saw the horse before Butch. He was kneeling on the ground. There was an Indian! He said , " Come get this horse, He's wounded, gotta get him to the camp fire. He's lost a lotta blood. He's got his hands tied to his horses bridal. I've gotta untie him first. I guess he didn't wanna lose his horse."

At the camp fire they saw where a bullet had hit him in the neck below his right ear a nasty gash that had bled all down his side. The bleeding had stopped, but Butch was afraid it was too late to save him. Still he said, "Flo I don't think he'll make it but we'll stitch him up while he's still out. I feel bad about shooting him , he's just a boy sixteen or seventeen. Plenty big to kill a man though. Maybe already

has. I'm taking his knife. You never know about Indians . They're hard to kill and he might see us as enemies. Put his horse on a tether for the night and we'll deal with him in the morning."

Later Butch said, " I don't wanna tie him up. I'll stay up until early morning and you can take over watching him. Don't trust him ,but give him your peace sign and try to make him understand that he must stay down. With his blood loss he'll be mighty dizzy and maybe fall starting things over. Wake me up."

The boy came awake when Flo was on watch and she didn't realize that he was awake. Finally the boy moved and Flo gave her peace sign and tried to get him to understand he should remain lying down, that he would be dizzy standing she also indicated to him that they had put his wound back together. She went to him and pulled a blanket over him. She thought his eyes said his thanks, but she wasn't sure. He went back to sleep and Flo didn't wake Butch. He needed his rest too.

Later that morning Butch spent most of his time caring for the boy and when awake tried sign talk over the next few days. There was no way to move the boy. It was then he found that it was to be a peaceful capture and don't hurt the black girl. They had thought it would be easy. They hadn't planned on fighting a warrior like Butch. Butch told the boy, he would kill to protect his Squaw and it was her medicine that kept him alive. Stealing his squaw would bring many deaths to their Tribe. After five days , the boy wanted to leave. Hot soup and rest had made a great difference and although Flo didn't want him leaving , Butch said, " I'll get his horse and when he's mounted give him his knife." . Within a minute , the boy was gone and Butch said, " He'll make it Ok Flo, thanks to you. We'll get Daisy rigged up and get on the trail."

It was slow going , but Daisy was holding up and Butch's leg was doing Ok. At least he thought so. Flo wasn't so sure and took on all she could to spare him. Butch didn't say so , but knew and loved her feelings for him. He was beginning to look at what the future might hold for him living with her as his squaw or wife. Every day and every event they had brought them closer together.

Independence Rock came up on the skyline looking like a large animal laying down. Butch and Flo were awed by the great size and how folks before them had spent time there carving and painting their

names on the rock. Two Wagon trains were camped there, but his sister wasn't there. They had evidently been there and gone. He felt bad about losing them, but knew they'd never accept Flo and she was far more important to him than they were. He knew that folks in the trains there would probably be no different than his sister. They passed by and took the river trail south. Daisy was a slow walker, but they still made good time.

They were still in sight of the Big Rock when morning found them surrounded by Indians! Butch knew they were probably gonna die and Flo would get killed if he fired a gun. He and Flo stood in shock wondering what was going to happen. The Indians were not painted for War. Butch said "Flo gal, I think it must be Tall Bear's braves again. He wants you." Flo replied, "Butch please don't fight. They will kill you. I'll go with them. They will not hurt me, but they will kill you." Butch said, "Flo, I will follow you and die if I have to, but I can never let them keep you. Maybe they will talk with me. Wait here by my guns and take my knife; it's very sharp and begin cutting your hair off. I haven't got time to explain." Slowly making a peace sign Butch bravely walked out to meet a group of sub chiefs. Maybe they would kill him, but he had to try anything to save Flo.

