

# THE EMERY SHAFT

by Tony Diem

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## CARSON CITY, NEVADA WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1897

The blow was sharp, along the part of the jaw line that mates perfectly with a fist, the sound like that of a hard line-drive coming off a wooden bat. Brock was ready to deliver another blow but in the instant before his gloved weaponry began its next mission, Brock noticed the effect of his assault. His opponent's body began to go limp. Brock's body was poised with his arsenal at the ready. The next punch would be undefended, devastating and dispatch his opponent shortly into the second round. Adrenaline coursed through his veins, his fighter's instinct heightened. But the second series never connected. John Holcomb's eye's rolled back and Brock leaned away and reined in his gloves. He relaxed his stance, showing a grace, style and class rarely seen in the brutal arena of boxing. Holcomb's arms dropped to his side and he crumpled forward onto the canvas.

The year was 1897, the date St. Patrick's Day, and Brock Hutchinson was listed on the card as the third fight of four on the day when a single famous punch would decide Nevada's first ever sanctioned championship prizefight. A night when the state's Governor, Reinhold Sadler, former World Champion John L. Sullivan and thousands more were in attendance. The sound in the arena was deafening as the cheering crowd looked on in the mid-afternoon sun that lit the arena in Carson City, Nevada. Brock Hutchinson let out a roar and was hungry for more. The owner of the adjacent racetrack, and the promoter who built the arena Brock now reigned over, Dan Stuart, held his cigar in his mouth, tipped his hat and cheered voraciously as the referee raised Brock's gloved hand in victory to all four sides of the ring.

Later that afternoon referee George Siler, would be raising the arm of Robert Fitzsimmons, in what would be called the "Fight of the Century", as the Australian middleweight champion defeated the reigning World Heavyweight Champion "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, with that now famous blow to his solar plexus—a single punch that in essence, paralyzed the champ to the count of ten. Fitzsimmons would earn an unprecedented \$38,000 between the purse and moneys from the Edison Picture Company which filmed the event.

After his fight, Brock Hutchinson witnessed that now famous 'bolo punch' while sitting between two lawmen brought in for security. Brock dreamed of a chance to fight Fitzsimmons, dreamed of the glory, the money, and the fame that could be his. He studied Fitzsimmons throughout the fight, examined his techniques and knew he could beat him.

Brock tipped his head slightly to his right to hear the words spoken loudly over the cheering crowd. "You've got a helluva left, Brock." The man with the square jaw stood even with Brock and brushed down his full salt and peppered mustache after speaking those words. Brock turned his upper body to shake the gentleman's hand, the grip was firm and the look in the gentlemen's eyes was strong.

Brock felt a tap at his waste, and turned fully to accept the hand given him. He looked up as he shook the hand of the man who now stood at his left. His bowler style hat was well worn, and the shadow it

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cast covered the long slender face and flared mustache. "I think the next time we escort you", the man shouted over the crowd, "You'll be the champ." The man pointed toward an opening in the bleachers, and motioned at the two to begin their way toward it. And with that Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson escorted Brock back through the tunnel and out of the frenzied crowd.

**FLASHING LIGHTS  
WILLOW HOLLOW, NEVADA CITY, CA  
THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1996**

It was just past two AM when the phone started to ring. Mark awoke just in time to hear the last ring before the machine picked it up. The fall of steady rain drummed against the house and slowly Mark's eyes began to close as the phone started to ring again.

"Hullo?" Mark said in a groggily voice, as he tried to gain composure by rubbing the sleep from his face.

"Mark, it's Terry, we got a problem downtown." The voice on the other end continued, "It's one of the feeders into the trunk line on Main Street."

"Yeah," Mark said with sleepy despondence, "give me ten minutes." Mark sluggishly made his way to an upright position and rolled his legs off the edge of the bed; his Aussie Sheppard-Border Collie mix lifted her head from her dog-bed and stared at him in confusion. She got up and furiously shook her head and body causing a raucous with her collar and tags then rested her chin on Mark's thigh as he scratched her behind her ears. Charlie made a rumbling noise and pressed harder into his scratching fingers. "Okay girl, let's get you outside, I gotta get to work." Charlie let out a huge sigh, reached out her forelegs and stretched her back before frog-dogging back down on her padded bed wagging her tail, legs splayed out flat behind her. Mark yawned as he reached for some pants hanging on the bed frame put them on and headed out of the room, Charlie in tow tags jingling and claws tapping the 125 year old wood floor.

