

The Diary of Moses Jenkins by

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## Prologue

On the upper shelf of the large mahogany bookcase in my library, you can find the diary of Moses Jenkins. It is standing quietly between two old friends, an 1878 edition of *The Mysterious Island* and the more senior 1855 edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Moses' journal was no longer in the ill health and poor shape in which I found it some 18 months ago. Realizing its importance and having restored it to its present condition, I am proud to say that it is the gem of my collection. It was also a book that dramatically changed my life ... forever.

I feel that it is important to recount how it was that I acquired this diary written more than a century ago.

## Chapter 1 – Gone Fishing

About two years ago, I retired and soon thereafter decided to take a fishing trip, something I had not done for more than 20 years. The relationship with my wife, Laura, had been somewhat strained during the months since I left my Boston law practice behind. We both agreed that a short separation would do us both a world of good.

It was with that in mind that I headed to Nova Scotia where my father had taken me fishing many times when I was a young lad. I remember it was at a lake near a small village called Sonora, very few people but no Mexicans. The name of the lake I could not recall and it might very well be that neither my father nor I ever knew it. The one thing I did remember was that it was near a rocky cliff on which many puffins nested.

It was a Tuesday morning in the late spring that Laura drove me to Logan Airport in time to catch a morning flight to Halifax where I would arrive ninety minutes later. After clearing Customs, I found my way to Bob's Van Rental where I picked up what would be my transportation and overnight accommodation for the next

five days. It was nearly forty years since I had been fishing with my dad and I knew I wouldn't be able to find my way back on memory. A map of Nova Scotia would be my guide. I had no GPS.

Leaving the airport terminal, I headed towards the Atlantic Coast to endure a 100 mile drive to my old fishing grounds. Arriving in Sherbrooke, I was able to buy some food, supplies and the fishing gear I needed. All I had taken on the plane was some change of clothing, credit cards, some Canadian cash and my passport.

Finding Sherbrooke was easy but Sonora might be a little more difficult.

Oh sure, it was on the map but there was no major highway to it. I did remember that father and I travelled the last eight miles or so on an old country road.

Sherbrooke is just a one horse town divided by the highway going through it.

There is only one country road on the outskirts of town which I found easily.

There were several signs at the beginning of that road. One said, "Sonora 15 km".

It was supper time when I found a flat clearing where I could park my van. I hadn't seen the cliff but I knew it wasn't far away. Being tired, I had my supper and crawled into my new sleeping bag and called it a night.

The sun had yet to rise before I got up and had my breakfast. I wanted to get an early start on my search for the cliff and thence the lake.

It came as quite the surprise when, after having driven only a quarter of a mile, I found the puffin colony and their cliff-side home. Now, if my memory didn't fail me, there was a path nearby which started by an old sawmill and ended at the lake. I was sure that it took a long time to get to the lake because I remembered how sore my legs were when I got there.

I parked the van on the side of the road and walked around in search of the old sawmill. Things had changed since I was here forty years ago. The trees were bigger and the woods thicker but after what seemed like hours, I did find a small stream and the remains of the old mill. The path was still there but was at first difficult to see. It had almost been overtaken by the trees and vegetation that had grown there.

I packed myself a hearty lunch and with fishing gear in hand, I began what I figured would be a long hike to the lake. It was slow going because the path disappeared completely several times before emerging again after I poked my way around trees and through bushes.

It was nearly lunch time when I arrived at the lake. I was excited to return after all these years and anxious as well to start fishing. The trout had been plentiful in the

past and many had been a good size. I hoped that, unlike the forests and the path, the fishing had not changed over the years.

I was not disappointed. I caught two nice trout within the hour and decided to start a little campfire and have them for lunch. It was a wonderful feeling being all by myself, self-sufficient and in a peaceful setting.

I fished for another 3 hours but didn't get any more bites. I was getting discouraged but was cheered up somewhat when a doe and two fawns came to the edge of the lake to drink. I was only 200 feet from them yet they had not seen me. I stayed quiet and was able to watch them for five minutes before they returned to the woods. They must have brought me luck as well because shortly after, I caught three more trout. The largest must have weighed close to a pound.

As dusk was only a few hours away, I decided to head back to the van, knowing that the path would again be something I needed to pay attention to. It was minutes after that, that my life was about to change.

## Chapter 2 - Getting Lost

The path looked different from what it had in the morning because of the sun's determination to call it a day. Shadows were beginning to appear and were teaming up with the trees and the brush in an effort to confuse me. And so they did. I found myself in waist- high bushes with trees all around but no longer could I see the path. I looked back in the direction I had come from but the path was no longer there. I was, quite frankly, lost. I remembered to purchase all the fishing gear I needed but I forgot to buy a compass.

I began to panic but was able to control myself. After all, if I was stuck here overnight, I did have a good supply of matches, food and knew how to build a lean-to if I had to. Time was still on my side. I had at least another two hours before it would get too dark to see.

