

## **The Making of Gangsters**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Growing up in rural Ohio on a small farm was easy and fun with long summer days filled with chores and play. My parents were hard working white Protestant stock, church going and led what some may describe as uncomplicated or boring lives. Every summer we took a weeks vacation. We would pack up the car on Friday evening and head to the mountains of West Virginia and Maryland to visit my mother's brothers and sisters. There were loads of cousins because my mother was one of ten children. Coming from the flat farm country of Ohio the mountain farms held great adventures. My Aunts and Uncles had large farms with hundreds of acres that included endless streams, deep woods and mountain tops. There were also guns to shoot, picnics and childish behavior to indulge; it was a busy fun filled week. At the age of eleven or twelve over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July one summer morning in the mountains we packed several cars packed and went to visit one my Uncle's which we had never visited before on our annual vacations. He was an older brother and my mother had never mentioned him except on a few occasions. My mother never had a strong relationship with her older brothers and sisters because several had married and moved away when she was just a baby. There was also some whispering going on and there seemed to be some mystery concerning this particular Uncle. Among us children there was quit an expectation of adventure when we stopped at the fist gate. Securely closed behind us we crossed a meadow and then another gate. There we started a long climb up the mountain of perhaps half a mile when finally we arrived at a mountain top home a barn and collection of out buildings. There were cars parked helter-skelter and a crowd of relatives some of which were familiar and many that were not. There were some introductions and as kids we were eager to play but there were a number of kids older than us; tough looking boys with no shirts and silly grins that offered to show us around. My brothers and I were led to large wash tub of ice and cold water chucked with soda pop and told to take our pick. This was quit a treat as our parents rarely if ever purchased bottled soda pop. We were enjoying our first gulps when I spotted another wash tub nearby and went to investigate. It was full of brown bottles. I removed one from the icy water taking note that it had no label. It looked like a beer bottle not that I was any expert. You see there had never been a bottle of beer or liquor in our house. My only knowledge came from a few wayward empty bottles we had found along the road. As I was examining the bottle one of the older boys came over and told me to put it back before my mother caught me. "That's home made

beer like your grand daddy made. You're too young to drinking that cause it will kick you in the head." About that time another boy came up behind him and snickered, "Yah that just like grand pap made before they sent him to jail for making it." The revelation that my grand father had made beer and had gone to jail was shocking and would create many future questions.

I would inquire about my grand father, his beer making and jail soon afterwards but my mother made it quite clear that his was not to repeat this information or ask about it again. Years would pass and I would graduate High School and be inducted into the Army. On furlough and at home one afternoon my mother was telling me that one of her brothers had died. One I don't remember ever meeting. On this occasion I asked once again about my grand father. In a melancholy manner she told me about his large hands and mustache and what a gentle man he was. Now knowing this was in the Prohibition area I asked again if her were involved with bootleg alcohol. In the same melancholy manner she said she yes he was involved in making alcohol and beer along with several of her brothers and sisters. She described by grand father a being tall and thin with red hair and dark red handlebar mustache. She said he was hard working, and was well liked and respected in Green Valley. She told me how she could remember Revenuer's searching the house and not finding anything. And then one night later her brothers showing up and opening a trap door under the kitchen table and taking tin's and boxes of alcohol away to some other hiding place. She also remembered the last time she would see her father in 1933 at the age of eight.

Years would pass and at times I though it cool that my grand father had been a bootlegger. My mother passed away a few years ago and in going through her things I found the beginning of a book she had mentioned she was going to write. It was hand written and full of childhood pleasant stories. I had hoped there were be more about my grand father and her older brothers and sisters. Having written one novel "Amedeja Returns to the Jungle", I decided to write another. My research would immediately take me to an Aunt that was a nine years older than my mother. Sitting over a kitchen table she explained that she was not part of the business but she did know a great deal more than my mother. In fact she confessed to knowing more that she should. Her older brothers and sisters had many secrets and I was told there was little chance that any of them would talk even though the statute of limitations had certainly expired on most of their crimes. This Aunt would tell me that it was big and there were many people involved in West Virginia and elsewhere. Her facts were sometime blurred with time and there was little chance of verifying the incidents and dates. One thing she repeated numerous times was that I could not possible understand how this or that could have happened. "You had to be living in the twenties to understand." She would add "These were different times with so much going on and so much changing. I want you to know these were good people but you wouldn't know that unless you were there. There at that time. It was like no other time in my life."

I took to heart what she told me and over the next few years read about this area in history and tried to collect as many stories as I could about the West Virginia bootleg clan. *The Making of Gangsters* is a fictional account based on fact and theory of how a small group of family members just looking to save the family farm were pulled along on a slippery road to becoming gangsters. I have taken an opportunity in several places to add focus to events by stepping out of the story line. There are many good books on the Prohibition and the 1920's but one of the best cultural studies is "The Modern Temper" by Lynn Dumenil and if you need help with the gangster lingo of the area I would recommend "The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life from Prohibition through World War II" by Marc McCutcheon.

To aid in books understanding and appreciation I will give you a quick guide to the Roaring Twenties. Three major events, World War I ending in 1918, Women's Suffrage the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1919 and Prohibition the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1919 would dramatically change the lives of Americans. After World War I American soldiers returned victorious and with high expectations. Women given the right to vote immediately took the moral high road as the holders of a higher moral standard than men. Prohibition of course made illegal the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages with a few exceptions for the manufacture for personal consumption. Initially passed with no means to enforce it the Volstead Act a year later formed the Prohibition Department of the Treasury with the power to levy fines and jail sentences for offenders. Prohibition was the result of a process started many years earlier against the typical saloon with the long bar, gambling and prostitution. Industry liked the prospects of a more sober work force and the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority seen it as a way of molding and instilling the morals and virtues that they shared and held dear. Prohibition was hailed as great and noble experiment that would ease the ease all the ills of society. Unfortunately many immigrants saw it as an insult to their culture and many others simply saw it as unwanted meddling by the Federal Government. Some states had already become dry by state law. Some like Maryland would never pass their own state law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcohol. Other state like New York would repeal their state laws in the middle of the decade. By the late 1920's only a hand full of States would allocate money for the enforcement of Prohibition. By this time the county was hubris on alcohol and big business. Three consecutive Republican Presidents subscribed to axiom that what was good for business was good for the country. By 1927 however many in rural America and city poor realized the good time and wealth was not trickling down. In fact it was trickling the other direction. Big business was gobbling up mid-sized companies in historic record numbers and chain stores spread their tentacles across the land. The chain stores siphoned off what little capital small communities had and in places like rural West Virginia things were becoming desperate. Farm prices were declining, crafts man were loosing out to mail order

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houses like Sears, the local store was loosing to the chains like Woolworth and local feed mills had to compete with large company mills in the Mid-west. In 1927 jobs were disappearing, the once plentiful wild game was gone, and the children were going to go hungry. Some would leave for the city where they would more often join the poor and destitute rather than finding riches. One family decided to stave off the creditors and tax man by cooking up a few batches of Stump-Jack or moonshine.

