



TRACIE  
PETERSON

PICTURES OF THE HEART

1

*Remember Me*

# *Remember Me*

## Books by Tracie Peterson

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### PICTURES OF THE HEART

*Remember Me*

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TRACIE  
PETERSON



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# Prologue

DAWSON CITY, YUKON

JUNE 1902

**A**deline Byrant, or rather Moerman, since she'd been forced to marry Sam Moerman last year, tried her best to sleep. It was the wee hours of the night—her birthday, or it had been the day before. There had been a big party for her, and Sam had presented her with a gold-nugget necklace worth a fortune. She had felt the entire atmosphere of the party turn dangerous and threatening when Sam put that piece around her neck.

“You’re the most beautiful woman in Dawson City, Addie. You deserve to be covered in jewels,” Sam had whispered in her ear.

Addie had felt the weight of the necklace. It was like a chain that bound her to a life she despised. She wanted to say as much, but Sam had been mostly good to her, and she didn’t want to cause a scene.

She touched the place on her neck where the gold piece had lain. It was safely put away for the time being, but she knew Sam would expect her to wear it. She heard someone

say it was worth one hundred thousand dollars, but she couldn't believe that. How could any one thing be worth that much money? Addie rolled over and tried again to get comfortable.

Thankfully, Sam had still not come to bed. Probably working downstairs at the Moerman Gold Palace, which included a gambling hall, saloon, and brothel. Unfortunately, Addie's suite of rooms was on the second floor, with many of the brothel rooms just down the hall, and the noise seemed to never die down.

She punched the pillow and flipped onto her left side. She had lived in the Yukon since her father and brothers dragged her north in 1898 during the gold rush. She'd been just fifteen years old and had no say over the matter. Just as she'd had no say in marrying Moerman. She supposed it could be much worse. When her brothers sold her to Moerman after the death of their father, they had tortured her, telling her she would have to work as a lady of ill-repute. Barely eighteen, Addie had tried desperately to find a way out of Dawson City, but she had no money, and even her best friend, Millie Stanford, couldn't help.

But thankfully Sam was more impressed with her cooking skills and had bought her mainly to keep her baking and serving up meals for the gambling hall. Addie hadn't minded that, except she wasn't paid . . . at least not regularly. From time to time, Sam took pity on her lack of decent shoes or clothes and gave her money to buy herself what she needed. He was better to her than her brothers were. It wasn't long, however, before he took advantage of her situation and forced her to be his mistress as well as his cook. Addie reluctantly gave in, knowing there was no one who could stop it from happening, and

maybe as Sam's woman, she wouldn't have to endure being passed around to the customers. At least that had turned out as she'd hoped. In time, Sam married her, although to this day Addie wasn't exactly sure why. Maybe he was afraid of losing her to another man. Maybe he honestly cared about her reputation. It seemed unlikely, still . . . who could say?

As Mrs. Moerman, she had protection from the men who showed up begging to have her as their partner for the hour. Sam made it very clear that his wife was not for rent and that one of the other girls would have to do. But now, even a year later, Addie was still propositioned by strangers.

She gave a sigh and rolled onto her back, staring at the ceiling. Despite the hour, dim light filtered in from behind black curtains. Midnight sun was what they called it, but Addie had never quite gotten used to a sun that never really set in the summer.

She thought of when she'd first arrived in Dawson City and met the charming seventeen-year-old Isaac Hanson. They used to take long walks around Dawson. They would inevitably lose track of time, and Addie would get in trouble for showing up at home near midnight. It had been love at first sight, and in truth, Isaac was the only man Addie would ever love. When he left the Yukon for college, Isaac promised her he would find her again no matter where she went. He gave her a small tintype picture of himself, and on the back, he scratched out the words *Remember Me*.

Addie knew she would always remember him, even after being forced to marry Sam. Poor Sam. He knew she didn't love him and never would.

Addie pulled the cover over her head and closed her eyes. She fell asleep almost immediately. Thoughts of Isaac put

them together in her dream. They were walking along the river, talking about their future. Isaac had just said something when Addie felt her body being shaken awake. She opened her eyes and blinked hard. A lamp on the table had been lit, and Millie Stanford was beside her bed.

