

KELVIN BUECKERT

Love Song of the Prairie : Gladstone

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# Introduction

What can I say?

I'm an actor.

I'm also a writer.

Put these two facts together and you might just get a playwright.

One of the things I've done in the past is to write and produce plays based on or inspired by the more unusual stories found in our local history.

I researched and wrote the scripts.

I went through the stress of producing them. Then the time came when the productions wrapped and the scripts were set aside.

One day I thought, I've already done a lot of work on these scripts, why don't I release them? In fact, why don't I release novelizations of them?

If Hollywood does it, it must be a good idea.

Hmmm. Before we all get too distracted, I'll say this, turning these scripts into novellas seemed like an easy idea to execute at first. However, converting these scripts into novella format took more time than I first thought. Telling a story through theater is quite a bit different than telling a story using only the written word. Then again, you already knew that.

You're far ahead of me.

In any case, in some sections, you may still notice some theatrical type story structure. To be honest, I could have changed that but out of sheer self-indulgence, I decided to keep it.

These stories would be technically classified as historical fiction. This means that I gathered up all kinds of historical facts and then wrote a fictional story around them.

Little history stories are great, but acting is a verb, and actors need something to perform. Writing in fictional elements helps to fill in the gaps

and enhance the theatrical elements of these stories.

The news clippings I've included are some of the tidbits I discovered while researching the original scripts. I found them interesting, I hope you do as well.

Before you ask, yes, the pictures included were part of or were taken during the original theatrical productions.

Some of these pieces were originally produced at the Gladstone Museum. I would like to thank the board of the Museum for letting a bunch of crazy acting types turn their venue into a theater. By the way, if you are ever in the Gladstone area, why not stop by and check out the Museum? I'm sure you'll be pleasantly surprised at all you find there.

Finally, to the casts and crews I worked with on these productions, thank you again for your efforts. I hope we can act up again sometime.

To you the reader, thank you for reading this, I hope you enjoy your journey through our local history.

Cheers,

Kelvin Bueckert

[www.kelvinbueckert.com](http://www.kelvinbueckert.com)

\*Note, I've reserved the rights to perform these theatrically. If you'd like to perform one of these pieces yourself, please contact me for more information. Thank you for your honesty.



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## Chapter 1

Free admission.  
\*Bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on.



# Our Town, Gladstone

\* AN ORIGINAL PLAY  
+ SAMPLE AUTHENTIC  
HOMESTEAD RECIPES  
+ MUSICAL GUESTS

JULY 1,  
2017.  
7:00 P.M

GLADSTONE  
MUSEUM. 6TH ST.  
GLADSTONE MB



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## Chapter 2



**-Minot USA.**

A steam train sat before a train station. A couple of engineers walked around the engine, inspecting it for flaws. Meanwhile, in the cab of the engine, a

young, soot-stained stoker shoveled coal into the blazing inferno that would soon help drive them forward.

Overhead, the sky was calm, a shade of peaceful blue without a cloud to pollute it.

The sun shone hot, a typical setting for a summer day.

Only the soft hiss of building steam broke the silence of the moment.

An elderly, black-clad woman hobbled from the train station. She paused to examine the train before her. It was obvious that only the caboose would be accessible from the platform itself. She would need to board through it and then move up through the train cars to her assigned seat.

More able-bodied members of society would simply swing themselves up onto the passenger car of their choice, however, her overworked knees would violently protest if she chose this option.

In any case, the woman wasn't quite ready to board yet. She set battered cases beside a nearby bench and then sat as if the weight of the world had collapsed upon her. After a moment, she began to reminisce.

She had no grandchildren to regale with stories. So, for the moment, she was simply speaking for her own benefit.

She needed to do something to calm the anxiety boiling within her.

"Some people like to sit and think about the good old days. Huh, I don't know how good they were, rockin and rattlin down the Saskatchewan trail in a red river cart. My word, those carts would squeal, you could hear them coming from a mile away. That wasn't the worst of it though. You see, back in those days there were three places the Saskatchewan trail crossed the Whitemud river and each crossing got more difficult, with the third crossing being the worst. My husband being the man that he was, decided that the third crossing would be just the place to stop and settle.

C.P. Brown had just started the village of Third Crossing you see."

The woman stared out into the distance. Her mind was seeing something far away, something beautiful that had been lost. She bit her lip and then continued.