***DEDICATED TO GOLDIE AVRELLA BURGDOLL-JONES***

## **The Making of Gangsters**

**PART ONE**

Pittsburgh August 1927

Dawn was bringing light slowly to the gray sky over Pittsburg as most decent folk were still snug in bed asleep or toiling away at some night shift labor. A few hours earlier a Prohibition Special Agent of the US Treasury Department was blinking his sore tired eyes as he followed Booze Man Marsenelli's car through the city streets. The Booze Man had never left home in the middle of the night like this in over two months of surveillance and the Special Agent immediately suspected it was something important; possibly connected to the recent rumor of a large shipment of Canadian liquor arriving in the city. Driving without headlights to avoid detection, the Agent observed the long black Cadillac enter an open door of a river front warehouse where two loitering men now quickly lower the door behind him. Even in the light of a lone street lamp a half block away, the two men looked like tough guys. One was brandishing a machinegun and the sight of it fully awakened the young agent who speed away to make his report.

Booze Marsenelli had risen to prominence in Pittsburg from an obscure job at a meat packing plant six year earlier to a gangster smuggling liquor from Canada, running alcohol stills, brewing beer and operating as many as sixty speakeasies in the city. Marsenelli was also suspected of having out of town connections, possibly as far away as the Italian gangs of New York. It was Marsenelli's recent activity including several recent murders that led local police to request assistance from the Federal Prohibition Agents.

A half-block from the riverfront warehouse, District Administrator Dick Casbro, Agents Jerry Sims and Tom Palmer were soon exiting the Ford Sedan with Thompson machineguns in hand. Administrator Casbro tugged at his sagging pant in a feeble attempt to get them over his large belly, a feat even with the aid of suspenders he rarely accomplished. He then quickly adjusted the unlit cigar in the corner of his mouth and straightened the fine white straw hat upon his head. A ritual the young agents had seen many times before. Looking up the street at the approaching police cars, Dick left for a quick strategy session with the police Captain.

Meanwhile Agent Jerry Sims grinned as he tapped out a cigarette and offered one to his nervous looking friend. Tom declined and Jerry lit-up and took a long hard drag. "This is it Tom Boy; I'll say so. We finally have the goods on the old man. We put him away maybe they'll send us to Chicago or New York where they got bad guys on every corner." Tom smiled back nodding his agreement and turned to an approaching police officer.

The officer was smiling and looking back at his bodies who where coaxing him with smiles and waves to proceed. "The guys back there were wondering if you might keep a little more evidence this time; beings Booze Man might be out of the action soon."

Jerry sneered, "Your talking through your hat mister. He is going to get pinched for sure tonight."

Affectionately he patted the machinegun at his side. "Tell your buddies they should have bought their hooch yesterday." Jerry shook his head in disbelief that the young man would be so bold. But relations with the local police were necessary and Jerry shrugged his shoulder and conceded to the surprised looking officer. "We'll see if we can spare a case or two."

"Thanks we appreciate that. And one more favor if you could. One of the guys is getting married next week and we were wondering if we might get a keg of beer. It's a surprise party so if you could just hide it till we can put it in the trunk."

"Horse shit," Jerry blurted out loud, "now get your no count ass out of here." As the man walked away Jerry angrily flipped his cigarette at him and mock kicked at him. Turning to Tom he made a deep deliberate frown. "Tom, if it wasn't for guys like us it's a sure shot the whole dam country would be drunk in a week."

Tom chuckled, "My guess would be two days." Tom looked to the growing light in the sky where he could now see some spotted crimson clouds on the horizon. The ominous red in the sky sent a shiver up his spine despite the mild temperature. Tom knew they had to move quickly and nervously checked his gun. Rejoining his men characteristically serious and confident; and quickly summed up the arrangements.

"The police are going to cover both ends and the back and we're going in the front door blasting the *sonsabitches*. We know Marsenelli is in there with his henchman Daryl and possibly three, maybe four others. He ain't going to go down without a fight so no sense waiting for hands to go up; any questions?"

Dick motioned to the waiting police and they hastily drove off to take their positions. Elbow to elbow the three Federal Prohibition enforcement officers turned the corner and walked in the shadow of the buildings toward the warehouse. All three wore finely woven white straw hats, long black overcoats, white shirts and bow ties. They held their weapons tightly to their sides in an attempt to conceal the large weapons with the thirty rounds can clips.

Dick pushed open the front door with a shoulder of his wide heavy frame. Inside he held up his badge in one hand, in the other he leveled and tightened the grip on the machinegun. In a low growled voice he shouted, "US Treasury", immediately a rattle of fire erupted from the weapon in his other hand. On ether side his young Agents responded in kind as a fusillade of bullets zipped and zinged hitting boxes, metal, glass and alcohol. As they advanced into the warehouse, return fire erupted from one corner causing the three to take cover momentarily. After few seconds of fierce gun fire came a "KABOOM". The large explosion sent fire, glass and debris flying and blowing out doors and windows. To witnesses outside it looked as if the whole roof heaved upwards, followed by rushing flames that poured from the upper floor windows.

After a brief silence the gun fire continued within the building, then "*BOOM*", another explosion rocked the building and then there was silence. Outside, Police with pistols, rifles and shotguns directed their aim toward the building's doors as coughing men with hands held high in the air started staggering from the back of the building. From the smoking front door emerged the three "G" Men as Federal Government Agents were called, began backing out of the building. As the heat and smoke intensified they fled to the middle of the street. On their blackened smoked stained faces perspiration began flowing in grotesque rivulets as they stood staring at the burning building. Jerry's three day old beard was now black from the smoke while Tom's clean shaven face was streaked with white lines etched from the perspiration. As fire raged in the building their hot gun barrels began to dip to the ground in unison and several muffled secondary explosions rocked the riverside warehouse. Panting for his breath and wrestling with his pants again, Dick smiled at his young Agents and confidently exclaimed, "We got-em boys and their dam liquor too".

This and similar scenes were being played out on the streets of American cities all too frequently by 1927 and the pendulum of public opinion was swinging the other direction on the issue of Prohibition with increasing speed. In 1920 it was believed that Prohibition of alcoholic beverages would reduce crime and corruption, reduce the number of people in jail and in poorhouses and solve most if not all of societies' problems and put the county on a moral highroad to heaven. Instead it ushered in an era of lawlessness, general disrespect for the government and the most rapid moral and social changes in U.S. history. Opposition to Prohibition started before it even went into law and some of the strongest came from returning World War I veterans who's right to a beer had been banished while serving in Europe. A troop ship arriving in New York harbor in 1919 after Prohibition had passed in Congress displayed a banner nearly the length of the ship saying "*WE WANT BEER*". The moral right did not waver for Prohibition was touted as not only the greatest, noblest experiment in U.S. history but in human history. Religious leaders saw it as a means to purge society of the weak moral character brought to America by the low class of recent immigrants. Evangelical reformers denounced the immigrants as the "wretched refuse" washing upon the shores of America. Immigrants like the whiskey drinking Irish, the German beer drinkers and wine drinking Italians. They were at the core of decaying moral values and alcohol was his common sin to be extricated from society. In the first few years of Prohibition, the consumption of Alcoholic Beverages decreased by one third to one half of the pre-Prohibition levels. By 1927 consumption was back to nearly the same rate as before Prohibition. But there had been a fundamental shift in the beverage of choice. Beer which had been the growing beverages of choice before Prohibition was replaced by high grade, high proof, alcohol which was easier for the *moon shiner* to make and more profitable to make and smuggle. But not all could afford the cost of