“Addie, wake up. Something happened.”

“Millie, what in the world are you doing here?” Addie rubbed her eyes. “What time is it?”

“Nearly five. Look, Sam’s been shot. There was a fight.” She paused as if perplexed.

Addie sat up. “What is it? Just tell me.”

“Sam’s dead.”

Addie was fully awake now. She threw back the covers. “Let me get dressed.”

She slipped into a navy blue skirt and gray blouse. Millie helped her do up the buttons in the back.

“Who did it—Hiram? Shep?” She named her brothers as prime suspects due to their well-known hatred of Moerman. They had once worked for him and been good friends, but after selling Addie to Sam, they thought they were due much more than Sam was willing to give. It made them enemies.

“No, it was a stranger in from the outer regions. I don’t know anything else. Jack was . . . visiting me, and we both heard the shots, so he dressed in his uniform and went downstairs to see what had happened. Then he came and got me so that I could break the news to you.”

“Thank you. I appreciate that it was you and not someone else.” Millie had been the only person to make her life bearable when Addie was forced to change her living arrangements. Millie worked at the saloon and brothel, and Jack, one of the local policemen, was quite fond of her. He often

commented about buying out her contract, and Addie had assured Millie that when the time was right, she would see to it that Sam did the right thing. Now he was dead.

Addie ran the brush through her long brown hair and tied it back with a ribbon. “I suppose I’m ready.” She headed for the door with Millie right behind her.

By the time Addie reached the gambling hall’s large open room, quite the crowd had gathered. She spied her brothers standing off to one side, and Jack and another policeman were standing near a blackjack table with the stranger.

Sam’s body lay in a pool of blood on the floor near the door. No one had even bothered to cover him. Addie steeled herself and went to Jack.

“Addie,” he said, nodding. “Sure sorry about this.”

“Thanks for sending Millie. What happened?”

“This guy said he was being cheated. Pulled a gun and threatened Sam, who happened to be dealing. Sam told him to put the gun away and leave. But he didn’t, so Sam started for the door and was nearly there, as you can see, when the man told him he wasn’t going to be cheated and shot him in the back.”

“He cheated me. I know how to play blackjack, and he cheated me. Dealt off the bottom for himself.”

Sam’s right-hand man, Bud, came to Addie. “Sure sorry about this, Mrs. Moerman. What do you need me to do?”

“Get Sam to the undertaker and have Joe clean up the mess.” She spoke with the calm of someone who had done this before, when in truth she had never had to deal with anyone’s death. Sam always managed the fights and killings. Dawson City was a dangerous town—especially when the Moerman Gold Palace was involved.

It was nearly eight in the morning before everything had been tended to. People were coming and going throughout the morning, but Addie remained to oversee the entire matter. Unfortunately, Addie's brothers, Hiram and Shep, stuck to the place like glue. They kept their distance, seeming to understand that she was in no mood to deal with them, but nevertheless they stayed around.

"Everybody needs to go home. I need sleep," she announced. But it wasn't to be. Mr. Lundstrom walked through the doors. He was a middle-aged man who handled legal matters for Sam.

"Mrs. Moerman, I'm mighty sorry to hear about what happened."

"Well, it's the nature of the business, isn't it?" She fixed him with a stern look. "Sam always said he'd probably die dealing cards."

"Yes, well, I know it's all just happened, but we will need to discuss Sam's arrangements."

Addie was more than a little aware of her brothers moving closer. It reminded her of wolves sneaking in for the kill. She ignored them. "The only thing I need to know right this minute is if he had arrangements for his funeral."

The man considered the question for a moment. "Yes, I believe he did. If I recall, he has had a plot at the cemetery for some time. Thankfully, it's June and the ground isn't frozen."

"Yes, that is good. Whatever arrangements he wanted, Mr. Lundstrom, would you please see to them and then let me know when the funeral will be?"

"Of course." The man gave her a sympathetic nod. "You have my deepest condolences, Mrs. Moerman. If it's of any comfort, Sam left everything to you."