"We had quite the times there. I still remember the day when two women went tramping through a mile of heavy snow to help another woman in labor.

What can I say? In those days, people couldn't afford to be independent. Maybe that's what I miss most about those days, the fellowship, the friendships. Still, the time came when we had to move on from Third Crossing."

The woman turned her face toward the sky as she spoke. She envisioned the events in her mind as she spoke of them.

"I can still see the sky going dark at midday as a cloud of grasshoppers came over us. Then, the grasshoppers landed and started eating everything in sight. Filthy creatures! Soon, our cattle were dying from the lack of food, and we humans weren't doin that well either. That's when my husband decided the only thing to do was move down here to the United States. He thought things would be more civilized down here."

A lad burst from the railway station.

He glanced in all directions, looking for a way of escape. There was only one obvious option. The caboose! The lad ran toward it as if his life depended on it.

A young woman burst from the station.

Seeing her prey escaping, the young woman jumped from the station platform onto a small wooden handcar that sat behind the caboose.

The lad pointed and laughed as the young woman began pumping frantically on the handles of the handcar.

By all appearances, a chase was well underway.

The old woman stood, examined the scene before her, and then marched to the edge of the wooden platform.

"Do ya realize that train isn't going anywhere?" She shouted.

The lad stopped pointing and laughing as his innocent blue eyes grew wide. "It isn't?"

The young woman dropped the handles of the handcar. "It isn't?" She parroted in exactly the same tone as the lad.

The lad flashed a smile full of mischief. "We knew that...um...we just wanted to try something we read about...somewhere."

The old woman crossed her arms as her face grew stern. "In one of those foolish dime-store novels no doubt. Goodness. Anyone who didn't know any better would think that this is the old west."

"Well, isn't this is the old west?" The lad said with a laugh.

The young woman marched to the edge of the handcar and began to lecture the lad. "Beg your pardon, but I would like to make a slight correction, this town isn't really that old and we are in Middle America, therefore, it is impossible for us to actually be in the old west."

The lad grabbed the white metal guardrail beside him and used it to swing casually to the ground. "Well, Betsy, there you go again."

The young woman placed her hands on her hips. "What?"

"Contradicting me."

"Bill, come on, I wasn't contradicting you."

The lad sidled up to the handcar and looked up at his enemy. "Like fun you weren't, you just did it again!"

Betsy took a swipe at the lad's floppy grey hat. "No, I didn't!"

"Stop it!" The old woman on the platform had to bellow to be overheard but she seemed to manage it without much trouble. The two youngsters at the handcar froze. The old woman's voice took on a sarcastic tone as she continued. "That's better! I must say, this town is lucky to have such sophisticated citizens as yourselves as residents."

Bill moved to seat himself on the wooden handcar. "Why thank ya, ma'am."

"That wasn't a compliment."

Bill's short legs dangled over the tracks. His shabby grey overalls matched those of the young woman and every other low-level employee of the railway in those parts. Still, these facts didn't dampen the tone of mischief in his voice. "My apologies Naomi, we know all the trouble you've had. We don't want to be adding to it that's for sure."

"I thought we did?" Betsy took another swat at Bill's floppy hat.

Bill ducked, chuckling as he avoided her hand of justice.

"Ha. Everybody around here knows the trouble I've had and you two have been a big part of it, as you know full well. I need to find some trouble I haven't had yet." Naomi gestured at the baggage cart standing behind her on the station platform. "Speaking of trouble. Shouldn't you two fine citizens be doing something else?"

Bill swiveled to face Naomi. "Why yes, I suppose we should."

"I beg your pardon, but I would like to make a slight correction to the

facts you presented.” Betsy pointed to a clock high up on the station wall. “According to that clock, we don’t need to be back at work for another five minutes.”

Bill sighed. “Man, you do that every time.”

Betsy stroked the mane of long black hair that flowed from beneath her regulation hat. “I’ve told you before. I’m not a man, I’m a woman.”

Bill shook his head. “Well, there you go again.”

Betsy crossed her arms. “What?”

“Contradicting me.”

“Bill, don’t be silly. I wasn’t contradicting you!”