bootleg alcohol and the poor drinker often quenched his thirst on legal patent medicine, sterno, rubbing alcohol, and doctored antifreeze. By 1927 private stocks of alcohol had been depleted, government warehouses looted, and most large scale illegal breweries and distilleries in and around most cities were shut down by the ever expanding force of Federal Agents aided with local law enforcement, game wardens, dog catchers and any and all government employees that cared to help in the abolition of alcoholic drinks. In Illinois even the Ku Klux Klan was deputized to track down whiskey thirsty citizens both black and white. In Maryland game wardens and even some oyster inspectors were paid solely on percentage value of the property and cash seized from smugglers, bootleggers and distillers. The results seemed impressive with a million and a half gallons of liquor and nearly six million gallons of beer seized in 1927 but the statistics were actually a sad assessment of a runaway problem. In the same year it was estimated that 100 million gallons of liquor were produced and/or smuggled into the country and perhaps two or three times that amount of beer made its way to consumers in speakeasies, private clubs, off street retailers. New micro-brewers sprang up in the cities hidden in offices and apartments and lager brewing and distilling operations shifted to rural areas near towns and even remote backwoods mountainous areas such as West Virginia where prevailing frontier attitudes and mistrust, if not contempt for government, already existed. West Virginia had gone dry in 1914 and hence *moon shiners* had been practicing their trade five years before National Prohibition and state law and local law enforcement had been deemed adequate to handle offenders. When National Prohibition became law the Volstead Act called for much harsher penalties than state laws and as a result most offenders cough by state and local law enforcement was prosecuted in state courts rather than being turned over to Federal Authorities. The Volstead Act called for a six month prison term and thousand dollar fine for a first offense. Federal Prohibition Agents were of course free to track down bootleggers and still operators where ever they could find them but in many areas Prohibition Agents left enforcement to local and state authorities unless their help was requested. To venture into remote areas such as Grant County without an invitation would likely result in lack of cooperation and back-up if it were needed. Even Federal Judges found it hard to impose such a sentence on a five gallon kettle operator and routinely found them not guilty irregardless of the evidence. State and local county Judges often exercised more freedom in imposing sentence for violation of state law. A first offender could be fined twenty five dollars and or thirty days in jail or even less. Fed up with high handed Federal Agents and catering to the increasing wet movement in New York the New York, Al Smith, pushed for the repeal of state Prohibition in 1925 and succeeded, leaving Federal Agents alone to enforce Prohibition. In West Virginia the newly formed State Police were tasked by the Governor with enforcing state Prohibition laws but all too often they found themselves concentrating their efforts in the coal mining areas were Army troops and

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thousands of armed private security personnel were pitted against the United Mine Workers of America. The fear still existed that a mine accident or cut in wages might bring the miners out of the hole like ants in another seditious, treasonous armed rebellion that could threaten the government of the United States and the mine owner's financial welfare. With such important task as keeping the unions and their communist backers at bay there was little time to comb the rugged mountains for still operators, moon shiners, kettle operators and Jack makers as the cookers of mash were often called.

## **TWO**

### **HOMESTEAD**

A few clouds hung lazily around the once green mountain tops of some of the tallest ridges east of the Mississippi. Below the clouds on the rocky slopes of these mountains, a bazaar landscape emerged that would shock any newcomer to conclude the even man had not the capability or the bad since to perpetrate such havoc on mother earth. Broken tree trunks and abandon narrow dirt roads leading to the top of the mountains however were enough indication that indeed man had something to do with the devastation. Wood cutters had come and gone taking with them the board feet and leaving nothing. The great forest of mature Spruce and Hemlock that had been standing from before the arrival of Christopher Columbus were felled by far away corporations for far away houses. The mighty trees were cut into ten and fourteen foot logs and pulled away on sleds or slid down the sides of the mountain to a saw mill or loaded on at train car for a journey to a waiting ship bound for Europe. Before all the standing trees could be removed the fires started by the forest

machinery and trains began burning the rubble of broken limbs and split and discarded logs left behind by the cutters and moved on to thousands of acres of standing timber. The fires continued to burn so often and so fiercely they consumed the ashes and the earth extinguishing only with bare bedrock was reached. The once mighty forest and its laurel and rhododendron, home to hundreds of black bear and deer were now just a memory or past dream. In Preston County going east down the mountain the first sign of trees was around a small shack where a disabled German woodcutter made his abode. The property had been abandoned by the owners after reaping their forest profits and was now owned by the state. Von, as they call him, became a camp cook for a short time after the accident that severed his left hand leaving a stump. When the wood was cut they left the mountain and Von behind. His face or unkempt whiskers dark eyes and large nodded nose were ageless as the mountain itself. The stocky German was still able to swing an ax and tend his lot of hogs and companion hunting hounds. He was a recluse that was seldom seen as he was suspicious of anyone coming up or down the mountain and would sleek away into the trees. His stump of a hand would steady a shotgun aimed at any intruder to his domain.

Down the mountain road a short distance the landscape suddenly changed dramatically. Like some ancient sentries to the valley below stood the giants as they locally know. Virgin spruce nearly three hundred feet tall and larger at the base than most could comprehend. The sixty odd acres of virgin forest were possibly the last standing in the whole state. Woodcutters had estimated that some were six hundred years old and had enough board feet in one tree to build six homes and a few barns. The owner Clarence Lacybough, like his father, chased more than one enquiring timber buyer off the property at gun point. To most people it was a haunting place to be enjoyed only on the fringes. Rhododendron and laurel tangled the interior to a height of twenty feet making it impossible to navigate. Early explorers to the once expansive forest on the mountains used modified snow shoes and boards to traverse the tops of the vegetation without touching the damp dark ground beneath.

A few fast switch back curves down the dusty rutted road it straightened as it straddled the top of a gently descending ridge. This was some of the worst parts of the road as the rain water would run down the mountain road like a muddy creek in a hard rain making the ruts impassable but with extreme care. About two miles past the old woodcutters home, less as the crow flies, the tin roof of the Lacybough house was visible in the widening valley to the left. The tin roof was painted red once upon a time but now was more rust than paint and in the middle there was a noticeable sagging of the roof. Across a small creek and before the hill turned up again sat a dilapidated bank barn and several small out buildings. Like the house it had been an impressive structure some thirty years ago but now was showing its years of neglect. On the right side of the road the forest, like most other forest now standing in the area was young and mixed with hardwoods and groves of

pine. Occasionally a stately oak overlooked by the woodcutters unfurled a large canopy but they were the exception. Further down the right side of the road was a dusty lane leading to another homestead that could not be seen. This recent addition to the valley had been build by Ned Yoder just in 1916 and he was still making improvements.