It wasn't a comfort at all. The only thing Addie wanted was to be free of Sam and Dawson City. Now this man was telling her she was the owner of a gambling hall and brothel.

"Mr. Lundstrom, would you find me a buyer for the Gold Palace?" This brought Hiram to her side. Shep followed. Addie continued to ignore them. "I want to sell out."

Mr. Lundstrom looked confused for a moment, then seemed to understand. "Yes, I suppose it would be difficult for a widow to run such a place."

"She's got me and Shep to help her. She don't need to be selling. Besides, she's our responsibility now. We're her brothers." Hiram put his hand on Addie.

She gave him a sharp elbow in the gut. "You are nothing to me, Hiram. I am the widow of the man you sold me to. Nothing more."

Hiram growled and took hold of her. His hand tightened around her upper arm in a most painful grip. "You got no say in this. You're our property."

"I'm afraid you're wrong," Mr. Lundstrom interjected. "Mrs. Moerman is no one's property. She is her own authority and her husband set her up to be well served. She'll have plenty of money to see to her needs."

Addie jerked away from her big brother. "You had your chance. You sold me once, but you'll never do it again." She gave Mr. Lundstrom a nod. "I'll be waiting to hear from you regarding the funeral."

She turned and swept past her brothers. She had nearly reached the stairs when Hiram's voice boomed out. "This ain't over, Addie. You owe us."

"That's right, Addie," Shep chimed in. "You got more than enough, and we got nothing."

Addie fought against making a scene and calling them both out on their lack of concern for her welfare. They sold her into slavery as sure as Joseph in the Bible was sold by his brothers. She just kept walking up the steps with Millie close behind.

The minute she reached her room, Addie hurried inside and motioned for Millie to follow. “Close the door and lock it,” Addie said, moving to open the drapes. “I can hardly believe those two. They think I’ll come back to them as if I have no ability to see to myself.”

“They’re very dangerous, Addie. They won’t stop until they have their way.”

Addie turned and met Millie’s worried expression. “That’s why you’re going to help me get out of Dawson City without them knowing.”

“How will we do that?”

“I’m not entirely sure, but I think we can figure out a plan.” Addie went to the small writing desk and drew out a key. “I’ve saved up gold and jewelry—gifts from Sam. With that, plus what I’ll inherit from him, I have more than enough to get out of here.”

Addie went to the armoire in the corner and unlocked the bottom drawer. She drew out a heavy lockbox and placed it on the bed. She took another key, which she’d hung on the back of the armoire, and unlocked the box.

Millie moved closer to see the contents. “Oh goodness!”

Inside was a variety of jewelry and gold nuggets. She had several bags of gold dust, but perhaps most impressive was the gold-nugget necklace she’d taken off just a few hours ago.

“That necklace is really something.” Millie lifted it from the box. “Heavy too.”

“Yes.” Addie studied the piece as Millie turned it one way and then another. A heavy gold chain had been used for the base of the necklace, and from that hung the gold nuggets in various sizes, starting small near the clasp and gradually increasing in size until the center, where a large teardrop-shaped nugget marked the middle of the necklace. It was a ghastly thing as far as Addie was concerned.

Millie carefully put the necklace back in the box. “Oh, Addie, surely we can get you out of Dawson with all of this.”

“I know Bud and Joe will help me. Even if Mr. Lundstrom doesn’t manage to sell the Gold Palace, it won’t matter. Dawson City is losing people every day. Surely I can just slip away with those folks and start anew somewhere else.”

She paused and took hold of Millie’s hand. “I’m setting you free, cancelling your contract. Tomorrow, I’ll go through Sam’s papers and set everyone free. If they want to renew a contract with the new owner that will be up to them, but I will see that they have their freedom and some cash to leave this place.”

“Oh, Addie, that will cost a lot.”

“All of this gold cost someone a lot in either work or their very life. I want to do whatever good I can.” She put a bag of gold dust into Millie’s hands. “Tell Jack this is for the two of you. But I’m going to need your help first. I can’t trust anyone else.”