Colored lights flickered in synch with the rhythmic pulse of the windshield wipers that barely kept up with the rain. A front end loader and an excavator where in motion, operated by two city employee's frantically clearing dirt from the car size sink hole on the side of the Burnham Bar. A few men in full yellow rain suits stood at its edge. Mark pulled up to the scene and spoke briefly with Terry, who'd given him his wonderful wakeup call, before being laid into by the Public Works Director. Mark looked up in the direction of Robert Hermann's loft above the bar, and there he stood watching, fascinated by the men furiously working below him. He saw Mark and waved, then held up his mug of coffee and pointed at it. Mark eyes grew saucer like as he excitedly nodded his head at his friend.

Hired the previous spring by the city, Mark was in charge of coordinating and installing new technologies and upgrades to the city's water and waste system. Only a year into his new job and transplanted from the southern, larger and more metropolitan portion of California, Mark sometimes felt like an outsider bringing too much change too quickly to a town where history stood still, and where "tomorrow" didn't mean the next day, but rather "not today". The mess in front of him would seem like another blow to the "new fangled" ideas for the city's infrastructure and a check in the win column for the crotchety Public Works Director who'd done nothing to improve on a city he believed was "just fine the way it's always been."

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A tall elderly gentleman made his way toward Mark, sporting a covered aluminum coffee mug. "Good morning, Mark." His voice was deep and with a big smile he shook Mark's hand firmly, "well this is quite the noisy mess isn't it?"

"Yeah, we'll get it figured out, hopefully by the end of the day we'll have it all covered up and patched." Mark answered. "Thanks for the coffee Robert. I might hit you up for a couple of refills, I think it's going to be a long, long day."

With daylight breaking the mess was no further along than at three AM, only now there was an audience held back by yellow tape stretched between lampposts and wooden barricades used for winter snow maintenance. Mark made his way down the ladder on the side of the hole. He could make out the stratification of the historic town's Main Street that existed over the last century and a half. He hopped off the ladder—got a stern look from the Public Works Director—and walked over to the valve switch that was installed earlier that year. Bilge pumps whined as they struggled to keep the bottom of the hole dry.

"Your little toy didn't hold up all too well. Looks like *jou have some explainin' to do*" He said in his best Cuban band leader interpretation. "And don't make me preach about ladder safety at the next city meeting," the Public Works Director had been there twenty some odd years and was pretty set in his ways.

Mark threw off the comment, "This battle may have been lost, but in all its what's best for the city." Mark handed Terrence a new valve, and helped support it while Terrence fitted it into place. A few turns of a wrench and the installation was complete. Terrence clicked into his radio, and the red gauge began furiously spinning to life as the other crew slowly released water back into the line.

A few days would pass before the hole could be filled. City ordinances for the historic town stated that any large disturbances or excavations near the historic town center, or areas that are contributing to the historic aspect of the town would need to be examined and reviewed by the town archeologist. Though not on Main Street, the intersection was central to the historical aspect of the town, and its proximity to the Burnham Bar made it quite significant. The examination of the excavated area started the day after the line break and would lead to front page news for several days and throughout the spring.

Terrence was on the radio to Mark in minutes, "Mark, you've got to get your ass down here. We got ourselves a little situation with the line break. Apparently the archeologist found sumthin'."

The sun was just catching up with its duties that morning as Mark pulled up in the city truck and flipped on the orange beacon atop the cab. He walked over to Terrence who was standing at the edge of the yellow tape staring into the abyss below. Known by most as Terry, Mark got in the habit of calling him Terrence after meeting his family and hearing his wife Deb call after him when she was upset with him for not taking out the trash, or using a dish rag to wash his greasy hands in the kitchen sink.

"What's so import. . .who's the . . .uh. . ."

"The hottie?" Terrence finished the thought. He'd grown up just outside Nevada City and had worked for the city since high school, if you count the years as a summer helper watering the lamppost flower

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pots and picking weeds out in front of the City Hall, it was close to twenty years. He was now in charge of the Streets Department, and filled in where needed with other departments. Aside from a few semesters at a junior college in Sacramento, Terrence had never left Northern California. He was married to his high school sweetheart, had two girls and chocolate lab with a head the size of a basketball. He drank PBR, and listened to old time rock and roll while refurbishing a '68 Dodge A100 Tradesman van in his garage. It was here he taught Mark the finer points of cars, the difference between fuel injection and carburetor engines and how the hub locks on his pickup worked. The two of them hit it off like school boys and were practically inseparable when working, especially when they were outside the office. Terrence was good for Mark, he knew the town's infrastructure, and how to get around major road blocks set up by the bureaucracy of city administration.