Somewhere along this ridge on the mid-morning of September 9<sup>th</sup> 1927 came a wife of smoke and the pungent odor of something familiar to most residents of this and many other rural areas. It was a blistering hot, humid morning as Clarence Lacybough crouched down in the forest hideaway close to a simmering still, his gimp right leg sticking out beside him. He was a tall thin man with leathery face sporting a large bushy handlebar mustache. His cut hair and mustache were a deep red color which had been passed on to two of his nine children. He teetered precariously as he mopped his brow with a damp faded red handkerchief and waited. Nervously he looked about, not for the law, but for his son who was supposed to be bringing the jars they had forgotten earlier. Glass Masons would soon be brimming with corn-Jack the satisfying reward for a hard day's work. It was seldom called moonshine but instead corn-Jack, berry -Jack, stump-Jack or lightning. Moonshine, white mule, and white lightening were something you got from the other side of the mountain. Suddenly, the small twenty-five gallon kettle shook and made a loud burping sound that sent a puff of steam from the end of the coil at his feet. Clarence recoiled, lost his balance and rolled on his back spouting a line of profanity under his breath. Scrambling back to his place, he spotted the first drop forming at the end of the coil. Clarence dusted off his green work shirt, adjusted his suspenders and then twirled the right side of his large handlebar mustache as he watched in amazement. The drop began to oscillate and grew larger, then stopped for what seemed like a minute and dropped a few inches where it instantly disappeared into the dry ground without leaving so much as a damp spot. Another drop quickly followed and then another. Clarence closed his eyes and held his hands cherubic fashion under the spout to receive his reward. The steaming end of the coil quickly spit a hot drop of alcohol that blistered his hand on contact and sent him to his feet wiping his now spotted hand on his pants.

Looking around in a wild rage he yelled out, "DUCK! Where the hell are you? You best be coming this way or I'll be laying a hard *switchen* to you."

Fifty yards away, Grant heard his bellowing father and was relived, despite the warning, for he had been hopelessly lost for the past few minutes. Grant was a big beefy boy of twenty-two years and was he oldest and tallest of the Lacybough children and was two inches taller than his father. His six foot four frame and 245 pounds slab and neck-less body seemed out of place with his childish smooth face and reddened hairless cheeks. It was bad enough that he had a speech impediment but without any sign of facial hair, he was doomed to a life of a single man. It was commonly known

that the latter affliction was an indication of lack of development and proper functioning male parts.

Grant was not wearing a shirt for he only had three shirts and there was need to risk tearing one in the woods. He was the oldest and largest of the Lacybough sons and quite a few sizes larger than his father. As a result there were no hand me downs and as he was not attending school there was no need to be spending money on new clothes. So with just his bib overalls and an identical red damp handkerchief like his pa's that was sticking out of a back pocket he made his way through the bramble and woods. Grant started yelling "Here, Ha Ha Hear Pa" in a stutter that worsened when he was excited or about to get switched like a lazy mule. Clarence was blessed with extremely good hearing and ability to read the sounds of the forest and it told him that Grant, on his current course, would pass him by on his way down the hill.

"Over here *damit*, to your left, I'm over here Duck!" Clarence barked.

Clarence was careful to call Grant by his given name in front of the wife and the small children, but like his oldest daughter Fay; most other times it was Duck for obvious reasons.

"Pa Pa ...Pa" Duck's head dipped with each pronunciation.

A smile came to Clarence's face as he perceived a change in direction toward him but suddenly there was a loud crack from a tree branch and an audible, "OH" and "AH" and unmistakable sounds of popping, bracking glass Masons. The sound made Clarence twitch and twinge as if he had gotten hit by a motorcar or bit by a poisonous snake. He considered a short prayer, but his anger had no time for that. Breaking off a tree branch the size of a child's leg he peeled away the blistered skin on the palm of his hand. His hand now sent pain up to his elbow and then to his shoulder and by the time it reached his head he was in a full painful rage, "I'm *comin* for you Duck, I'm *comin* and I got a stick for you." Clarence gripped the tree branch with his other hand and charged off after Grant.

As Grant stood surveying the broken jars, he could hear his approaching father and rubbed his legs and backside at the thought of the beating he would soon receive. Suddenly, a glimmer of green light in the leaves revealed an unbroken jar. With nimble thick fingers he picked it up and turned it slowly like a jeweler looking at a gem. Not a scratch or nick could be found. To his left he could hear what sounded like a team of fear stricken draft horses plunging through the nearby piney thicket. Grant began breathing heavy as the sound of splintering wood, heavy feet and his fathers snarling came closer. "DUCK I SEE YA", he yelled as he broke free of the pines. Defensively Grant thrust the green jar between him and the thrashing machine just in time.

As Clarence eyed the unbroken jar the anger drained away. Clarence loosened his grip on the tree branch and dropped it at his side. Taking the jar from his son he quickly performed an inspection of its liquid carrying ability. A smile came to his face that forced the curl of his handlebar mustache to nearly touch his ears.

"Follow me you flop." With the jar tucked like a pig skin, he rushed off through the forest from weariest he came.

At the still Clarence quickly placed the jar under the dripping coil. Grant started stoking the fire to get a greater heat. A few moments later Grant noticed something horribly wrong. "Pa, the Ka... kettle is swelling up!" Clarence lost his balance attempting to escape and went rolling through the leaves and dirt backwards, yelling for Grant to take cover. In a muffled roar similar to a large military mortar firing, the kettle exploded sending a cloud of hot gases, corn Jack and the soldered top of the kettle up into the air. There was steam trailing the lid which was propelled with such velocity it made an eerie whirling sound spinning over the tree tops like nothing ever seen in Preston County West Virginia.

A few hundred yards down the hill in Green Valley, Ned Yoder and his wife Ester Lacybough-Yoder stopped their porch swing to observe the startling sight and curious sounding spinning disk. Like a flickering beacon in the sunlight, it arched high over the treetops disappearing over the ridge leaving a dispersing vapor trail that looked as if it might point to a possible landing site in Frog Hollow.

"Lord Have Mercy on us all," Ester grabbed her husband's arm, "What has that crazy brother of mine done now!"

"Guess I best go up and see." Ned said calmly as he shook his head trying to comprehend what he had just witnessed. As he was about to get up, a distant volley of swearing was followed by a series of yelps that Ned knew had to be Clarence and his idiot son Grant. Ester blinked her eyes rapidly and tightly puckered her lips moving them about as if she had just sucked on a lemon. As the deep furrows above her eyes pulled the wrinkles out of her forehead she exclaimed angrily while shaking her finger in the direction of the ridge, "You know that was your still don't yah? What sort of lame brained moon shiner, will you tell me, would let a souse like Clarence find his kettle and turn it into a big mess of flying metal all over the ridge up there." Ester flailed her arms around for effect.

Ned pretended to be concerned about his brother-in-law and nephew as he cupped an ear to the ridge and strained to hear the commotion on the ridge.

"Now what if Johnny should come down with a cough or *croup* this winter," Ester continued. "Why I would not have a hot toddy to chase it away with, and heaven forbid you should have to buy some at the store, cause Clarence sure won't have any, and if he did I wouldn't drink it, and nor would I let ....."

Ned was now convinced from the volume of shouting and the fact that the ensemble was receding over the ridge; there was no reason to leave the porch. He placed a firm hand on Esters leg next to

"Hush now, I'll be fixing up another in time to make some Jack for you."  
Ester pushed his hand away. "Yes you will. And it better be good Jack too. Fact is you're too big of a pie to tell Clarence to mind his own business. I just don't understand how a broken...."  
Ned interrupted, "Clarence found it last year while I was making some Peach and last week he said he had some seed and sugar mash but someone had found his still and made off with it. So I thought it was the neighborly thing to do in letting him use mine."