Three days later, Addie had a plan. Hiram and Shep had tried to force her to meet with them more than once. The armed guards for the Gold Palace refused them entry as Addie

had ordered, which only served to make them all the madder. Hiram stood in the street yelling up at her window for nearly fifteen minutes, making it clear that he wasn't about to drop the matter.

It gave Addie a certainty that she needed to get out of town as soon as possible. The funeral for Sam had been short and simple the day before. Afterward, Mr. Lundstrom had quietly bought the Gold Palace from her. She'd practically given it away, knowing that she had more than enough gold to see her through the rest of her life if she was careful. Her one provision was that each of the girls who had worked for Sam be given some money and set free. If they chose to stay in that lifestyle, Lundstrom would deal with them honestly. He agreed. That gave Addie great comfort.

She and Millie had hit upon a plan. Because she was still quite small, they figured she could pass as a boy. A down on his luck boy who had gone to the Yukon hoping to find a fortune and instead found hunger and homelessness like so many.

It was almost comical to resort to such a thing. Her father had brought her into the Yukon the same way. He didn't want anyone knowing she was a girl as they traveled because he knew there could be conflict should someone take a fancy to her. Men were often ruthless when it came to women. Her father knew that full well because he and her brothers often acted that way. And Addie had been happy to pretend to be a boy. She very much liked the idea of being ignored. Hopefully, it would work again.

Millie arranged to find some ragged boy's clothes and an old knapsack. Addie arranged for Mr. Lundstrom to get her passage on a boat that would take her south. Eventu-

ally she'd catch the train and then a ship to head to Seattle. That big city was surely large enough to hide anyone who wanted to be hidden.

The trick would be getting away from the Gold Palace. Hiram, Shep, or someone working for them watched the place at all times. Addie had heard they were promising their friends a piece of her fortune if they would help keep Addie under observation.

Bud and Joe, however, figured out how to help her with that as well. They rounded up a bunch of boys to come into the Gold Palace, making a commotion. Bud would usher them out, and Addie would slip into their ranks. They set it all up for when the Palace was at its busiest. With so many people coming and going, Addie ought to be able to just leave without being noticed.

Now, waiting for the appointed time, Addie made one last decision. "Millie, help me cut my hair. I snuck into Dawson with my hair cut off, I might as well go out that way. At least this way if my hat falls off it won't give anything away."

"Are you sure?" Millie asked.

"Yes. Quite. We'll have to be quick. Don't worry what it looks like, just cut it."

Millie took up the scissors and nodded as Addie started to undo her braid. "No, just leave it. I'll cut it at the top of the braid."

"Smart thinking."

Millie began snipping away at the thickness. Finally, she held the braid up in front of Addie. "There you go."

Addie looked in the mirror. They had already smudged her up with dirt and soot. She didn't even recognize herself. "Cut some more. Trim it up a little shorter."

Millie did her best. When the clock chimed the hour, Addie was ready. She grabbed the heavy knapsack. She had packed it with a change of clothes and another pair of boots. Each of the boots was stuffed with gold and jewelry, and on top was a pair of wool socks to keep everything contained.

She secured her cap in place. “How do I look?”

Millie studied her a moment. “I honestly wouldn’t recognize you.”

“Good.” Addie’s voice sounded confident, but inside she was fighting back her fears.

She sent Millie downstairs first to let Bud know she was ready. Meanwhile, Addie snuck down the back stairs and waited in position for the boys to show up. It wasn’t long until a half dozen or so urchins wandered into the Gold Palace. They started begging for food almost immediately, causing a disruption to those who were dining. Addie slipped into their numbers and found herself welcomed without words. The boys crowded around her, as Bud and Joe had no doubt instructed. Across the room, Addie spied Hiram drinking at the bar. She prayed he wouldn’t recognize her or even care about the rowdy boys.

He didn’t. He glanced up only once that she saw and then went back to his beer. She had no idea where Shep might be, but so long as neither recognized her, she’d be safe. At least she prayed she would be. She wasn’t all that sure God heard her prayers, since she’d never been in a church, but Isaac had once told her that He would.