The chief in the middle was Tall Bear. One of the sub chiefs surprised him saying. "White eyes I am Yellow Hand, I speak your talk. Chief Tall Bear wants black girl. What say you?" Butch replied, "The Great Spirit will bring death to any brave that touches the black girl. Many Apaches have already died. The black girl is my Squaw. I cannot fight your thirty braves, but I die for her. Look! She knows I will die and begins to cut her hair to help me in my journey to meet my great spirit. Tomorrow she will cut her face in the same manner as the Cherokee, to show the darkness in her heart. She will bleed for one moon and then she will die. It is the way of the black hawk." Butch waited, hoping they would believe him. What he had described was the way of the Cherokee to meet death and sorrow and every Indian knew that a hawk, once wounded would keep picking on the injury and die in a few weeks.

Yellow hand spoke at length to Tall Bear, then said, "White eyes you kill two braves that touch black girl. Black girl heals Little Wolf. Black girl is great medicine. Tall Bear says, return to Black girl, we make talk." Butch made the Indian peace sign and returned to Flo. She

was Bald headed! Butch exclaimed, “ Flo, damn it . I didn’t mean you had to cut it all off! No, no I’m sorry . You did a great job. I’ve gotta come up with something else now. Let me think a little. Indians have very strong belief in their Great Spirit. That’s quite a bundle of curly hair you cut off. How good are you at making pig tails in your hair?” Flo replied, “ Butch I’m beginning to think you’re crazy. I don’t have enough left to make a pigtail, but yes I can do nice tight ones like those in the end of Daisy’s tail.” Butch said, “I’ve got an idea but we haven’t got much time. I’m gonna bring Daisy over her and I want you to weave your hair in Daisy’s pigtail. As much as you can and as tight as you can and when you’re done we’ll cut Daisy’s tail hair off tying both ends with a rawhide and make a necklace like for around Tall Bears neck. That should bring him all the black medicine he’ll ever need. I’ll take the Black girl medicine ring to Tall Bear before their sub chiefs convince him to take you with them.”

Butch was surprised by Tall Bear. Yellow Hand spoke telling him that the Chief will not allow Black girl to die like Black Hawk. Little Wolf is his son. Her black medicine saved his life. He brings two horses for your travels taken from the Army. They will see you to your journeys end. You and Black girl are free to go.. Butch replied, “ Black girl has made Tall Bear a wonderful medicine ring for his protection in battle.”Tall Bear was very pleased , wishing him and black girl a safe journey and much sunshine .

The following week was a happy event for Butch and Flo. They were both riding and Butch laughed as he followed Flo leading her good friend Daisy as they headed south. Flo could not understand his laughter, but she couldn’t see her bald head followed by the bald tail of her cow. Butch was thinking, “ How many other girls, I’ve known would give up all their beautiful hair for me. No they’d probably have traded me for a pretty ribbon. Flo, though never even asked why. I’ve gotta make a good life for us. It was a great thing when Tall Bear gave us these horses. Stolen from the Army or taken in a fight, it doesn’t matter. We’re going into New Mexico Territory and there’s a hundred around just like these, all now lost by the Army. Should be no problem.” Wrong! The horses they were given had been stolen from Fort Bridger in a raid when two soldiers were seriously injured. There were hundreds of horses branded with the US on their shoulder, but unfortunately their Calvary saddles carried the ninth Calvary marking.

They were arrested as they attempted to enter the Fort. Butch wanted to hit the trading post for a few supplies.

A Capitan Dumas was called in and he immediately insulted Butch for partnering with a Black woman calling him a number of filthy names His guns and everything they had was confiscated including Daisy. Butch and Flo both told the true story, but Dumas refused to believe that Tall Bear would even speak to a white eyes, much the less give him horses for travel. Tall Bear was known for his killing raids and their story was considered a pack of lies and they were to be held as Renegade horse thieves until Major Kittering the post Commander returned from a field operation.

