

Bloody Kansas
A Tragedy of the Old West

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Preface

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This work is a labor of love. It is 3 years in the making, and I have endeavored to pour every ounce of my intellect, my heart and my soul into it. It is many things. It is an attempt to teach a little US History in a manner it is hoped the audience will find enjoyable. It is the culmination of 23 years of practicing my very favorite hobby, writing fiction. Most importantly, it is an act of spirituality. This book is my prayer, and these are my confessions.

Thanks without measure are owed to so many, and there is only space here for a very few. First of all, a big thank you is owed to my best friend Michael Jaglarz for his encouragement and support over the last 14 years of my life. Thanks are also owed to Dr. Kavita Pandit, Dr. David Roberts, and Dr. Denise Wright of the University of Georgia for being such wonderful teachers and showing me how truly satisfying a life of the mind can be. Last but not least, I shall be forever grateful to Illona Stewart, the wonderful woman in my life, for all of her love and support when I needed it the most. I love you dearest. It can never be said enough, thank you.

Writing fiction is the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, and it is also the most rewarding. Certainly there will be many who disagree with the message contained herein, but I hope my friends of differing opinions can at least appreciate the spirit of good citizenship and love for all of humanity in which these words have been spoken. I have enjoyed writing this book very much, and I certainly hope you enjoy reading it.

Farley W. Jenkins, Jr.
Athens, GA
May 23, 2010

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Prologue

The Story Fire

Somewhere In the West

Autumn of 1893

The story fire was lit, and it soon began to hold the darkness at bay. The face of the wise elder soon came into view against the backdrop of the cold but crisp and clear night sky. Everywhere the tall trees stood watch over the last of the tribe, like sentinels sent down from Heaven with orders from the Great Father to stand watch over them. It had been three years since a Cherokee had dared shoulder weapons in defiance of the white government. These five were the last of their tribe who had not agreed to be penned up in a reservation and live the white man's way, although they knew it not.

A father and his three sons cast a forlorn gaze to the eldest and wisest of their remnant. For years they had lived a hand to mouth existence, for everywhere they went they were not wanted. White men were fearful and suspicious of them, as if at any moment they would burst into wildness and start slaughtering their children and taking scalps. Red men were too frightened of drawing a watchful white gaze to have anything to do with them. They were tired, they were hungry, they were lonely, and they could never hope to pass on their way of life. Once they finally collapsed, their particular species would be extinct forevermore.

In his wisdom, the elder knew what his tribe needed to bear up under the heavy burden. It was a story, for the story makes real the longings of the soul. The story brings to light that which dwells in the darker realms of one's being. It is that which leads one to look within and find the light of the Great Father to illuminate the way through the wilderness. The tribe came to their elder with questions.

“Father, why does the white man hate us so? Why does he fight with us until we cannot go on and must lie down before him? Why is it so important to keep the Cherokee ways from passing on into the spirit realm? Has their time not passed? Why is it that you say this is worth paying any price, even if it is our own lives?”

The elder drew in a deep breath. His son had asked a valid question that he, as the tribe’s guardian of wisdom, was obligated to answer, even if it was beyond his ability to do so. He looked up to the Heavens, towards He who created wisdom, and then he looked back down to his family that he might share his prayer with them.

“My son, the white man is not so different from you and me. They, too, come before their Father with questions and seek that which is right and good. However, while we seek only what is right for the Cherokee, they seek to impose their right upon the whole of the world. We, the Cherokee, live surrounded by life and we learn from Creation. We know that just as the way of the bird is not good for the badger, neither is the way of the white man good for the Cherokee. They, however, have built a dead world that has blinded them to the ways of life. So, they have taken up the ways of death.

“The white man has a saying, ‘The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.’ The best and truest friend I have ever known was a white man. He was a great seer of visions. He spoke with the Great Father and returned from Heaven with stories of such wisdom that he inspired an army of followers of many colors and stations in life to shoulder heavy and terrible burdens and follow him. He, too, followed the path of the story fire, but in the end, he lost his way...”

Chapter 1

The Father

Boston, Massachusetts

Spring of 1858

The Reverend Doctor Esau Channing was a man with no time for a lot of things. He had no time for rest; there was simply too much work to do. He had no time for waste or for wastrels; God had simply provided too much for fools to squander away. He had committed his life to the church, but he soon found that he had no time for his church. So he committed his life to the study of what is right and good for all. He was completely committed to God, but God's price is time. Though he left his father and mother to cling to his wife as he had been instructed, he soon found that he had no time for his family.

He was rarely at home when his son Jacob was growing up. Even when he was home, he was always in his study consumed by his books. He had no time to play with his boy. He had no time for play or for the things of childhood period. His business was too important; Esau had to save the world. Too many men had become lazy, growing fat off the fruits of others' labor so they could spend their time whiling away the idle hours sitting in the shade and sipping mint juleps. Slavery, alcohol, the tyranny that allowed men to profit from the labors of another, all of these evils had to be swept away to make the world ready for the coming of the Lord's kingdom.