“You boys get out of here. You’re not old enough to be of use to me.” Bud grabbed her by the collar and put his arm around another boy to push them through the door. Once outside, he gave Addie’s shoulder a squeeze. “Go on and

stop causing me trouble. You boys know better. Why don't you go beg down by the docks?"

The boys moved en masse with Addie in the middle of them. They shouted crude insults back at Bud and continued their way to the river. The steamer waiting there blew its whistle to let everyone know it would soon be leaving. Again, the boys made a scene, racing up the gangplank and past the man taking tickets. Addie slipped away from them and was helped by one of the captain's men. It was all over in a matter of minutes. She was with the boys one second, and in another, she was being pushed into a small cabin by one of the captain's men. How in the world Bud had managed it all, she didn't know, but she was ever so glad she'd left him a nice bonus with Mr. Lundstrom.

"You'll be safe now, boy. Stay here. Someone will bring you something to eat in the morning."

Addie nodded and said nothing in reply. She'd been practicing a lower voice but wasn't at all convinced that she could pull off speaking as a boy. Once the steamer was underway, she breathed a sigh of relief and sat down on the bed.

The room was stuffy, but she didn't mind. The last few days had been unbearably hot, so at least she wouldn't have to worry about freezing to death on her trek south. She leaned back and closed her eyes, her pack still secure on her back. It was all she had to her name, except for some ready cash Millie had insisted she hide in the socks she was wearing and the binding they'd used for her breasts.

She thought of her brothers back in Dawson City without enough money to leave. They would be livid when they learned she was gone. Millie was going to cover for her for a few days, telling them Addie was sick, and the doctor

agreed to help by insisting she needed to be quarantined. That would buy her precious time so that just in case they were able to come up with enough for their passage south, Addie would have a good head start.

Now, if she could just reach Seattle.



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

MAY 1909

Oh, what a busy day,” Pearl Fisher said, coming into the kitchen. “How’s supper coming along?”

Addie Bryant stirred the thick beef stew. It was one of Pearl’s favorites. “The stew is ready. I just pulled it from the oven. If you want to call Otis, I’ll have it and everything else on the table momentarily.”

“Wonderful. I swear I have such an appetite these days. I believe it’s all due to the extra work with the expo. I’ve never worked nearly so hard.” The older woman left Addie to finish up and went in search of her husband.

Placing the stew in a serving bowl, Addie smiled at the creation. She had always been a decent cook. People in the Yukon used to come calling just in hopes of getting a sample of whatever she was serving for supper. That was saying something, too, because they had to endure her father and brothers in order to eat at the Bryant table.

She hurried to gather up the vegetable side dishes and biscuits. Once Otis knew supper was on the table, he’d waste

little time getting there. The Fishers were good people, and Addie thought Pearl was right. The soon-to-be-open expo was making them all work harder and eat more.

The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition was opening in Seattle on the first of June, and Addie's employer, Otis Fisher, had the brilliant idea of creating what he called "Camera Girls" to promote photography and in particular the sale of Kodak's new Brownie camera.

Otis had hoped to be the expo's official photographer, but that went to his rival Frank Nowell. To counter his disappointment, Otis had come up with the idea of training pretty young ladies to take pictures with the new cameras, and then folks could stop by his little store at the expo and buy the postcard-sized photo that had been taken. And with any luck, they'd buy a new camera as well.

Addie thought the entire thing was brilliant. She knew the pretty and personable young ladies would attract attention. Otis and Pearl had even invented a uniform for them to wear. Black skirt, high-necked white blouse with long sleeves, and a straw boater hat trimmed in black ribbon, which they provided for each girl, as well as a name tag that Pearl had fashioned. The uniforms were smart looking and distinguished them as Camera Girls to the roaming expo crowd.

Pearl returned to the kitchen to help with the coffee. Addie handed her a tea towel so that she wouldn't burn herself.

"Otis is so worried that people aren't going to buy the photographs or cameras," Pearl tsked as she followed Addie to the table.

"I think folks are really going to be excited about this, and Otis is selling the photos quite inexpensively." Addie grabbed the sugar and cream from the sideboard.

“So long as he has the camera sales he anticipates, we should do fine,” Pearl replied.