Butch was furious, but knew he had to hold his temper and practically pleaded with Dumas to believe him and Flo. They were not horse thieves, but he had no way of proving it. Flo was treated with total contempt by the soldiers and her bald head saved her from attempted assault by the Jailers. Her features without hair were not a pretty thing to look at and the fire in her eyes should have warned the soldiers to keep away. Her hand strength could easily choke a man to death and the jailers were never to carry weapons into the cells. Butch was not treated a whole lot better, although as a man, he represented a threat to anyone coming into his cell. Dumas had given strong orders that they should be treated well until the Major arrived. He may have began to think twice about his actions in treating them like dangerous criminals.

Major Kittering arrived after Butch and Flo had been in the Fort Jail for ten days. Butch demanded that he be taken to Kittering immediately. Capitan Dumas blew up at his demand sharply stating, “Mister , you don’t run this place and you don’t tell me what to do. I’ll take you to the Major in my time, not yours.” Butch replied, “ I’ve told you Flo and I are innocent and damnit man I demand to see your Major! Maybe he has some sense. I’ve told you twenty times. Tall Bear gave us those horses. Go see him if you’ve got the guts He’s camped just three days north.” Dumas said , “Go to Hell!” and walked out.

It was late afternoon when Kittering asked to bring the prisoners to his office. He had already been briefed by Dumas and had nothing to say to Butch, but when he saw Flo, he jumped to his feet exclaiming “ Damn you Capitan! This is the Medicine Woman of Tall Bear you’ve locked up. She’s all the chief would talk about while we were in

Council My God man, surely they told you their story. God if he hears we took her prisoner, they'll attack us and Dumas you damn sure know how many Spencer rifles you issued to his Tribe for hunting purposes. Mister Wakefield, you and your wife are free as of this moment. I'll do everything in my power to correct this terrible mistake. I sincerely apologize for the incompetence of my junior officer. Capitan Dumas , you will see to their comfort immediately . Get suitable quarters for them. Mister Wakefield , if you would please join me for dinner. I would love to hear your story. Tall Bear indicated that you are the bravest white eyes warrior he has ever seen and he worships your wife. His greatest and most precious possession is the woven medicine ring he wears around his neck. He insists that the great spirit brought Medicine woman to favor him.

A week later Butch and Flo were once again on the trail south, but this time with ownership papers for their horses and a fully loaded pack mule . These all given by Major Kittering as consolation for the ill way in which they were treated. One other thing pleased Butch, Dumas was now sporting Lieutenant Bars.

New Mexico territory was a huge expanse of empty desert like land. Butch knew there were Indian raids common to the country, but he hoped they could make Santa Fe. There , he felt was where he and Flo could build a life together. The country all around was open for settlement. He was telling Flo of his plans when she said, “ Butch, are you sure you want me for your wife. I know you think it's ok, but many will have nothing to do with you, if we are married.” Butch replied, “ Damnit Flo, everyone thinks we're married already and I don't see anyone running from us. Good folks will only wish us the best and soon come to know that we're great neighbors. Bad folks will be bad no matter what, but remember we know how to deal with them.”

“ We'll get a paper in Santa Fe from whom ever does marriages and that should be good enough unless you want something more.” Flo replied, “ Butch , I would die for you and I saw you face death for me. I don't think we need more than that. Yes, a piece of paper is good, but I do have a question. I know with all the sleeping we've done together, you have never tried to get in my blankets. Is there a problem?’ Butch replied, ‘ Honey we're gonna take care of that very soon. I just didn't want you getting pregnant until we reach Santa Fe. Have I been counting, of course not, but guess what, we're only three days away!”