"Ah Ha, someone stole his still. That's as likely as a man flying to the moon Ned. Just you listen to yourself. I don't know where your sensibilities are at times. Clarence went and put it up in those trees somewhere and forgot where it was, is exactly what happened. Just because those *Frenchees* gave him that medal the size of a saucer people think he has a mind. Well if he did he lost in that war, or in jail, or some other place he's been. With the exception of maybe Preston and Katie they all seem to be lacking in development up where it counts." Ester pointed to her head. "I ain't responsible for their shortcomings and nether are you Ned and I don't see why... "

Ned hooked his thumbs on his suspenders, leaned back in the gently swaying porch swing and closed his eyes with a big smile on his face as he let the sound of a babbling brook in the distance drown out the cacophony of Esters critical kinsman assessments.

By 1927 the government estimated that half of the households in America were annually engaged in producing alcoholic beverages. The percentage was somewhat higher in Green Valley, West Virginia. Not all the beverages were illegal of course because each family was allowed under the Volstead Act the ability produce up to two-hundred gallons of fermented fruit juice. Physicians were allowed to prescribe legal alcohol with an allotment of twelve-hundred "Whiskey" prescriptions a year for the treatment of just about anything but most often "bad nerves" also called the shakes. A condition brought on by the lack of whiskey. Patent-medicines were also made and sold legally but were limited to two once containers and were expensive but often contained up to sixty percent alcohol.

### THREE

#### A Frog Hollow Afternoon

Katie Lacybough was a short plump woman with a tight round face and her hair always in a bun like her German mother had worn. When she pushed the screen door aside it slapped the side of old clapboard house with a decisively loud bang sending baby Brooks eyes to a startled wide open. The porch vibrated as Katie and Brook tucked firmly on her hip approached the banister overlooking the side yard. The porch like the house was showing its age and creaked and gave with every step. Some of the railing spindles were missing and a few patches to the porch applied over the years were evident. Clarence often joked that worms from the dogs were eating the porch and they should avoid all being on it one time. Two hound dogs under the porch suddenly raced out into the yard toward a shade tree where they stopped and looked back hoping a meal was about to be tossed their way.

"What's all *dat* NOISE out here" Katie shouted.

Fay, the second oldest Lacybough sibling wiped her hands on a blood-spattered apron and turned to her mother.

"What noise would that be, Ma?"

Katie stomped her swollen bare feet on the porch causing the two dogs that had just lain down to take flight across the dry creek toward the barn.

Katie's voice rose, "That loud bang a while ago and those hogs a squealing Missy, that's what!" On her hip, six months old Brook began grabbing at her breast through her thin cotton dress for an early lunch. Katie quickly slapped the little hand. "Don't be acting simple with me Fay or I'll bring the strap down there."

Wayne the fourth child and third son stopped stoking the fire under the boiling kettle. Pleasants, the fifth child and second daughter stopped plucking the chicken and turned to Fay for her answer.

"Those hogs are a squealing because Tucker and Mason are down there shooting them in the ass with their sling-shoots." Fay grabbed the last chicken hanging on the cloths line by the head and with a swipe of her sharp knife severed the head from its body. Quickly she turned away to avoid the flapping bloody carcass and tossed the head in the metal bucket next to her where its

"That's the end of the chickens Ma, and that big boom was ether an automobile backfiring or Pa and Duck done BLOWED themselves to hell trying to make some Jack."

Wayne bit down on his lip; the less restrained Pleasants began giggling. To lesson her possible punishment Pleasants frantically started plucking the wet feathers on the bird in front her, sending a shower of wet down falling like snow all around her.

"That's an ugly mouth you got Fayette." There was an angry flutter in her voice. "Your Pa ain't making no Jack and if you *knowed* your brothers were shooting the hogs you ought to have done something. Instead you stand there flapping your jaw and neglecting your chores." Katie grabbed up a small piece of kindling from the porch box and began beating the porch banister with it. "You come on up here right now Fayette. I'm going to take that strap to you till I whoop that sass and ugliness out *ah* you." Baby Brook, who had been pouting, was suddenly struck in the face by a splinter of wood from the banister pounding and immediately began wailing.

Fay made a sigh of resignation, she had her tormenting fun and it was time to move on. "I'm sorry Ma. I won't talk like that again. It must be all the heat and smell of this blood. I'll go right down and tell Tucker and Mason that Preston will cut their ears off tonight if they don't stop. And I'll send Wayne down to the wagon shed. Don't know what that noise was but I seen Pa and Duck.... I mean Grant. They were down at the shed a while ago and they appeared to be about normal." Fay pulled the chicken off the close line and plopped it into the boiling pot in front of Wayne.

From the porch Mother and daughter exchanged a tempered glare at one another. "You see that you do that Fay, and tell them boys there is a strap up here waiting on them if they don't do what you tell *em*."

Katie tolerated Fay's occasional disrespect and foul mouth because of her hard work and ability to meet out punishment when needed to the younger children. Fay verbally kept the younger children in line and when that failed she had the muscle to enforce her threats. Fay was a big boned woman and near image of her mother except at six feet tall she was a good eight inches taller than her mother. And although not as heavy as her mother yet, she was clearly headed toward the very large woman sizes. Approaching twenty-one years old she had passed that prime marrying time and was clearly going to be an old maid.

Over the past five years Fay had several suitors but Clarence did not take kindly to them and quickly chased them off. Something Clarence now regretted with the exception of Donald Wetzel. Donald was shifty eyed, nerves as a weasel type and smelled like a spring barn. Clarence found him holding hands with Fay in the barn and threatened to drown him in the creek if he ever came back. Clarence told his friends at the store that someone should have put him in a bag and dropped him in the river when he was baby. Now the boy was so quick and nervous taking him down to the

creek and drowning him would like trying to drown a tomcat in a tin cup.

With Brook in a crisis and a dozen apple dumplings burning up in the fireplace Katie retreated to the kitchen. It was hard to be a good mother in these times. It seemed as though the whole world was trying to confuse young people and interfere with their proper upbringing. Magazines were glamorizing city flappers with scandalous dress and habits like smoking and not using gloves on a date. In her heart she did not blame Fay for her rebellious nature, not even the holding of that Wetzel boys hand without her white gloves. It was so simple when she was a young girl. Katie sat down a moment after placing the blackened dumplings on the table to cool. She rubbed her forehead as she thought of the cause of her children's demise. It all started with that stupid war. It took their father away. Then when their father got shot he had to go away again to jail. *We have both done our best but we have failed them she thought.* Katie was not the sort to blame someone else. It was more her doing than Clarence, there could be little doubt of that. She wiped a tear from the corner of her eye with her apron and got to her aching feet. She put a piece of Brooks dress under the table leg to tether her and begin anew her chores.

The Roaring 20's in addition to bringing more automobiles and mass produced home appliances also brought new forms of communication and expansion of printed magazines which were given life with new advertising dollars. Motor car companies, cigarette manufactures and others soon found that adorning their ads with thin young liberated flappers sold an image of freedom, youth and the good times. More scandalous advertisers showed women holding hands with men sipping Bootleg alcohol and smoking cigarettes. The radio played jazz, the devils music; and films showed nudity a disgrace to God and human decency. By 1927 according to some accounts the sport of distilling illegal moonshine had surpassed the national sport of baseball. Police were objects of the comic section and movies glorified the alcohol gangsters. As Victorian values and respect for government were being shed by a young generation. Katie Lacybough was not the first to shed a tear at the thought of what sort of citizens their children would become.

