

KINGS and CLANS Series

This book may be read as a stand-alone novel, or as a sequel to the novel, KINGS and CLANS of the Midwest, also by Den Warren.

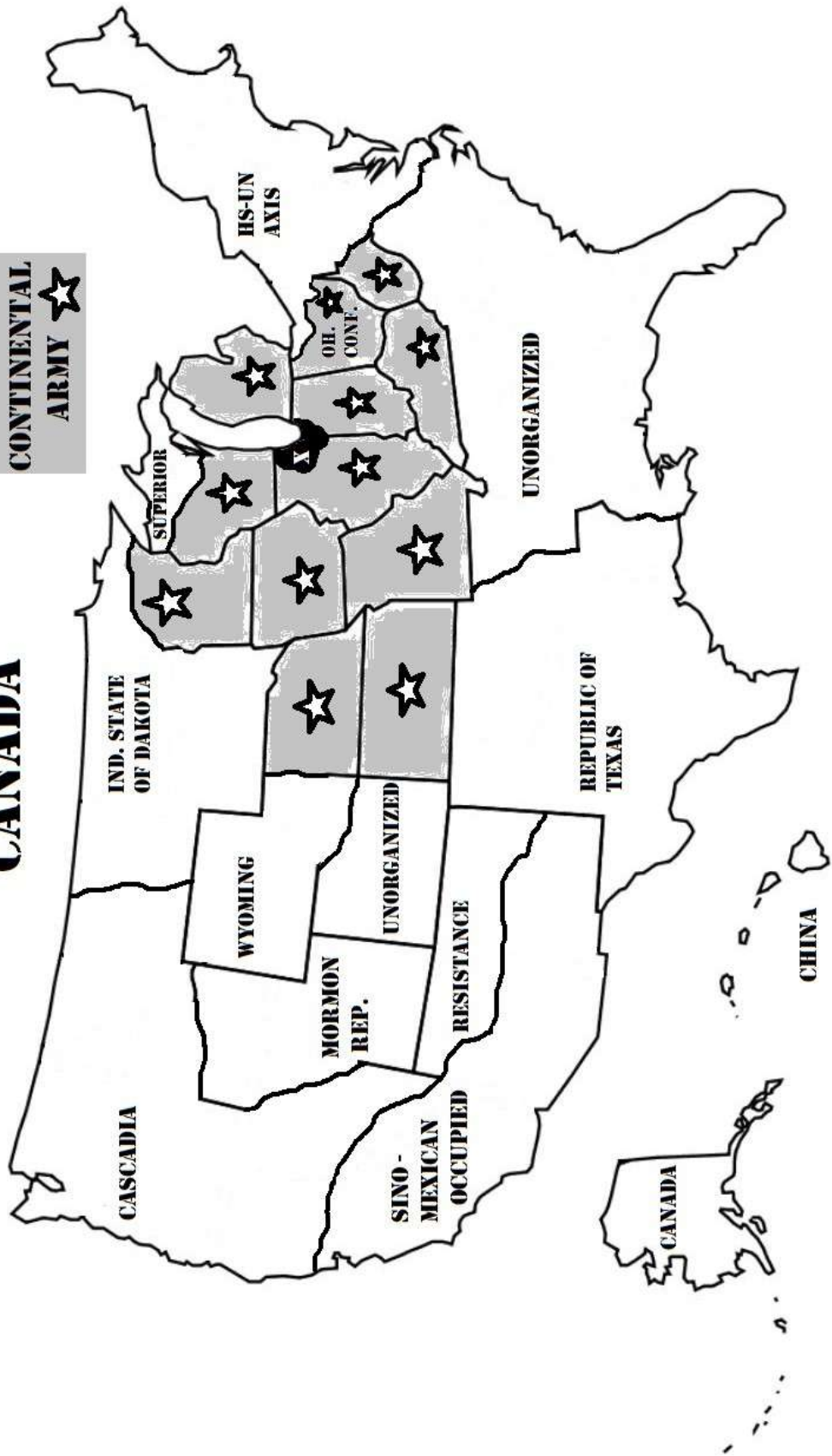
KINGS and CLANS of the Midwest is set in the near future. The US dollar becomes worthless and the economy collapses. Society breaks down and characters try to survive when resources are diminishing and hostility is increasing. Don't you hate it when half of the storyline is laid out in the synopsis? Your enjoyment of reading the novel will not be spoiled here.