I headed west toward the dying sun with the intention of either finding my way out or building my lean-to before dark. I carefully notched trees with my jackknife so I had reference points in the morning should I need them.

With barely a half-hour left before the sun said good-bye for another day, I came upon the remains of a dwelling nestled in a small clearing. All around it were hillocks which supported a forest of thick birches. Its sides were made of stone and, though covered with moss, seemed to be somewhat sound in structure. There had been what looked like a wooden roof but only a quarter of it remained.

### Chapter 3 -Refuge for the Night

At least I had found a place to stay for the night and I didn't have to make a lean-to. It wasn't quite like the comforts of home but it would do.

Upon entering, I was able to see, with the little bit of light that was left, that there were candles on a make-shift table under the part of the dwelling where the roof remained. Quickly, I lit two and examined my surroundings. There wasn't much to see but there was a fireplace and next to that some wood which was very dry but not rotted. I then realized that somebody had been using this place in the last year or so. Maybe somebody like me who needed shelter for the night.

My suspicion was confirmed when I found three empty cans labelled, "Hunt's Beans". The logo on the cans celebrated the company's 50th year in business. The company was founded back in 1959. So, it was just a short while ago that somebody had been here. I decided not to eat anything so as to conserve what food I had. I started a fire and lay next to it on the stone floor.

Despite the Spartan conditions, I slept soundly and was woken up by the sound of birds. The sun had already managed to rise and the night chill was beginning to recede. As it got lighter, I became more aware of my surroundings. The dwelling looked to be very old judging by its style. I had seen similar types of buildings in



Salem and in the oldest parts of Boston. Yet, here I was in another country in an area more than 800 miles away from home.

I decided to eat some of the sandwiches I had prepared the day before and then try to return to civilization. Thankfully I had brought some instant coffee and had several bottles of spring water with me so I was able to make myself a hot drink as well.

Just as I was getting ready to leave, I noticed something wedged in the rock foundation near where the door once had once been. It looked to be a book but it was hard to tell as it had moss growing on it. Pulling the moss away, I saw it was indeed a small book which clearly had seen better days. Its cover was in extremely poor shape but it appeared that the rocks which had entombed it, also had prevented it from rotting. It was about four inches wide and six inches long and about one-half inch thick.

It had been wedged in tightly and it had taken me many minutes to ease it out of its resting place. I had to be gentle because I was scared of damaging it.

It was a personal journal or what most people would call a "diary". It had been written more than 100 years ago by someone called Moses Jenkins.

My thoughts of searching for a way home were delayed by finding this book and I began to read.

### Chapter 3 – The Diary of Moses Jenkins

“I begin this journal on the 20th day of June in the year of our Lord, 1892. I am now alone and have outlived three wives and five children. My time to return to my Maker is fast approaching and I must tell my story while I still have time.

I joined the Union Army when I was 18 and fought in that war in which brother faced brother and father faced son. I saw many people die on the battlefield but I give thanks to my God that I suffered no worse than a broken leg when I was trodden on by a horse during the Battle of Bull Run.

My first wife and infant son both died of pneumonia while I was fighting for the abolishment of slavery. I despised the South and their practice of slavery. My grand pappy had been brought to the United States against his will - on a slave ship in the year 1820. He managed to escape to freedom ten years later. He and my grandma settled somewhere in Vermont.

After the war, I returned to Portland, Maine where I had lived my entire life. I became a seaman on a merchant ship that travelled to Nova Scotia exchanging fish for lumber. It was in Portland that I met my second wife.

Martha blessed me with three children, the youngest Isaiah was born on my 30th birthday. Four years later, I lost them all when the house where we lived, burnt to the ground. Nothing was saved. All I had were memories. To bury my sorrow, I decided on a new life and moved north to Canada. I had friends in the small ports of Nova Scotia and roamed from town to town for a few years. I finally settled down in Sheet Harbour in the year of our Lord, 1882. There I worked in the local lumberyard.

Soon after, I met the third love of my life, Fiona, a young Scottish lassie. She was 22 when we married. I was almost 39. My sorrows from the past were gone and I was the happiest I had been in a long time. Misfortune again visited me when Fiona and our 3 month old baby were killed during a riot that erupted outside a tavern when the owner refused to sell liquor to several individuals who were drunk.

22nd of June - I was not able to write yesterday as I had little energy and spent most of the day sleeping. I must finish this journal while I still can.

After losing my third wife, I lost all faith in mankind. I had saved enough money to buy the materials I needed to build a small home where I could live the rest of my life in peace. I was adept at both hunting and fishing and I knew I could sustain myself without the aid of others. I no longer feared being alone. It was something I needed. It is here that I shall die.

This sickness I have, whatever it might be, tires me greatly. Lately I have been having hallucinations of long bearded elves running in the woods outside my home. They seem so real. I can hear them singing and talking to one another. I have even tried to get their attention by calling back to them even though I know they are not really there. Once, I thought one of them answered me saying it was not time yet but they would be back later.