“I believe the sales will go well. The girls are quite excited about the commission they’ll earn for each camera they sell.”

They went to the table, where Otis waited to take his place. Addie surveyed the scene, making sure nothing was missing, then took her seat as Otis helped Pearl into her chair. Once seated he offered grace, then immediately dug into the stew to serve it up.

Addie passed her bowl to be filled, as was the routine on something like stews or soups. They never stood on formality here.

Once the stew was served, Addie passed the biscuits and butter. After that the creamed peas and a platter of asparagus made their way around the table, and they were finally ready to eat.

Otis sampled the stew and smiled. “Good, good. Our Addie is quite the cook and takes the load off you, Pearl. We are blessed.”

He was a pleasant employer and even better landlord. Addie had found them on her first day in Seattle, seven years ago. She had spied a notice declaring there was a small room for rent on the third floor downtown. Fisher Photography occupied the first floor of the building, while its owners were on the second floor. The small room on the third floor suited Addie just fine. She was living with other people, and there would be no need for her name to be listed at the address.

Knowing she was newly arrived, Otis asked if she was interested in a job. He had presumed her a boy in need of work, and for a time, Addie let them both believe that. It

got her established and solidified her friendship before she confessed the truth.

The Christian couple had been loving and kind, very nearly becoming the parents Addie had always longed for. Eventually she confided in them, explaining that she wasn't a boy at all, but rather a young woman trying to make it on her own after her father's death. She told them of how her brothers sold her in marriage to a man she didn't love. Pearl was horrified at the thought. Addie was careful not to reveal the truth of the matter in full. When she'd seen Pearl's upset over the idea of being sold in marriage, Addie could hardly admit to the situation being so much worse. Fortunately, the Fishers had told her they would do whatever they could to help her. In turn, Addie admitted to having some gold in the bank. She had offered to help them on several occasions, but always Otis told her no—that he would find a way to provide for Pearl and himself.

“Well, the shop is ready for opening day,” Otis admitted. “I stocked the last few crates of supplies and made sure the darkroom was ready.”

“Do the expo coordinators have everything ready for tomorrow's opening day?” Pearl asked.

“I think so. They were going to lay the last bits of sod tonight after the University of Washington graduated its classes and ended the school year,” Otis replied.

“It's all so very exciting.” And Addie meant that too. There had been very little that she'd taken such pleasure in as she had the expo's birth and development. She had watched the area come to life as the men built grand and glorious buildings, fountains, and gardens on property belonging to the University of Washington. Of course, there was a bargain to

be made. Those in charge of the exposition agreed to build several permanent buildings amidst the temporary ones, so that the college could use them after the expo. Locally, it was seen as a great boon for the school and the city.

The plan was for millions of people to attend and learn about the various cultures represented in Alaska, the Yukon, and the Pacific. The focus of the exhibits on Alaska was meant to encourage a push for it to become a permanent territory or even a state. It was hoped that there would be renewed interest in people wanting to settle there if visitors knew about the place and its peoples. The emphasis on the Yukon exhibits would also be tied to the rapid development of the local area. Seattle exploded with people in 1898, when the gold rush was on. There were to be several displays devoted to the requirements for each citizen heading into the Canadian wilderness. Lastly, the Pacific exhibits would focus on anything and everything in the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Representatives for Hawaii would share its culture and history, as would those for the Philippines, Japan, and other locales.

Despite whatever might happen in the next few months, Addie, and many others, thought the expo had already changed Seattle for the better. There had been new street-car lines added, the sewers and electric services had been extended, and new neighborhoods were springing up faster than anyone had expected. Added to this was the betterment of the university. Even if the expo should fail overall, Seattle had benefitted.

“Do you think the girls will do well, Addie?” Otis asked, sounding a little more anxious than she’d heard him before.

“Of course. I’ve had them over there every day to learn

the locations of everything they could. They know the position of the shop and where it stands in contrast to various buildings and amusements. I think most of them could find it blindfolded.”

“And they understand all about the camera. Are you sure we don’t need to call them together tonight?”