Finally in Santa Fe and where to find a Parson or Priest. They went to the local sheriff asking and he said, “ Don’t have one of those Parson fellers, just got a Mexican Father Ramon over at the Chapel it’s down the street a ways. Do you reckon he will do?” Flo replied, “ Butch we don’t need any Parson or Priest. Cain’t you write up a paper and sign my name . I cain’t write you know.” Butch replied, “We’re gonna take care of that. I’m gonna draw your name in the sand and you copy it three or four times and that should do it. Doesn’t have to be perfect. Yeah, I want our marriage done right, you’ll no longer be Flo the black girl. You’ll be Mrs.Butch Wakefield and you’ll have a gun to prove it. We’re going right away to the local Chapel and Father Ramon will do the honors. It’ll be in Spanish, but that’s ok. Here in Santa Fe Spanish is the language, lets go!” Flo replied, “Butch I’m a mess.” Then laughing said, “Should I do my hair?” Butch laughed and pulled her along.

They were in luck, Father Ramon spoke English fairly well with a mix of Spanish. He had nothing to say about Flo. To him she was just another happy Bride. Blacks were common in Mexico The words were mostly in Spanish and Father Ramon tried to explain it all. They were there almost an hour. His best wishes included a warning about Apaches, There was still a lot of raiding and killing going on. Apaches and Mexicans hated each other with a passion. Butch asked about where they could settle and make a home. The father recommended a small settlement south east of town west of the river Rio Chania. There was the remains of an old Spanish Fort somewhere near there and open ground all around.He said, “ Many years ago there was an uprising of slave Indians that killed everyone in the Spanish Fort. It has never been found.” He suggested they might find shelter in the abandoned Fort Lowell buildings, also in that area; until they could throw up a cabin. There were a number of Mexican families living in the Fort.” Butch said, “ The old Spanish Fort tell me about it please.” They talked for awhile and Butch gave the Father one of his double eagles. After all marriage to Flo was worth it.

As they left the Chapel Butch said, “ Flo today is very special. What would you like to do? There are rooming houses here and we are in no hurry to leave.” Flo replied, “ Butch, this is all a dream. I wish it were true. I don’t wanna wake up. I feel more wonderful than I’ve ever felt. Can we just travel on and camp by the river?” Butch replied, “ You

know something Flo, this is really a dream, but it's our dream and Gal it's real. We're gonna build us a home and I love camping on the river. It's our world now Flo ;yours and mine. Whatever we do, we'll do it together." Flo couldn't hold back the tears, she was too happy.

They spent two days camping and it was time to move on. Butch said, " Honey girl , we've gotta hurry along. Need to get something set up before winter gets here. That abandoned Fort Lowell sounds pretty good. The Father said there were families living there, we'll try it." Flo said, "Butch, this is so wonderful and I feel so bad that I have nothing to give. I have been so poor all my life." Butch said , " Honey you're not poor any more. We're both rich. Rich with each other."

They were following the river trail as they went south and camped by a large river bend. It was in the very early hours, that Flo awoke to an eerie noise outside coming from the river. Quickly waking Butch they both went with drawn guns to the river. Shocked and scared they both saw a large ghost like figure in the edge of the water near a pile up of drift wood. The eerie whistling sound came from the ghost. Suddenly, as they approached the ghost whinnied to them. It was a large white horse caught in a floating tangle of brush and driftwood. It's head almost submerged . The horse had quit struggling and it was the restricted whistling of its breathing that awoke Flo. Butch was amazed and said , " Flo we cain't do a thing until we can see. It's too dangerous to try moving the horse. I've got an idea though. Let me get my rope. Maybe we can pull that float to shore a little and hold it there until daylight. If the current carries it into the main stream , the horse will drown." Flo said, " Butch I can swim like a fish. Get your rope and I'll get it around the horse. We can pull it into shore inside this bend."

A few minutes later, he returned and Flo was gone ! Frightened , he yelled for her and got a quick answer. She was in the water already . He just couldn't see her in the dark water . She took his rope and quickly swam out to the horse and by full daylight they had the horse safely in their camp. Butch said, " It's a mare Flo and when she whinnied at us , I knew she was a tame horse. From her size I'd say she's a wagon horse There's not a brand on her, but there's a crowfoot like cut on her hip that'll need stitches. How good are you at sewing up a horse?" Flo replied , " Done some on the farm , just need some horsehair from her tail, you hold her and I'll get what I need." Later she

said, “ Wish I had some wagon grease. That cut might have a little infection already.” Butch said, “ Lamp oil Flo, we’ve got some of that ; it’ll leave scars but it’ll heal .”