Ayanna, and Kings and Clans of the Midwest are available in paperback.

All Characters in this book are fictional, any likenesses are coincidental.

CANADA

CONTINENTAL
ARMY ★



KINGS and CLANS Series

AYANNA



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Chapter 1

Crawfordton, Ohio

November

It was like Angela and Ayanna were two completely different little girls.

Angela was taught by her adopted parents to be considerate of others, to always tell the truth, and to love Jesus, her Savior. Now she was surrounded by kind and selfless people. If Angela would not have had those caring folks, especially Amy and Phil, in her life, she could not have lasted a day on her own. Even though Angela had such good examples for caretakers, Angela was filled with latent anger and hostility. Her aggression was beyond mere moodiness. Her enmity with the world was not just some occasional irritability, but an abnormal opposition to everything and everyone.

Ayanna was dark, brooding, and silent. Ayanna had been exposed to the worst kinds of evil imaginable. Ayanna did not participate directly the murderous actions of her clan. She saw and did things that no child, or even an adult should ever have seen or done. Now with her new family, she was surrounded by people who she sometimes blamed for killing her parents. She was not completely sure if they would yet kill her because of her past.

Other children in the neighborhood called Ayanna the "Zombie Princess". The verbal torments were frequent reminders of the hostility others in the Community had for her. Ayanna had grown up confused by what was right and wrong. She wanted to be a good girl, but saw no examples of any good little girls to follow.

Angela and Ayanna were names given to the same confused little girl. She was born Ayanna. Everyone who knew her as Ayanna was dead, except for Phil. She told Phil that her real name was "Ayanna" in confidence. Ayanna felt a bond with Phil unlike anyone else. Phil was old enough to be her grandfather. Phil saw Ayanna as a top priority in his eyes. He was the only one who would give her the unvarnished truth. Ayanna was always trying to parse what the real meaning was behind what was being told to her by cryptic adults. After all, Angela had lived seven hard years with the last couple being horrific. Angela wasn't a baby anymore and sought after some straight talk.

Ayanna was dubbed "Angela" only because she refused to speak to her new caretakers, and they had no clue what her given name was. Ayanna was rescued by the man who they called "Angel" because of his spiritual nature. So Amy, Phil's wife, named her Angela. If it

wasn't for Angel, she would be dead, but if it wasn't for his military involvement against her parents' clan, they would be alive.

Angel was the leader of the Crawfordton Guard Platoon who wiped out Angela-Ayanna's cannibalistic clan. But he refused to let anything happen to her, while his men wanted her left to fend for herself.

The residents of the house where she now lived were all seated at the dinner table in the darkened room. There had been no electric power for a couple of years and the windows were boarded up with scavenged constituent bits of shanties leftover from the Battle.

"Angela," Phil said at the dinner table. "You with us here?"

She nodded her head yes. She always sat next to Phil at the large dining room table, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

Angela only recently started speaking to certain people. Then it was only in single words or sentence fragments. Phil was the exception. She would converse with Phil.

There was not much to eat after two years of total collapse of the US economy that included all out selfishness and violence. But Phil would praise God for anything they had to eat every single day. Today dinner was some soup made by Amy with some squirrel broth. The soup du jour had some sliced up turnips in it along with a couple of carrots. Some green onions and garlic were added for more taste.

Angela-Ayanna had lived at the Crawford house for about a year.

Phil and Amy Crawford had adult children of their own, but they were unable to have any contact with them since the United States fell apart, including all of the transportation and communication infrastructure. Now Amy and Phil lived in the town of Crawfordton, which had sprung up around Phil Crawford, because of his masterful leadership during the onset of the crisis. So the town was named "Crawfordton" after him.

Although Phil was not liked by many, he had the know-how and the drive to help everyone around him do their best to survive. A relatively stable micro-economy had sprung up around Phil and his friends who lived in the House. Soon their rural housing development, turned into a settlement for many displaced people, and many moved in and the result was the growing shanty town of Crawfordton.

Crawfordton was part of the Ohio Confederation. The Confederation was an irregular-shaped area about a third of the size of the original US State of Ohio. The Confederation was part of the large Continental Army Alliance. The Continental Army had been at war with the

Homeland Security-UN Axis. The conflict had presently cooled off for a respite. But the unresolved festering tension behind the war had not been resolved in the least.