June 23rd - I should really try to gather what strength I have to drag myself to the village to get some medical attention. That would mean a hike of two miles to a doctor who lives there on the other side of these hills. I don't think I have the stamina to do that now. Perhaps I will rest for a while and try tomorrow.

June 25th - I slept all day yesterday and today I am the weakest I have ever been. Again, I have seen the elves. They waved and said they would be back tomorrow. They seemed to be a happy lot and friendly. I wish I had the energy that they had. I must remind myself that they are not real.

June 26th - I am even weaker as I write this. The elves woke me this morning with their singing. They all wear green caps except for one who wears a red one. Perhaps he is the Head Elf. It is he who told me to be ready tomorrow. Ready for what - I have no idea. Could it mean that my time has come? I think it is approaching ever so quickly but the elves could not possibly know. How could they - they are just in my imagination as my health wanes.

June 27th - Today the Head Elf knocked on my front door and told me it was time. They would be back in an hour to get me. He handed me a robe and told me to change into it before I left. Suddenly he was gone but in my arms I was holding a robe. It was real. I could feel the fine silk. I now realize that the elves are real as well.

So, I must now finish my journal before I depart this life. I will hide it here in my dwelling and hope that some day, someone will find it and I will not be forgotten. I must now wear my robe and wait for the elves to come and get me.”

Yours Sincerely

God's Faithful Servant,

Moses Jenkins

## Chapter 4 - What an Amazing Story!

The rest of the pages in the book were blank. I closed the book and considered what I had just read. The old man was dying, There was little doubt. He did hide the diary just as he said he would. Most likely he left this dwelling and wandered off into the woods where, I hoped, he died without too much discomfort. What an amazing find I had made!

I could probably easily confirm the existence of Moses Jenkins. He had given enough information in his journal to help someone validate it. He asked that he not be forgotten and I knew I never would. Better yet, I would check public records once I got back to Boston and write an article in his memory.

But first, I had to find my way out of here. I needed to find the van or find a trail, power line or a railway track to get me back to civilization.

## Chapter 5 - Searching For My Way Out

I carefully packed the diary in my knapsack and started what I hoped would be my return to society. I had travelled for a few hours but seemed to be more lost than

I was the day before. I had absolutely no idea where I was. The sky was now cloudy and I couldn't even gauge which direction was which. Thankfully it was not raining but the sun wasn't going to help me find my way out. It didn't matter much anyway. I didn't know if my van was to the east of me or society to my north.

I sat on a flat rock near a stream where I refilled my water bottles. It was there that I heard some bushes rustle. I didn't move, thinking that perhaps another deer was close by. I had no fear that a dangerous animal might be lurking about. Black bears were not common in this part of the country. I thought it might be a coyote but I figured if it was just one, I would be a match for him.

Then off to my side, I saw something move. I carefully turned my head and thought I saw something small dart between two trees. Then I heard what sounded like voices. They sounded like young children and I thought that I may be saved after all. It was inconceivable to me that children would be playing in woods without an adult present. I called out to them but received no answer. I called again and still no answer. I was going to try one more time when what appeared to be an elf came out from behind a bush. He doffed his cap in salute, bowed and said "Hello" to me.

I had trouble finding my voice. An elf ? Just as Moses mentioned in his diary. No way - this was a hundred years later. Even if Moses had seen elves, they wouldn't still be here after all these years.

It was hard to hold that thought when one was standing right in front of me! Then two more emerged. I finally found my voice and asked who they were. One said he was Pip and that they lived there.

I told them I was lost and I wanted to find my way out. I told them about my van and that I had parked it near the cliff where the puffins nested.

All three nodded and said they knew where that was. They told me I needed to go cross-country in an easterly direction until I came to a logging road. Once there, I was to turn right and the road would take me to the cliff.

I wasn't sure which direction was east and even if I did head off in the right direction, the cloudy skies would not help me if I had strayed. Pip said they would guide me to the road but then I was to go alone the rest of the way. The elves were somewhat shy but were friendly and wanted to help me.

Along the way, I told them that some of us humans believed in them but not most. I admitted that I was in the majority. Pip said he understood and that he



would prefer that it remain that way as they had little desire to interact with us. He didn't elaborate. I didn't think I needed to ask.

Once we arrived at the road, Pip and the other two elves removed their caps, bowed to me and wished me a safe journey. I thanked them and waved good-bye.

Forty minutes later, I saw the cliff and all its puffins. I returned to my van without further mishap. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon. I was sore. I was tired. I put my gear in the van and headed back to Sherbrooke. No more fishing for me. I was anxious to return home and start my research on the life of Moses Jenkins.

## Chapter 6 -On My Way Home

I found a place to stay for the night and was able to change my flight back to Boston for the next day, three days earlier than I had planned.

Back in Boston, I began my research where I did manage to get some leads on Moses Jenkins. There was a Moses Jenkins who had enlisted in the Union Army in 1863. I also made several trips to Portland and did confirm there was a seaman by that name who sailed on a vessel owned by Nash and Sons.

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