Pearl responded before Addie and patted her husband’s arm. “It will be good, Otis. You’ll see. The girls will do well. It might be rocky at first, but I believe by the end of this grand event, they will be quite comfortable and have sold every camera you have available.”

“I hope you’re right. We’ve invested so much.”

“Otis, I believe it will be a complete success.”

He still looked worried. “But you know the last expo did not do well. The one in Jamestown was a huge failure. Millions of dollars were lost.”

“That’s true,” Addie admitted, “but I don’t believe it’s going to happen to us. The newspaper said they were poorly managed and had overly ambitious goals that they knew they could never accomplish. The planners here have been very wise and the people equally supportive. Just look at all the money they were able to raise from regular citizens alone.”

“She’s right, Otis. It’s going to be just fine.”

Addie smiled. “Besides I’ve already told you that if all else fails, I’ll buy your entire inventory and sell it elsewhere. You two are the only ones who know that I have plenty of money in the bank to do exactly that.”

“No, no. I want to earn the money myself,” Otis said, shaking his finger at her. “I will build my new shop with my own blood and sweat. This is a matter of pride. My father

always told me anything worth having was worth giving your all. Sometimes chances have to be taken, and this is that time for me.”

“Then do not give it further concern, husband.” Pearl smiled so sweetly at the man. Theirs was a true love match, and Addie couldn’t help but be a little envious.

Pearl began again. “We prayed about this and felt it was the right thing to do—the thing God called us to do. Satan wants us to doubt. We cannot spend all of our time in worry.”

He drew a deep breath and refocused on the food. “You are right. I will stop my fretting.”



Hiram Bryant was tired of being bossed around, but as a part of an early release agreement with the Canadian government, he and Shep had signed on for the hard work in order to get out of prison.

They had been sentenced to ten years for an armed robbery that had resulted in a man being severely wounded. After serving seven of it, they were offered a deal. If they would participate in helping with the heavy lifting aspect of moving artifacts to Seattle for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, they would receive an early release. The news was well received by Hiram and Shep, who had more than wearied of life in prison.

“You fellas have done a good job,” the overseer announced. “I have paperwork here that declares you’ve served your time and met all of the requirements for early release from prison.” He handed out the envelopes to a dozen men and smiled. “The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition is going to be better for all

of your work on the Yukon exhibit. You'll find a small amount of pay included in your release papers. You're welcome to spend the night in our tent, but tomorrow it's coming down."

Not a single man there cared one whit as to whether the exposition would be better, nor did they have any interest in staying in the prison tent. Hiram took his papers and elbowed Shep.

"Let's go into town. I'm sure we can manage to find something else. At least a decent meal, and maybe some female companionship." He took up the sack of their worldly possessions and threw it over his shoulder.

Shep nodded and followed his brother away from the Yukon exhibit. As they neared the front gate area, a man called to them.

"Hey, you two. Wanna earn some money?"

Hiram stopped, and Shep ran into him. His growl was enough to cause Shep to jump nearly three feet to the right.

"What did you have in mind?" Hiram asked, turning around.

"I'm helping with landscaping. We're laying the last of the sod tonight. I could use a couple more fellas to help with carrying the sod from the wagons to the areas where it will be planted. It pays well."

Hiram considered it only a moment. "I suppose we could."

"We'll probably work quite late," the man added, "so if you want, you can stay in the dorm we have for the groundskeepers. I know for a fact there are a few empty cots—private too. They arranged rooms for the men who would be working throughout the fair."

"Sounds good." Hiram nodded. "Where can I put our gear?" He nodded to the sack.

“I can take it to the place where you’ll stay. After we’re done laying sod, I’ll escort you there as well. I promise you it’ll be safe.”

“It better be.” Hiram looked to Shep and then to the man. “Let’s go.”

It wasn’t that he wanted more meaningless work to do, but the promise of good pay and a place to stay was too much to pass up. He was determined to get a drink as well, but this exposition was dry. Whoever thought that was a good idea was obviously blind to the profits that could be made by whiskey and beer. People would get thirsty, and the advertised lemonade and iced tea didn’t satisfy like a cold beer. The exposition planners were fools.