## **FOUR**

### Preston and his horse Junior

Most would swear Junior was a purebred horse but there were no papers in his lineage; he was just a very fine horse that many admired for his looks and high proud step. The powerful dark chestnut stallion had a white jagged blaze on his forehead and three white socks. Sitting on the cushioned leather wagon seat with the rains, was the third Lacybough child. He was a handsome young man, smart, not quite as tall as his older brother and sister but he was something special. His deep set dark eyes and wavy hair turned the heads of young women and his hard work was noted by all that had labored with him. His thick arms had lifted many a bail of hay, built fences and stocked shelves at the Fork Store. He was always neat with his dress and always managed a few coins in his pocket. He was also his father's favorite or so it seemed to most. He was outgoing and everyone in the community of Peterborough seemed to know him because on Saturday mornings during the summer he and his father delivered pints of alcohol. Grant helped make the Jack and Preston helped deliver it. Preston would jump from the buggy with a pint, make some morning conversation, collect a dollar and return with the money and an empty jar.

As popular as he might have been in Peterborough he was not as highly thought of in the Green Valley. The parents in Green Valley knew him more as bully that often had a smirk on his face. The smirk on his face was actually the result of being content with life, much the same as the statement made by a sleeping dog. He did not have a quick temper but when finally mad he often settled things with his fist which had put several young men to the ground with a bloody nose or a black eye. Usually the fight was in the defense of his older brother who stuttered and was slow to respond either verbally or physically to the abuse by bullies. Then there was his sister Fay. She had an angry mouth and was not shy about using her slapping hands on a fast moving windmill on both girls and boys. Somehow Preston always got drawn in to settle or finish a fight. It was the bloody noses and the principle's visit with the paddle that that everyone remembered and not who started it or the fact that most were older and bigger than Preston. All three of the oldest Lacybough children had been paddled by the visiting principle. A record that the teacher could only assume would continue. After all they were undisciplined and full of wild ideas, the obvious result of a jailbird father. There were even nasty rumors that in the war Clarence and the other boys had committed some despicable deeds. None would talk about it but Clarence had been put in charge of their unit

and thus he was held responsible for what ever war time gruesome inhuman atrocities may have occurred. The whole unit had been sent home with their heads held low and without any meddles except for the French ones. The one Clarence had was bigger than the rest with a ribbon attached and most people in Green Valley assumed it was a fake of some sort because he never said how he got it.

Preston, sitting in the wagon, shielded his eyes from the blinding setting sun with his hand as he watched the door of the church. The wagon was one of the best ever crafted by Clarence and one of the last in an oeuvre that spanned nearly a decade and coming to a close due to obsolescence. This wagon was a unique design and the craftsmanship was superior as all his wagons, coaches and slays were. The wagon was a slide back but instead of just a second seat being exposed when the seat was slide back the seat back also folded back creating a third seat facing toward the back of the wagon. It was quit handy with a large family. On the back of the fold down seat back was a wide walnut board with the name LACYBOUGH carved into it. Preston looked away from the church and down the valley where the shadows of the hills were drawing a curtain across the green meadows. Green Valley as it was affectionately called; was a six mile long valley that was pinched by the mountains at both ends nearly cutting off the eighteen families from the rest of the world. Suddenly Preston heard the sound of the church door opening and soon the figure of Amy Critter came leaping toward him across the lawn. Her unbraided hair bounced and glimmered with every jump. Suddenly her thin cotton dress by some miracle of the light became transparent in the sunlight and his eyes became fixed on her legs and thighs in motion. Staring so intently the sun momentarily blinded his watering, wanting eyes.

"You going to help me up Pres!" the shrill girly voice sent a shutter up his backside. It was his younger sister Pleasants that he had been so wishfully gazing upon. As he helped her in the wagon he spotted Amy strolling his way and quickly pushed Pleasants across the seat. The sun was not as revealing this time due to a cotton slip and knee high bloomers. Helping Amy in the wagon he had to physically and under protest, move Pleasants over once more so Amy could sit in the middle.

Both girls wore a small white broach that resembled a bow of ribbon. It was a symbol of the "White Bow Society", the junior chapter of the "Women's Temperance Society". A predominately rural organization organized to preach the sins of Alcohol, Saloons and the evil path of drunkards that would take them and their loved ones to hell if given the chance.

Preston had a crush on Amy and was always eager to take her home after the meetings. They had danced together at a school dance that spring and Preston was hoping to know her better by the end of the school year. Unfortunately that would never happen. As Amy started to speak, Pleasants blurted out the bad news. "Amy's going away to Parkersburg to help a dying man." As Pleasants sat

smiling, Preston locked eyes with Amy, begging for an explanation. "Things are slow down at the mill and father is only working a few hours a week. My Uncle is right sick and I'm going to go cook and clean for him." She looked straight ahead unwilling to face his disappointment. "Father thinks it is best I go attend to him and promised Uncle Butch would be dead by Easter and I could come home." The sad voice trailed off softly as Preston signed. Amy was the only girl he had ever cared about and on more than one occasion he had even envisioned Amy being his wife one day. Preston swallowed hard choosing his words carefully, "But you'll miss school and I was looking forward to asking you to the Harvest dance this year." Preston put his hand on hers. "Can't they find someone else to look after him?"

"No there is no one else in the family that is not married or promised or working." Preston mumbled his words that came with some difficulty, "I was hoping one day maybe you and I could maybe," he paused and lowered his voice so as Pleasants could not hear him, "you know get together down the road a piece."

Amy removed her hand from under his, "I've been of marrying age for years Preston had you had bothered to notice. But I haven't found the man I want to merry. And when I do, it's going to be to someone with more ambition than having a sack of oats for his horse."

Pleasants who had been straining to hear every word bent forward and looked at her brother across the seat. "Is that all you want is a sack of oats." Pleasants nudged Amy beside her, "He's hopeless Amy. I'm like you. I'm not getting married to *no* man that can't buy me everything I want and build me a big house."

Preston sat trapped by his own words. Now it was clear, Amy had not been joking or making idle conversation when a few weeks earlier she had asked him his goals in life and what he wanted to do after they finished school. To Preston he thought the future was obvious and Amy knew the answer as well as everyone else in the valley. He would get a job at the saw mill or feed mill and pa would give him enough land to build a house on and have a garden. After that all he needed was a sack of oats for his horse. The only other option was leaving the valley and he had no intention of doing that, ever. Somehow God and these glorious mountains would keep him and his horse in oats. Stubbornly, Preston sat silent rustling the rains to hurry Junior along.

Two miles down the road he stopped the wagon and disembarked. Taking Amy by the waist he sat her down on the ground with ease. A feat that always impressed Amy as she stood close to him intently looking into his dark brown eyes hoping for a good-by kiss. Preston wanted to kiss her but knew it was wrong. It seemed they were both contemplating sin when Pleasants yelled, "Come on Pres I got to get home before I wet my pants." Pleasants then made a plaintive audible grown as if she were about to burst. Preston and Amy hugged and pressed cheeks together and departed with soft good-bys.

There had been no conversation between Preston and his little sister till they approached the Fork Store. Pleasants was normally talkative and seemed to favor her bothers Preston and Wayne for her profound rambling as they seen it. She was thin for a Lacybough and with sharp features, green eyes, and red hair that made her one of the prettiest young girls at school. She was also the most opinionated and independent of all the children and had professed at a young age that she was going to leave the valley and see the world. Most of her ideas were amplifications of her fathers, others such as temperance were not. On a visit to town one day she jumped from the wagon and ran down the street after a man in an auto who failed to yield to a horseman. Not only did her father praise her but so did Sheriff Mosey that witnessed the young freckle faced red hired girl run up the street, jump on the side boards of the Packard and berate the driver for his illegal action.