Crawfordtonians tried to normalize their lives as much as possible. They tried to seize every opportunity to improve all aspects of their lives.

With Phil's help, Amy ran the local public school. They tried to individualize the curriculum to each student. Angela was on a super fast-track of learning, with Phil as her mentor. If a subject was important to Phil, Angela thought, then it must be worthwhile to learn.

Angela knew a lot about politics and military science for a seven year-old. Much of her awareness of these topics were because the Crawford's House was the Constabulary of Crawfordton. There was plenty of interesting talk to be overheard on a nearly daily basis. Amy always tried to get Angela to play with boring dolls, instead of her plastic soldiers. Since Angela rarely spoke, she had been overlooked by military officers preoccupied with their sensitive discussions as a security risk.

Instead of being a kid, Phil would feed Angela stories about how the real world worked. She loved it because it was all secret between her and Phil. Amy would have had constant fits if she knew the diverse and distasteful adult-world topics Phil was telling Angela.

Angela returned to slurping on her soup. Phil gave her the "I know your real name is Ayanna" wink. She loved it every time, since it was a secret only Phil and her knew. And Angela was comforted knowing that her wishes of confidentiality were being observed by Phil.

Jayden Phipps, the Constable and leader of the local Guard and his wife also Ella lived at the House. They were okay people, Angela thought. Angela didn't say too much to them, and that was how they treated her.

Logan "Angel" Howard also lived in the house. He liked wearing his do-rag. After Amy committed to taking care of Angela, Angel no longer wanted the responsibility and became pretty much hands off with Angela's care.

Wesley Crawford also lived at the house. Wesley was Phil's nephew. He was in his late 30s, so like most all of the other men, had a full beard and long hair. Wesley was at the scene when Angela was brought back from the woods. Wesley was totally against Angel bringing her back, and particularly against her living in the house. There was no way Angela was going to forget that one. She despised Wesley and saw him as an enemy.

Angela sneered at Wesley, who was slurping his soup and stopped to munch on the root vegetables. Wesley had that gross hand on his spoon that had the finger shot off. Too bad it

wasn't his whole head. Wesley didn't see Angela glaring at him with daggers coming out of her eyes.

"Angela," Amy said. Trying to disrupt her obviously hateful mood. "You get enough to eat?"

She shrugged her shoulders. There was not much point since they didn't have much food anyways.

Amy picked up the soup pan. There was a little bit left in it.

Amy said, "Here Phil, pour the rest into her bowl there."

Angela didn't refuse it, but never asked for it so she stubbornly thought she did not owe anyone a "thank you".

As Constable, Colonel Jayden Phipps was the de facto leader of the burg. He looked at Phil with a smile. "The Ohio Confederation is sending two more platoons to the fort."

"Nice," Phil said.

The Confederation had finally finished building the heavy fortress on the north side of Crawfordton. The wall of the Fort enclosed a huge area, about half the area of a football field.

Jayden added, "The Fort construction crew came over here to the House, they secured the garage so it didn't collapse when they pulled out the wrecked armored vehicles. Then they took those big steel boxes and incorporated them into the Fort design. That damn thing is one thick skinned son of a . . ."

"Jayden," Amy said. "I'm out of soup."

"Thank you," he said, reminding himself that Amy wanted to keep the vernacular clean.

Ella chuckled. They all got a chuckle.

Wesley said, "I'd like to see those Gofinns mess with us now!" "Gofinns" was the slang name given to the fascist Goldfinch Coalition, who were founded upon killing and stealing. "If they try anything, they'll be wiped out."

Angela sneered at Wesley again and said, "You're stupid!"

Wesley quickly looked at Angela in surprise.

"Angela!" Amy said. Amy hated to stop her from speaking because it was so rare of an occurrence. "Why did you say that? Say something nice."

Angela looked at Amy. Angela said, "Now the Axis bastards will just send a bigger army here."

"Phil!" Amy said, looking at him.

"What?!" Phil looked surprised, "I didn't tell her that."

Amy huffed. "Maybe not, but you are the cause of it! What little girl talks like that?"

No one chuckled this time.

Phil stopped slurping and stared as if he was looking into his soup for a sign. The others realized that Phil had taken the substance of Angela's words seriously.