"She's the new city archeologist, she was hired a couple of weeks ago. You'd know it if you ever went to the city council meetings like *you're* supposed to." Terrence made a dig at Mark.

"I delegate that task."

"Oh, that's very supervisory of you, have I ever thanked you for that responsibility?" Terrence said without a smile.

"It's an extra fifty bucks for ya. Besides, what would Charlie think if I didn't take her hiking on those evenings? But I might have to rethink about attending." He continued as he watched the archeologist dig around on the side of the hole. "Is she single?"

"She's a Santa Cruz grad—worked Forest Service and as an interp' or something down in Tombstone. Single. Not sure, ask one of the girls back in the office, I'm sure they'd know." Mark didn't have to look at Terrence to know he' rolled his eyes halfway out of their sockets.

"Tombstone, Arizona? OK Corral."

"I'm your huckleberry." Terrence replied as he made like he was spinning a pair of guns in his hands. "Exactly." Terrence blew twice, once each at his imaginary smoking guns.

"So what's she doin' here?" Mark made his way toward the ladder.

"Her job. She found some bones."

"Bones? Dinosaur bones?" Mark was curious as he swung his body around the ladder.

"No. Human."

Mark's eyes popped from his face half way down the ladder. "Seriously?"

"Yeah and get this. It's like chromed with gold."

Mark started back up, stepped off the ladder and said, "What do you mean?"

"Well I'm no 'doctor science', but near as I know, the gold adheres to the fat and acids from the body as it decomposes and gets incorporated into the bone tissue over time." Terrence was stunned at himself for sounding so intellectual.

"Whatever." Mark was not as impressed. "How the hell do you know all that Einstein?"

"Discovery Channel—bronze does the same thing. Like with soldiers buried in armor. Their bones absorb the bronze on all the fatty areas of their bodies." Terrence finished as a police car pulled up and Chief Milken stepped out. "Chief's here because of it. He needs to find out if there's any wrongful death or anything like that." Mark waved at the Chief and headed down the ladder.

"It's a friggin' town meeting down there." Mark stated, before descending as well. "Is the valve working? Oh, hey! What's her name?" He asked Terrence in a soft voice.

Terrence leaned over, "Stop delegating an' go to the meetings." Then whispered, "Elke." He pointed to the valve, nodded, "for the most part."

"Elk?" Mark returned.

"No, like the actress, *Elk-eh*, Elke Sommers." Terrence answered and headed back toward the loader.

Mark shook the Director and Chief's hands, then introduced himself to the archeologist.

"I'm Elke Jennings." She said with a smile. Elke was very earthy and reminded Mark of the granola, hippie coeds that came and went from the co-op from his days at UC Santa Barbara. She had longer hair and was using a pair of pencils to hold it up in a bun. She wore faded jeans with tattered hems and needed tape to hold her kneepads in place. She wore a tattered long sleeve shirt that had a sun-bleached, smiling, yellow slug waving a UCSC banner across the front of it.

"Pleasure to meet you." Mark smiled as their eyes met and he continued to shake her hand. Mark pointed to the slug, "So, banana slug I see. I hear you found something of interest?"

"Yes, I was just explaining to the Chief that it appears to be a man's thigh bone, the only reason I think that, is because the clothing—or what's left of it—is consistent with that of a man." Elke pointed to some dirt covered shreds of cloth on a mat on the ground, and to several bones lying next to them. "So what are you?"

"Me, I'm a Gaucho. UC Santa Barbara. Mark turned his head down and could see what Terrence meant about the gold, the bone was tan to brown, and near the ball head of it was the shiny glistening tell tale sign of gold. "Is it really gold?"

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure it is. It's common in the Med and in and around Asian ruins, mostly bronze but not limited to it. I'll have to do some checking for sure. You can tell from where it is there must have been gold in the pocket of his pants, it's only a hunch, but if you look at the bone, it would kind of make sense. I'm guessing the gold was either washed away, or just mixed up with all the digging and the rain last night."

"Any idea how old the bones are Ms. Jennings?" The Chief asked as he examined the thigh bone and carefully lifted it with a pen.