Tonight Preston was in no mood for her usual rambling after a White Bow meeting. But finally she could not keep her thoughts to herself and looked at him with squinted eyes and furrows in her brow, "Is it true our pa and some of the other fathers from the war come down to the Fork and drink beer?" Pleasants pointed to the Fork Store as they passed. Once an Indian trading post, the store was now a long flat roofed whitewashed shed that was not only the only store in the valley but was also the Post Office. Out front there were a gasoline pump and a row of empty wooden boxes for sitting and a collection of auto parts, buggy parts and miscellaneous junk. It was once a prosperous store but like the rest of the valley good times were gone. Despite the roaring economy of the cities the only thing roaring down Green Valley was the occasional convoy of bootleggers. Heavily armed men would stop at the Fork and drop off a few tens of white lightening. It was rotgut liquor that would have a person moaning with pain with the first sip but would grow milder with each successive one. Across the end of the building under the fading whitewash and a tacked up metal Goody Ice Cream sign, one could read the old sign which read, "BEER, WINE AND WHISKEY SOLD HERE". On rare occasions Clarence and some of the other men in the mountains around the valley would sell a gallon or two if it had a good bobble and Sam would re-sell it at the store Without an answer from her brother Pleasants continued, "Do you think Sam Twig, Pa and all of them will go to jail if Sheriff Mosey catches them?" Pleasants eagerly asked. Her now worried expression urged an honest answer and Preston shook his head no. "Sam Twig, he *don't* sell any beer and Sheriff Mosey is not going to arrest anyone." Preston fought off a smile as he glanced back and in the shadows of the trees next to the store and seen their family horse Sam, Skitter Johnson's horse, and several rigs including Buck, Cannon, Woody, Feed Bags and Sheriff Mosey. All but Sheriff Mosey fought in the war and after almost ten years they still meet nearly once a week for drinks and conversation. It was odd to see Sheriff Mosey there on such a night. Preston's thought were not with his sister's fears but was concerned about what might be the subject of such a meeting.

"Miss Landry says there is an alcohol Lion loose in the woods and it eats the brains of drunkards." Pleasants stiffened her posture and sent Preston a thin smile indicating she was not entirely convinced.

"Last week you said it was a snake that ate their brains" Preston laughed. To which Pleasants poked him in the ribs with her fist. "So, there are snakes and lions and they are going to eat pa's brains."

A at the fork of the Ridge Road which ran up the mountain to the Lacybough farm, Preston stopped and told Pleasants to get out and walk home.

"But I got to go pee." She protested. "There are a thousand bushes between here and the house," Preston said shaking his head in amusement.

"I'm going to tell ma on you mister." Pleasants hopped out of the wagon and stomped up the road a short peace, hiked her dress and commenced to urinate in the middle of the road. With a wooden expression Preston turned the wagon and headed the short distance back to the store. Strolling into the store he approached the counter. Mr. Twig knew he wanted a soda before he seen the nickel in his hand. "Good evening Preston; drinks on me this evening. Your pa and the men are in the back. Why don't you and I fetch the boxes out front and lock the gas tank then we'll close up shop and join them in a bit."

An hour later in the darkness he and his father returned home and proceeded past the house, where two lamps were burning, and went on to the wagon shed where his father had demanded he be taken. Preston spent a half-hour feeding, watering and grooming Junior and Sam in the barn. Finally in the kitchen the smell of food intensified his hunger as he washed up in the sink. Fay was seated at the table reading the Cumberland paper and looked up to give him a nod when he entered. While cleaning up, Katie came into the kitchen and took a covered plate from the oven and poured Preston a cup of coffee. As Preston dried his face his mother put her hand on his shoulder, "Me and the baby are going up to bed but there are two things I want to tell you young man. One is I never want you leaving one of the children down at the fork the way you did Pleasants. Poor child can in screaming about a lion chasing her up the Ridge."

"*Maaa*" Fay complained from the table, "She's lying. Tell her Pres there's no lions around here anymore."

Katie turned and shook her finger at Fay, "Keep your tongue still Fayette it's none of your business." Turning back to Preston, "And the second thing is, your pa has some business he needs talking to you about." She had a sad look on her face as she kissed Preston on the cheek. "Your pa and Grant had a bad day mending the fence and he ended up at the Fork where you found him. When he makes it up to the house you tell him if he ain't got the wits to talk to you he best sleeps in the barn or down stairs here with you. You tell him I said it. And I *better not* hear him coming up

Preston tried not to look at the big smile on Fay's pie hole. He told his mother he would and she returned to the sitting room and gathered Brooke who was asleep on Preston's bed. Stopping at the foot of the steps Katie snapped at Fay.

"Fayette, you best be going to bed instead of *sitten* there like a *tater* and wasting oil."

As soon as she was out of hearing range, Fay leaned over at Preston who was attacking a strip of dried beef. "So you and Amy get a chance to kiss and hold hands before she left?" She hoped to make her brother blush but Preston ignored her. After awhile it became obvious he was not going to take the bait so Fay started again, "Pleasants is a real baby isn't she. I don't think anyone but Ma believed there was a lion on the Ridge Road."

Preston, still busy eating his beef and mashed potatoes could not reply but he was sure there was no lion. If there were, Wayne would have shot it and they would all be eating it for breakfast. The thought of them eating a lion brought a smile to Preston's face and Fay seen it as a favorable time for conversation. "You should have seen Grant and Pa. I think they were up in the woods making Jack when the still blew up on them."

Preston face turned to a frown for if so it would impact his spending money.

"Yes, their clothes smelled like corn mash and they looked like they had been in a fire, all black and all. Ma wouldn't let them in the house so I had to take clean clothes down to the shed. The dirty ones are in the pot. Come out when you're done and I'll show you." From the open window they could hear the dogs growling as if pulling on opposite ended of a large bone. Fay shrugged, "If the dogs haven't drug them off and buried them by the time you finish," she then made a sigh of anxiety at the thought of clothes needing mending.

Preston spoke up, "Lucky they didn't get hurt. I was forking hay with Johnny when I hard the explosion. Uncle Ned told us later he saw the still fly over the hill and heard Pa chasing Grant." Fay studied her tired looking little brother; relieved she had got him to say something so she could move on to more important matters.

"I'm sorry about Amy leaving. I hear she will be back as soon as her Uncle or who ever it is dies. Did you at least get to kiss her?"

Preston ignored her and was wiping his plate with a slice of bread when Fay folded the paper in front of her and handed it across the table.

"See that," pointing to the headline, "BANKRUPT FARMERS LINE UP FOR HOOVERS ASSISTANCE". "They say farmers out in Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma are loosing their farms and this man Herbert Hoover with the government is giving them food so they don't starve." Fay's voice cracked with emotion as she leaned over the table, "Is this going to happen to us some day?" Preston snickered, "You sound like Pleasants. There is always someone down on their luck. Its big

business with their tractors and machinery and overproduction that is putting some of them out of business and I don't see that happening around here."

Preston pushed his plate away. "I got a couple of dollars and Pa has that wagon done down at the shed. We're as fine and anyone else. No poorer I'm sure."