Amy was still going on about the rough language. "This poor child will never have a chance to live like a normal little girl. What if she talks like that at school, or outside? Phil, you've got to stop it."

Phil said, "God help us if she is right."

Chapter 2

Sidney, Ohio

It was early morning. Elijah had just came out of an abandoned car he slept in, that was left in the middle of the southbound side of Interstate-75. Elijah walked southbound down a four-lane highway that once was a continual river of car and truck traffic, flowing in unison like a massive moving parking lot.

Those days were gone. Now the freeway was quiet. There was no traffic, because the gas had long ago ran out. Even if there were some gas, the road was blocked with thousands of abandoned vehicles. By now most were inoperable. If the vehicles were not burned out, then there was typically a hole punched in the bottom of the drained out gas tank. There was a period of time when gas became completely unavailable, that people would kill to get just to get a gallon.

Looking back on those extremely violent days, what did it gain the killers? Those who they killed, often innocent, died a horrible violent death. Meanwhile, the killers were able to live a little while longer. Their ill-gotten gain was probably soon squandered just to make their murderous life a little less problematic for a short while.

Marauders were still out there. Everywhere; and Elijah knew it. Thieves and killers were always watching. That is all they had to do with their time. Look for someone to kill, rob, and perhaps, to eat.

Surveying the road up ahead, Elijah pondered whether to continue on, or hide out until nightfall. The road was elevated compared to the built-up city on both sides of the road. He would be clearly visible on both sides of the road. If he chose to walk on the far side of the road, he may only be visible on that side.

Elijah knew how it would be if he hid out. He had done it before. He would lay around all day tormented by boredom and hunger. He knew that if he chose to lay under a car or in a culvert then he would be arguing with himself all day which was worse; boredom, or death.

Elijah had provisions in his backpack that his friend, "Angel" had prepared for him, but the pack was intentionally packed light. The load was heavy enough with all of the extra water he

packed. The quantity of provisions were at best only good for a one-way trip down to Cincinnati, which was the goal.

Back when all of the trouble really started to get serious, Elijah and his wife, Aliyah, wanted to leave Detroit, and go to Cincinnati. In fact, Cincinnati was going to be their retirement destination all along, even before the trouble. They wanted to go there, because Cincy was where their daughter, Rene, and her husband Matt lived. If only they had left for Cincinnati a day sooner, because they never made it.

The Dollar became worthless and the wheels totally fell off of the economy. The complex economic system started to unravel, with no one left on the payroll to fix it. People started running out of gas. They abandoned their cars in the middle of the busiest highways because they had to. So more cars were blocked on the road with no way out.

The cities became enveloped in violence. People who lived under the notion that they were to be taken care of by government felt as if they "deserved" food, a comfortable home, and all creature comforts, on the basis that they simply didn't have any of it. These needs were seen as an entitlement that would be vigorously pursued, even if they had to use violence to take from all of the other have-nots. The days of depending upon government were over.

So they Elijah and Aliyah, along with their friend, Henry, were running out of gas back then and had to stop somewhere, they wound up in a little place called Crawfordton. It was supposed to be a one night emergency visit, but the night turned into a sojourn, which turned into a permanent residence.

Then Elijah, Aliyah, and Henry got caught up in various armed conflicts and war. The wars started out as a million tribes in the US who were killing each other just for the chance to try to survive on things not being made any more. Now many of the clans were consolidating into larger, but still weak and untrustworthy factions.

Most Americans had perished in all of the violence before they had a chance to starve to death. Those who remained were those who were either of a strong breed, or exceedingly evil, willing to violate any taboo.

The most intolerable thing to Elijah was that Aliyah was still there, back in Crawfordton. Elijah knew that everyone thought his journey south to Cincinnati was pure folly. In his head he could not mentally argue with them. His heart, his love for his daughter, said "go on".

If they could have just travelled a couple of more hours in the car. . .

Elijah noticed a man up ahead walking on the road. The man clearly had seen him. The guy was wearing a coat and. . . some kind scarf on his face. Was this some guy a lone bandit?

Elijah reasoned that bandits did not need to hide their identity since there was not much in the way of law enforcement for any bandit to worry about.

The guy up ahead was also carrying a rifle. But being armed only made him normal. Elijah could see the guy in the distance, and realized that when he compared the man's position to an abandoned car along the road, they were walking in the same direction, at roughly the same speed.