They worked until midnight, and when the last of the sod was laid and the last adjustments made, the man who’d hired them reappeared.

“I’ll walk you over to the dorm.”

Hiram and Shep were covered in dirt and sweat, but it didn’t matter. They’d never worried overmuch about cleanliness. It took money to stay clean.

As if reading Hiram’s thoughts, the man pointed. “At the far end of the building are showers. There’s plenty of hot water. Soap is provided as well as towels.”

Suddenly settling for dirt and sweat didn’t seem nearly so appealing. “Thanks,” Hiram said.

“I never really introduced myself. The name is Riley Martin. You fellas worked hard. Want a job helping to keep up the grounds? Pick up trash and so forth. You’d carry a canvas bag around and use a pickup stick to get the trash. It doesn’t pay as well as what you just made, but I can keep you in the dorm for no charge.”

It wasn't at all what Hiram wanted, but he was starting to think it might be to their benefit. "Any time off? We haven't had even a day since they brought us down here."

The man smiled. "I can give you opening day—tomorrow—but you'll need to be available at the crack of dawn on Wednesday. We'll need to have the entire campus cleared of trash before the expo opens that day. The other trash collectors will do what they can through opening day, but we're anticipating around seventy thousand people or more, so it'll be difficult to keep up. Your regular days off will be Thursdays and Sunday until noon. The expo doesn't open until one in the afternoon on Sundays."

He opened the door to the groundskeepers' dormitory and led the way to a small room with two cots. "This will be yours for as long as you're employed by the exposition. Oh, and you get a free lunch each day—part of your pay. Otherwise, you can get food from the expo at a discounted price. Just show them your work pass." He handed one to each man. "This will get you in and out of the expo for free, and like I said, discounts on food and drink and a free lunch."

Hiram looked over the small room. The cots were made up with a pillow, sheet, and blanket. There wasn't even a window in the room or another piece of furniture. It wasn't all that different from prison. "Sounds good." Hiram and Shep received their pay and waited until the man was gone to speak.

"Why'd you do that?" Shep asked. "I thought we were going into town. I wanted to get a beer."

"I know, and we'll have tomorrow off to do just that." Hiram noted that their sack of goods was placed at the foot of one of the cots.

“I thought we were gonna make some money for ourselves. Make money our own way,” Shep said, sounding quite disgruntled.

Hiram pushed him aside. “Look, I had an idea. If we work here and live nearby, we can pick the pockets of all who come to the expo. It should be an easy way to make a living—at least until this fair closes down. As employees of the expo, no one is going to expect us to be picking pockets.”

Shep actually smiled. “I hadn’t thought of that.”

“We’ve got a place to stay, showers, and free meals. There’s been many a time we’ve gone hungry in the past, so at least there’s that. We’ve got some good money in our pocket and the day off tomorrow to figure out what all we want to do.”

“You suppose Addie might come to the expo?”

Hiram frowned. “That’s hard to say. We don’t know exactly where she ended up.” They had overheard Millie telling one of the store owners that Addie had moved to Seattle. That had been enough to set Hiram’s mind on future plans. He figured to beat it out of Millie, but instead he and Shep had gotten caught robbing a man who just happened to be a judge. There had been no mercy for them—only prison.

But now they were in Seattle, and if she hadn’t moved away, Addie was here as well. Hopefully, it wouldn’t be all that hard to find her . . . and that gold-nugget necklace.

“I’m going to go take a shower. You’d do well to do the same. Maybe wash out your clothes, and we can dry them overnight.”

“Seems like a lot of fuss to pick up trash.”

“We’re going into town tomorrow, stupid. And frankly I don’t want to smell your stench all day.”

Shep shrugged. “These clothes aren’t all that good anyway. Just used clothes given to us by the prison. Couldn’t even give us a change of clothes.”

“That’s all right. We’ll steal what we need tomorrow.” Hiram smiled. “Remember how to do that?”

His younger brother laughed. “I reckon I do.”

“I thought as much,” Hiram said, heading for the door. “Now, come on. I’m worn out and want to get to sleep. We’ve got a lot to accomplish tomorrow. Including figuring how to sneak some whiskey back with us.”