Later Butch asked, “ Whatta you gonna name your horse Flo, she’s a beauty about six and honey she’s an Albino. Pink eyes, and pink nose. Pretty rare, most folks don’t like’em but Indians worship them as Gods from the Great Spirits. They do have soft feet and you’ll never see a true albino in a wild herd unless it’s pretty young. They go lame real early and wolves get’em. Flo said, “ She’s a sweetheart Butch and that’ll be her name. Ok?” Butch replied, “ Ok with me , she’ll sure pull a plow easy with her size. I think you made a good catch Flo and I doubt you’ll find an owner. No tellin how far up river she came from.”

Ten days later they were at Fort Lowell and almost fifty families were living in the abandoned buildings. It was almost like a small village, but there was no control. Each family endured on their own and Butch wasn’t happy with staying there, He said, “ Honey we can do better alone I think if the Apaches will let us. It’s pretty scary out here by ourselves, but I cain’t handle that mess in the Fort. I don’t speak very good Spanish, but we’ll go there if Apaches come. I want to look for the old Spanish fort that the Indians wiped out. Flo, there could be treasure there. Indians never took gold. It was of no use to them at all.” Flo replied, “Butch we have suffered terrible danger before, but I’ll follow you. Maybe death will meet us, but it could at any time. I never felt that anything like you would come into my life, but freedom and happiness is worth dying for. Without it you may as well be dead. Yes, let’s go find that old Spanish fort.” Butch said, “ There has to be some remnants left. The Father said it to be west of Fort Lowell and across the river.”

Butch called them Flo’s animals, Daisy, Sweetheart and the mule. He said , “Flo, you have the makings of a farm there following you. Apaches would love them. I hate to think of that and maybe we should take up in the Fort. It would be safer for us and the animals.” Flo replied, “ Let’s loan the mule to a family in the fort in exchange for tending Daisy and my horse. I’ll ride Sweetheart with you . She can carry a pair of good bags for camping and still carry me easily. I’m sure we can find a family. They did and a good one, Paco Fluntez ex bandito with a family of wife and five kids. He spoke good English. Yes he

would care for Daisy and said , “ Yes Sen’or Butch, but I think your cow is gonna calf. She shows pointing stomach, maybe next summer.” Flo was thrilled to hear that. They had thought she was too poor to be calving. Butch said, “ That’s good news Paco there are many Nino’s in this fort; milk would be good. She will fare much better staying here, Flo and I are going to seek finding the old Spanish fort said to be west of here. Paco excitedly replied, “ Oh Sen’or I thought Nana’s grandmother was too old and dreaming. She talks of a lost Monastery , a church near here that her grand father talked about. Come to my place and talk to her. I can tell you what she says.”

Later returning to camp Butch told Flo of his visit with Paco’s grandmother, Maria; and said, “ Flo Hon we may be on the search for a monastery that was located on a small hill. It wasn’t a Fort and that could be the reason it’s never been found. Maria’s grandfather had said he could see all around the country from the church alter. That’s what we’re gonna look for. Every monastery had an underground chamber where church valuables were kept She said , he also talked about the fertile land all around with olive, fig and nut trees. He was not there when Indians revolted destroying everything. Hon this is more information than any one knows of and I think it should be easy to find. There’s bound to be olive trees there somewhere and figs are almost indestructible. Tonight we pack and tomorrow we leave.”