Maybe if there was trouble up ahead, the scarf guy would run into it first. So maybe it would be good to keep a fair distance, to stay away from predators, or perhaps even the scarf guy.

This tactic continued for what seemed like a couple of hours. They were both walking at about the same pace. The road was warming up in the sun and felt good on the old, tired feet. But each step forward was another one that would have to be taken to get back.

There was a cluster of cars up ahead in the middle of the road. Scarf guy was just walking in among them. It would take five minutes or so for Elijah to progress to that point.

Elijah thought of the reports he had gotten from the area directly south long before he left on the journey. The stories were sobering. It seemed the chances of Rene and Matt being alive was fairly remote. Was he throwing his life aw. . .

"You lookin' for me mister!?" It was scarf guy pointing a gun at Elijah's face.

Elijah froze in place and tried to catch his breath. "Not really."

"Well, it seems like you've been following me pretty close for the longest time."

"We're just going the same way, friend."

"How do I know you're a friend?"

"How else would you expect me to talk, given the gun and all."

"At least you are honest about that."

"C'mon man, you aren't carrying anything. You're not much of a target to rob. On the other hand, you do look like a robber to me."

"If I was a robber, you'd be robbed."

"So, you're not a robber?"

The man moved closer.

"Easy now," Elijah said.

"Shut up and keep your hands up!" He moved even closer, wary of Elijah having a weapon.

Elijah didn't warn him again. But Elijah didn't grab his own pistol, which was holstered on a belt under his long coat. Instead he grabbed the stranger's rifle.

They both tried to seize control of the rifle. Both of the men had both hands on it. Elijah was driven backwards into one of the cars with a slam. Items in his back pack dug into his back. Both men refused to let go of the rifle. Elijah gathered himself. He was pinned up against the car.

"Let go. . . of. . . it!" the stranger commanded.

Elijah had no leverage to push back. But when he looked into the eyes of his adversary, he saw no real fight in him. Elijah relied upon his hand-to-hand combat training as a Iraq War veteran and a Detroit Police officer to out maneuver his much younger assailant. He pulled the rifle down with one hand and up with the other, spinning the rifle so the stranger crossed his arms and had to let go.

This move caused Elijah to turn his body, and his hip was exposed to his foe, and his coat opened. As the man let go of the rifle, he easily reached down and pulled the pistol out of Elijah's holster. The stranger then pointed the pistol back at Elijah.

Elijah quickly pointed the rifle back at the long haired panting man. Elijah realized that his trusty method of taking the gun should have been done in the opposite direction so his pistol would have been out of his opponent's reach. Elijah said, "We aren't making much progress here."

"Au Contraire. That rifle is empty."

Elijah pointed the rifle to the ground. Click. "So, you couldn't have shot me anyway, but now you have the gun and you still didn't shoot me." Elijah put the empty .22 rifle down and started walking down the road away from the man. "Okay, we're good."

"What?! Hey!. . .No! You better stop! I'm the one with the gun! Hey! I said get back here!" He tried to keep up with Elijah.

"I want that back, by the way," Elijah said.

"No! It's mine now!"

Elijah said, "You should go get your rifle."

The man scrambled back to get the rifle, while trying to point the pistol at Elijah.

Elijah asked, "Are you weird or something? That scarf is nasty looking." The white scarf had dried blood all over it.

"No, it's not a scarf. It's a bandage."

Elijah stopped and took a good look at it. "Sorry. It's not very well wrapped for a bandage. Let me fix it."

"No! Keep back!"

"Have it your way." Elijah was not sure how much effort to invest in this stranger. "Where you headed?"

"I gotta go to Kentucky."

A short while later, Elijah asked, "So what's your name?"

"Does it really matter?"

"That's a weird name."

"Jason."

"I'm Elijah Williams."

They walked several more minutes in silence. The interstate took them through the industrial part of Sidney, now all abandoned.

Elijah said, "Maybe once we get out of this section, we could go get some road salad."

"That's all I ever eat. I'm surprised I'm not green now, on top of everything else."

"You mean your neck?"

"Yea."

"What is it?"

"I have no idea."

"I bet my wife would know. She's a doctor."

"Really? Where is she?"

"Well you'd have to go back the other way about twenty miles."

"Maybe I should. This thing on my neck might kill me. But I'm trying to get to Kentucky."