Preston smiled as he got up to wash his plate in the sink. Fay followed, "Pres now that Amy is leaving; are you thinking of leaving too? *Cause* if you do I want you to take me with you?" Fay put her hand on his shoulder. Startled by her touch and becoming annoyed at this strange behavior he shook his head no. Not an answer to her question but a general 'leave me alone', response. Fay removed her hand and sullenly chirped, "A good looking fellow like you has no reason to stay in these parts. You'll move to the city and marry some rich city floozy and have a pack of little critters running about in no time." Then her mood turned gruff, "Just forget about the sister that has always taken care of you." She turned and walked to the dimly lit parlor where she stood giving the impression she were about to burst froth in tears.

Preston knew his sister was smart, manipulative, and capable of altering emotions like a chameleon changed colors. But after washing his hands he walked to the parlor door and whispered to Fay's back.

"So you think I would marry a Flooky. If she were pretty enough I suppose I could. But I don't know about the pack of critters!"

Fay turned and buried her head on Preston's shoulder. He put his arms around his sister in an uncomfortable embrace. Fay looked into Preston's hazel brown eyes set so deep below a heavy brow they looked black in the thin light. It was clearly his most arresting feature.

"Thanks Preston I knew you would look after me," Fay said not knowing his intentions. Fay then smiled and made her way up the steps to bed.

Preston shrugged off Fay's conversation as idle blabber and went back to the kitchen where he picked up the oil lamp and a book and retired to the porch.

After thirty minutes of reading he heard the sound of shuffling feet approaching and was soon watching his father haltingly make his way to the bottom of the porch steps where he sat down. Clarence's face formed a rugged relief in the lamp light as he twirled the right side of his mustache and drew out his words in a husky whisper.

"Son, did your ma tell you we had to talk?"

Preston smiled as he reflected on his mothers' earlier conversation. He didn't think they actually had anything to talk about; it was just his mother's way of telling him if he smelled like beer he had to sleep downstairs or on the porch. "Yes Pa, she said if you couldn't talk you had to sleep in the parlor or on the porch I suppose."

Clarence sat quietly on the steps for a few minutes then got up and took a chair on the porch. He

was not drunk, he never was, just a man showing hard years of work and disappointment. He wasn't alone in his condition for in this rural area poverty hung on like a cool morning fog. For some it would clear early, some at noon and yet others would suffer the whole day waiting for the sunshine, the good times, and the joy in life that would never come. Preston didn't see it happening to him or his family but he had surely seen it happen to others. He remembered the mines and broken families and lost fathers. He even remembered the families that left Green Valley after the woodcutters were gone and hard times hit like a bad storm. But it would never happen to him or his family. The poor light of the lantern seemed to deepen the wrinkles and despair on Clarence's face. He was forty-one and looked many years older despite the dark red hair that had yet to see any sign of gray and his glowing hazel eyes that had a young look about them.

"We got to talk son." Shifting his gimp leg and waiting till he had Preston undivided attention, "Mr. Hazlet told Sam to tell me he couldn't buy the coach I built for him *CAUSE* he got an automobile. I busted my rump building a coach with a solid roof all lined with leather and he goes down to Pineville and buys an automobile." Clarence leaned closer and lowered his voice, "He told Sam he would come up to the house to tell me himself but he was afraid of getting his auto stuck in the ruts or maybe a rock would fly up and hit it." Clarence twisted the left side of his mustache which he often did when he was mad. "The coward was probably afraid of me hitting him with a heavy hammer on the head and then beating the oil out that no good piece of iron and rubber. Seventy five dollars he owes me. And he goes out and spends two hundred and ninety for a cheap Ford-T coupe that won't get him to the top of the mountain and will be just a bunch of junk before a year is up."

Clarence fingered the left side of his mustache carefully trying to twist it into a fine point. Simultaneously both realized without comment that the left twist of the mustache was now an inch shorter than the right, no doubt a victim of the earlier fire and explosion. Clarence continued, "If I ever had the money to buy one myself it would at least be a Packard, or a Dodge or one from some other boys that had built wagons and coaches." There was a long silence. "I called your Uncle Jacob in Baltimore and he has agreed to help get you a job at the shipyard." Preston's heart began to race. "There is nothing here for you Preston, the saw mill is cutting back and the tannery hasn't hired a man since old man LaCosh died. You'll make a decent wage in Baltimore."

"But Pa," Preston protested, "I already have job."

"Helping your uncle Ned and Sam at the store is something Grant can do if you were not here."

"I can get a job at the feed mill."

"Feed Bags and his father are struggling *cause* a bad year for farmers and the big mills are shipping stuff in and selling it on the sidewalks outside general merchandise stores in Pineville and

Peterborough. He ain't got any work for you or nobody. There is nothing at all for you in this valley son. Now listen to me, this dam farm has never made a dollar. Rocks are coming up in the pasture faster than spring onions, and I feel like I'm on the chain gang at the penitentiary every time I go out in the field. We got to leave this valley." Preston realized his father was talking of them both leaving the valley. "But you can't leave the valley pa. All the Lacyboughs on this earth were born here. It's our home. I'll work and send money home, what ever it takes but you can't sell the farm."

Clarence smiled at Preston's good intentions, "I didn't say I was selling the place tomorrow. But things are getting right tough for us all. We already told Sheriff Mosey no one in this valley is being put out without a fight. But there might come a day. We have all *knowed* that. We left here after the timber was cut off the mountains and went to the mines. When we came back we *knowed* it would be hard but we vowed to take care of each other and we have. We never thought things would get this bad though." Clarence made a sigh with pain on his face, "Mosey said Mr. Harris at the State Bank told him Skitter Johnson is in trouble of loosing his place. We took up a collection for him but I don't expect he will stay the winter. Buck had to lay him off at the saw mill and cut the rest of the men to just half a weeks pay. Feed Bags is going to have to do the same for the rest of the winter and if things don't get better by summer he may have to close the mill." Clarence then softly uttered the last of the bad news. "Skinny is leaving for Beckley. Skitter was with me at Blair Ridge but not at Beckley so unless they get to checking he should get on OK."

Preston drew a heavy breath as he could see the plan unfolding. All the young people in the valley were being shipped off. Thoughts raced across his mind seeking a solution. "What if I helped you and Duck make some Jack."

Clarence shook his head. "Selling a little bit of Jack helped, but someone stole my kettle and Duck put to much heat to your uncle Ned's and blew it up. A dozen good hounds couldn't find all the parts to that pot now." Clarence twisted the left side of his mustache once more annoyed at the loss of this appendage. "We all seemed to have made a flop of things at once." The words were obviously coming hard a he paused again to rub the redness on the palm of his hand and wipe his nose. "It's not just us, Preston, this valley has turned a cruel hand us and it is our fault. Your grandfather said we should have driven the woodcutters off the mountain, shot them dead if we had to. Now the river floods the fields in valley every few years. The fish are gone. The deer and other game are gone. And we can't sell the little we do make for an honest dollar. There's not much here for any of us son. I expect if you go to Baltimore, and Grant works your jobs it will help out things. And as soon as Brook is weaned your sister Fay is going to be married off to the first feller that comes along. If we can all get through another year maybe some of that prosperity they keep talking about will come rolling down the mountain or float up the river to us."

Preston put down his book as his world tumbled out to control. He and other young people were

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being flung from the valley nest they cherished and never dreamed of leaving. Preston made several protest, but in the end his fate was settled.