Naomi moved back to the bench she had just vacated. “Bah. I don’t have time for this! The train is about to leave.” She picked up her two battered bags. “Take my advice. Stop arguing and clean off that baggage cart! You’ll get more out of that than out of harassing an old woman.”

Bill slid off the handcar onto the ground. “Oh? Like what exactly?”

“Oh, I don’t know. An honest wage maybe. Maybe even a wife, you never know which poor woman God will decide to punish next.” With that bitter proclamation, Naomi headed off toward the train.

Betsy jumped from the handcar and followed Bill as he ambled slowly back toward the station platform.



Meanwhile, a sophisticated young woman had stepped into Naomi's path.  
"Mother."

Naomi carried on, easily pushing her way past her foolish daughter-in-law.  
"Please step aside Ruth."

"Now, just wait a minute." Ruth snapped, reaching out to grab Naomi's



arm.

Naomi turned back and unleashed a little of the frustration that had been building inside her. "That sure is strange advice coming from you. When was the last time you waited for anything?"

Ruth adjusted her black-rimmed glasses. "I didn't come here to start an argument."

"No, I'm sure you didn't, you came here to persuade me to stay." There was an awkward pause as the two women studied each other. As this was going on, Bill and Betsy were stroking their chins as they studied the baggage cart. Naomi fought the temptation to hurl more abuse in their direction. After a moment she decided to aim her wrath at her daughter-in-law instead. "That's it, isn't it Ruth?"

"I just wanted to ask, why are you leaving like this? I would have at least expected a word of goodbye...a wave, a hug."

Naomi snorted. "I'm sure Patrick will gladly give you all the hugs you want, you sure don't need any from me."

"But, after all that has happened I thought that..."

"No more excuses. Step aside and let me board this train."

Ruth's pale blue eyes were pleading as they looked into Naomi's wrinkled, hardened face. "But it's been so long. Do you have any idea what Third Crossing will be like now?"

Naomi rolled her eyes. She knew she should do the motherly thing and talk some sense into her daughter-in-law. Her son would want that. With that in mind, she moved to a nearby bench and seated herself. "I don't. I do remember that they changed the name of the town from Third Crossing to Palestine. What else they've changed remains to be seen I suppose. I can't imagine that there'd be much."

Ruth drifted into her imagination. Her voice took on the tone of an excited young girl as she began to pace, envisioning the glories awaiting her up in Canada. "I think it'd be so exciting to go up to Manitoba and see it."

Naomi lowered her head, a beaten widow in black. "Things were sure a lot different up there. Why, during the great drought, C.P. Brown let everyone help themselves to stock from his store so we could get through the hard times."



Naomi raised her head and surveyed her surroundings as a familiar bitterness crept into her voice. "It would take a miracle for someone to do that around here."

Ruth pulled an ornate paper fan from her purse and began to fan herself. "You make Palestine sound like the promised land."

Just to the west, Bill picked up the long black hitch attached to the baggage cart and began pulling. At the back of the cart, Betsy leaned into the load before her, pushing with all her might.

Slowly but surely the cart and its cargo, one small suitcase, rolled along, moving west along the platform.

Naomi patted the empty space beside her on the bench. As Ruth moved closer, Naomi's tone grew practical. "Ruth, I apologize for leaving you the way I did, but we need to be realistic. It was my son Bradley who brought us together and since he is no longer with us, the time has come for you to pursue a new life and marry a new man."

Ruth seated herself. "But I haven't even agreed to marry Patrick."

Naomi took the hand of her daughter-in-law and squeezed it. "But you should. This is where you belong, this is your home!" Naomi stood. "And, I must go back to where I belong, to Palestine."

Ruth stood as her voice grew more pleading. "But I know things around here could change, just give them a chance."

A few hundred yards up the track, steam chuffed and puffed inside an engine, building up to the moment of departure. An engineer pulled a cord and the train whistle shrieked, underlining this fact.

Naomi picked up her two battered bags. "Bah, I've never trusted chance, never will. If C.P. Brown and his kind are still around Palestine I'm sure I'll get by. Now, this train is about to leave, so please..."

Ruth was lost in thought and so made no move to resist as Naomi moved away from her. However, a strong resolve was building within her. As she witnessed Naomi pull open a door and vanish into the caboose, she knew what she had to do.

The train whistle shrieked again as Ruth gathered up her skirt and began to run the length of the platform, heading toward the train.

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