"Family?"

"Yea."

"Well, Jason, you can go north and see the doctor and then convalesce, then walk back, maybe healthy. Or, you can keep going south and would be at least forty miles further south and still have who knows how far to go."

"You got me thinkin'." Jason kept walking southward. "Your wife got the medicine to heal me up if she does know what it is?"

"Not likely."

"Well then."

So they kept walking. They reached the southern side of Sidney's former industrial area.

"Over there looks like a good place to forage," Jason said.

"Okay."

The men were able to find some greens worthy of consumption. This time of year any vegetation found that was leftover from summer was bitter, but tolerating some of the bitterness was something that could be gotten used to.

Jason said, "I'm tired." An abandoned luxury car along the road provided an inviting place to bed down for a nap. He got into the back seat.

"Mind if I join you?" Elijah asked.

"It's a free. . .State," Jason said.

Elijah figured out how to recline the passenger seat in front and sat down.

Chapter 3

Crawfordton

At the school, Amy was busy working with the twenty-two students in the class. Even though the schooling was provided for free, most people did not send their children because they wanted them to work on the farms. There were a couple of other such functioning schools outside of town.

Phil was not being the kind of help at school that Amy expected. Phil told Amy that he was busy working with Angela on her Chinese literature, which Amy found impressive, but said Angela should do some Bible reading. Angela was keen on studying the easy to understand, Sun Tzu's Art of War, and enjoyed the discussions with Phil that accompanied it.

After school, Phil went with Jayden up to the fortress on Dan's Hill. He took Angela along.

The Chief Construction Engineer stopped by. "What do you think, Phil?"

"What's not to like?" Phil said.

"Yep," the engineer said, "This will be quite a tribute to Colonel Wicox."

"Wilcox?" Phil asked. He had been at odds with Wilcox in the past. "You know, I find it quite strange that Wilcox. . ."

Jayden interrupted, "We are all sorry about Wilcox being killed in action up north. It was no surprise to us that he acted with gallantry."

"Umm. . .no surprise at all. Our hats are off to him," Phil said, unaware of his demise. Phil wanted to change the subject. "So. . . the garrison is coming here pretty soon?"

"Officially, I don't know, but I suspect any day now."

Jayden said, "Let's go inside and take a look."

Angela was trying to pull Phil aside. He leaned toward her.

"What's a garrison?"

"I'll tell ya later." Phil wanted to have adequate time for their usual in-depth discussion on military topics.

Ethan Mentzer and his Scouts came riding into Crawfordton. The five horses drew the attention of the townspeople. Ethan, the Viking-Cowboy was a tall blonde with an angular build and face. He was dressed like a mountain man, but wore a Hollywood version of a cowboy hat.

Unlike his previous visits, he now had the female warrior, Jackie with him on the beautiful chestnut colored ride.

Jackie had softened her appearance from the tri-Mohawk hairdo she sported at the Battle of Crawfordton. Her hair was growing out. Like the other Scouts, she was wrapped up in heavy clothes for the weather.

Ella saw Ethan and his rider out of what was left of one of the front windows. Most of the windows were shot out during the Battle. "Amy! Come here! Look who's back!"

Amy joined her at the window. "Ooooh."

Ella said, "That chick sure knows how to get the hot guys."

Amy said, "It's not that tough. Back in the day, Phil was a pretty big catch."

Ella looked at Amy and wondered how accurate her version of history was.

The other riders had the look of people who were not to be trifled with. The entire Troop was well armed and well supplied, Mentzer's Scouts were one of the keys to victory in the Battle of Crawfordton.

Jayden contorted himself around the women to get a look out the window. He finally got a peek at who the women were looking at and rolled his eyes. "I hate it when he comes here. He always wants something." He looked at the women and shook his head.

A couple of Guard sentries met the Scouts. All the members of the Crawfordton Guard were too young, or too old to do their mandatory service with the Ohio Coalition. The Guard was a force that had shrunken down to about 50 members after the Battle of Crawfordton.

Jayden went out the front door to greet the scouts. "Ethan."

"Colonel," Ethan said, with a salute.

"Give me a full report."

"Sir, the Shanesville Raiders are requesting assistance in dealing with a band of marauders. The marauders have no known heavy weapons in particular. In fact, some of them are armed with medieval weapons."

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