Raised only by his mother, the boy grew soft and Esau had no time for either of them. Jacob developed his father's love for books, and he was soon to be found invading his father's study in search of reading material. He was quickly

banished, as Esau had no time to waste instructing the youngster in the proper use of books. He developed his father's love of the church, and went with his mother every Sunday while Esau stayed behind to prepare his next lecture. He developed his father's love of freedom, and began attending Abolition Society meetings at a very young age.

Indeed, Jacob's apple seemed to have fallen miles away from Esau's tree. He had time for everything. He had time to feed every animal that wandered into the neighborhood until he had soon collected his own private menagerie. He had time to talk to every stranger he encountered on the street, so eager he was to hear all of the world's stories. He had time for King Arthur, Robin Hood and every other silly little story for boys he came across. Many times he tried to talk to his father and hear his story, only to be shooed away. Esau simply had no time for the boy's daydreaming.

But in the fullness of time Jacob grew into a man much like his father. His sense of right and wrong was absolute, and his moral compass always pointed the way north. He followed in his father's footsteps, first into Harvard University and later into Harvard Divinity School. From the pulpit, Jacob developed a style not unlike his father's, as his right was always right and his wrong was always wrong. But his manner of speaking was different in many other ways, for Jacob's sermons were gentle, loving, and embracing. Although Esau would never say so, he was pleased to see his son come into his own. If he had wanted a machine, then he would have constructed one.

So after many years of hard and careful study, the day had finally come to pass that Jacob should take up his inheritance. Esau walked at a brisk pace through the crowded streets of Boston and through the doors of the Federalist Street Unitarian Church. Today was the day he would give to his son his blessing, and ordain him as a minister of the Unitarian Church like his father and grandfather before him. A rare smile just barely turned up the corners of the lips of the Reverend Doctor Esau Channing. For in his son he was well-pleased, although the good doctor would never find the courage to say as much to him.

Chapter 2

The Son

Morning had broken, and dawn's early light banished the darkness from the sanctuary of the Federalist Street Unitarian Church. Jacob had been there all night. On his knees he held an unwavering vigil. He prayed without ceasing that God would take away all of his imperfections and shape him into an instrument of His divine will. For try as he might, Jacob simply could not escape the doubt that plagued his mind and slowly chewed away at his heart. He was not worthy. He was not worthy to preach the Word and he was not worthy to receive his father's inheritance, and there was no denying that fact.

But the doubt that seemed so complete by the darkness of night just seemed to melt away like snow in the springtime once sunrise was upon him. Jacob knew that the Light of the world dwelt within the hearts of each and every human being. One only needed to have faith in order to let it come shining through. For faith brought hope, and hope brought love. It was Love that had the power to reveal to man his true nature. They were beings of light, all of them, and this crude matter was nothing but an illusion. It was nothing but the play of light upon water. Jacob knew, and he wept at the beauty of the revelation. His faith had been rewarded.

The massive wooden door to the church creaked open, and through the portal came his father. Jacob finished his nightlong prayer and rose to meet his patriarch. Esau was a great bear of a man, who towered over his son with red hair that smoldered as if it were made of fire. Jacob by contrast was a short thin wisp of a man with blond locks that appeared so gentle it was almost as if they were not even there. He walked over to his father and began to say hello, but before he could even open his mouth Esau embraced his son for the first time in his life. Again,

Jacob wept. Esau held his son at arms length that he might behold him.

“You have done well son. You have worked hard and you have achieved. Today is your day, and you deserve it.” Jacob glanced down for a moment, for he couldn’t quite bring himself to believe the truth of the words that had just been spoken.

“I have tried father. I tried so hard to live up to what you expect of me.” Esau was not one to miss an opportunity to lecture his son.

“Do not sell yourself short Jacob. You have proven yourself, and now the real work begins.”

Knowing that this was all the approval he was likely to get, Jacob smiled and clasped his father on the arm. He knew that the work he had done to reach this crowning achievement had been the easy part. Now it came time for the hard part. He must accept it.

But his father was not the only one to come share in Jacob’s boundless joy on that happiest of occasions. One by one, they came through the door. One by one, they lined up to congratulate him, and to tell Jacob that they loved him. One by one, they took him by the hand and shared in his triumph. One by one, his father took their hands in his firm and overpowering grasp and thanked them at length. One by one, Jacob let his hand be held and responded to his well-wishers with little more than mute meekness. Although he was a man of words, on this occasion he found that he had very few. One by one, they gave Jacob a look of understanding and took their place in the pews.

At long last, the moment had arrived. Esau stepped up to the pulpit to welcome the assembled congregants, and Jacob took a chair by his fathers side. He felt his heart threatening to leap right out of his throat as he looked out at all of the people he loved most in this world. In the front row sat his mother, without whose love and compassion he would never have found the courage to stand up to a harsh and cruel world. Beside her was his friend Ruth, who had hardly left his side throughout all of his years at Harvard. By her sat Peter, who had been his best friend since boyhood. Jacob wished for all the world that he could just leap right off the stage and into their loving arms, but he knew that the ceremony commanded respect.

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