Butch figured that crossing the river might be a problem, but he was wrong. There was a shallow forage just west of Fort Lowell. Curiously he noticed that the trail outta the river went north, then turned going west and south. The rode for two days looking for the small hill. One thing positive, Flo had found a number of Olive and Fig trees but they were scattered about with no pattern. Finally giving it up as a lost effort, Butch decided to head back to the Fort. As they approached the river crossing ,a sudden thought came to him “ yeah!’ He almost scared Flo and said, “ Honey we’re dumb. This trail goes north because there’s a small hill directly west of the crossing. This has got to be it!”

Excitedly they rode into the brush and up a small dome of a hill and there on the top nothing! No sign of anything! A big disappointment. Butch dismounted and looking around he saw a stone with a straight edge. Quickly grabbing it up, he was amazed at the light weight. Flo took it and exclaimed, “Soap stone Butch ! Butch it’s

soap stone, you can cut this with a saw, it's very lightweight but Master Williams used it on the farm to set floors on. Something was built right here!" Butch now excited said , " Honey , we found it ! This has got to be it ! Can you see all around from here?" Flo began to turn in the saddle and suddenly exclaimed , " Oh God! Indians! Ove there ." She was pointing west. Quickly Butch mounted saying, " Damn, they're Apaches, must be thirty of'em and painted for war. Hon we've gotta get to the fort!"

Racing back they grabbed Paco and alerted him . over the next ten minutes, there was a panic and everyone having a gun of any kind came together at the old gate to fight Apaches. Butch looked at the sorry array of guns; most were muzzle loaders. They were no match for thirty Apaches with rifles and they didn't have enough men to defend all the walls. It was beginning to look like a terrible loss of life, a slaughter was gonna take place at this old Fort. He and Flo would both be killed. The Apaches hated Mexicans and they wouldn't be spared. He and Flo would fight and probably get killed. Butch said , " Hon, I'm sorry. I should have known. We could have stayed away." He hugged her and Flo saw the tears in his eyes, She had never seen him cry. She said, " Butch we're not gonna give up. What can we do? The Apaches will be here before sundown. Will they kill a black woman?" Butch said , " Honey they may not kill you unless you fight. I cain't let that happen.

"We'll try something. Maybe they've heard of the Black Medicine woman. Word and tales spread fast among the plains Indians. We cain't no more than die and that may happen any way. Grab our bags and guns We're gonna try to live. " Flo said, " Butch we cain't run and leave these poor folks to fight alone.' Butch said, " We're not going to, but you and I are going outside . You the feared Black Medicine Woman riding a pure Albino horse may be enough to make the Apaches pass. We'll pile our guns and bags by the walls outside the gates and take a chance. If we have to fight Sweetheart here will get killed . We'll have to use her body for protection and give'em Hell as long as we can breathe., I'm gonna tell Paco to hold his fire unless we fail."

It was only minutes after getting outside that the Apaches appeared out of gun range. Butch said to Flo Unsaddle and ride bareback out fifty yards from the fort and sit broad side so the Indians can see you. Show as much of your legs as possible, so there'll be no

doubt you are Black all over.” They kissed and once again, taking that deep breath of resignation He remembered so well, making a peace sign he rode out to meet the Indians unarmed. He was praying they would let him come close enough for sign language. He suddenly realized that all thirty of the Indians had come forward in a straight line staring intently behind him. He rode boldly to the chief and spread his arms in greeting showing he had no weapon. Through the actions and hand talk of one of the medicine men he knew they feared the Black Woman on the Spirit horse. They would move on, they would not fight the Great Spirits. Go in Peace he signed to them, the Spirit Woman was his Squaw. Butch turned his horse to ride back to Flo and when looking at her shocked to realize she had done far more than he asked. Yes, she was a beautiful Stark Naked woman!

The End

Epilogue:

Butch and Flo were able to unearth the Chapel underground chamber finding a treasure trove of gold and silver artifacts. They used their good fortune to aid the families at the fort and eventually built a home on the small hill that formerly housed a Monastery. Wakefield became a common name and in later years adorned the front of a high school that provided an education for their great grand kids

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