"Turn of the last century." Elke said pointing to the tattered rags of the pants. "Judging by what remains of the clothes."

Mark looked at the Public Works Director, "is there any record of a cemetery here? I know Hillside was moved, and they find remains all the time while digging foundations for new homes out there."

"Not that I know of, might have to ask over at Gregson Brothers, see if they have any record of one in their old logs." The director replied. "They've made almost every stone marker out this way since their grandfather started the business after the Rush. If anyone knows, they surely will."

"Let's assume not. Chief, what's your take?" Mark asked.

"Well, the bar's been here a long time, survived at least two town fires that I know of. I've been looking at the photos Elke sent, I made out some boards here." He pointed to the side of the hole less than an arm's length below them, where it could clearly be seen that there was a layer of boards. "He might have had a hiding place under the wooden boardwalk, or been put there. We'll need to complete some forensics to determine that."

"How friggin' long are we talking Chief?" The director said sternly. "We've got tourists traffic, and this hole ain't gonna help that one bit." The director placed his hands on his hips and sternly kicked at the dirt on the ground.

"What's your concern, I'm the one responsible for traffic control." The Chief replied.

"Well, I just don't want a hole in the middle of town." Came the retort from the Director.

"Yeah," Mark interjected, "that's all we need, a tourist attraction right in the middle of a tourist town." Mark could hardly contain his giggle, and Elke definitely couldn't as she turned her head down to keep from laughing even more. The chief did the same, trying to catch his laugh in his hand.

The Director stared down Mark, headed up the ladder where Terrence was waiting to come down, "You better start making more of those meetings."

"So, Chief?" Elke kneeled down to look at the bones, "Can I continue to do the digging or do you need someone else to come do this."

"Yeah, continue, talked with the city attorney and the mayor, and they agree that's what you were hired for, so go ahead and earn your pay. Keep me up to date, and let me know if you need anything from me."

"Great. Since it's your hole Mark, I'm gonna' need some help from your department." Elke said with excitement.

"Don't delegate me!" Came the quick response from Terrence as he winked at Mark from the edge of the hole.

"Sure, Elke. What all do you need?"

"Well, for starters a ladder and a scaffold of some sort since the bones came from up there." Elke pointed about five feet up the wall. "We'll also need to tent it off, to prevent more rain, and sandbag it to prevent flooding."

"Terrence." Mark lifted his head toward him.

"On it. I'll get the 'Tommy' loaded, and be back in a bit." Terrence got on the radio, and headed back up the ladder and out of the hole.

The Chief and Director talked amongst themselves for a few minutes and Mark took the opportunity to check on the valve, and examine the exposed plumbing works. Just as he grew tired of waiting they both headed up and out of the hole. Elke was taking measurements and tapping in stakes. She was squatting down examining her work when she realized Mark was still there. "Hey, can you lend me a hand, I need to run some string between the stakes to layout a grid."

Mark was eager to help, and spent the next hour spooling out string while Elke tied off each individual stake. They talked about their respective schools and how they each ended up in a town with a population smaller than their own high schools. Terry returned, and the three had the truck unloaded in no time. Terry's radio crackled with a report of broken sprinklers over at the park, and he headed off. Mark gathered up some courage and asked Elke if she wanted to head over to the Great Wall for lunch. In minutes the two were walking down Main Street side by side, and hit it off at lunch with varied conversation.

**EMERY SHAFT 1250 FT BELOW GROUND  
MILTON MINING COMPANY, NEVADA CITY, CA  
SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1902**

With the charges loaded and set, Brock and Jack walked behind the bunker and hunkered down next to the rest of the crew. Jack looked at Brock, who replied with an overt nod. Using an expression taken from coal miners back east Jack's voice filled the corridor, "Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!" The explosion filled their small world with a near endless clamor of noise and a thick heavy dust



cloud that rumbled toward them like a wave. Brock covered his closed eyes with the hand that held his shirt collar over his mouth and nose, each breath of his was hotter and more humid than the one before. He could smell the sweat of the four previous hours of preparation work, and the hot air that filled the dark world he worked in.

As the crumbling of the rock continued 300 yards away, Brock was back in the ring. His memory of that St. Patrick's Day in the sun came flooding back. The introduction before thousands, the punches he took, the punches he evaded and the punches he landed. In the darkness of the shaft his shoulders clenched, moved forward

and aft, his head bobbed. It tilted left then right. His left hand clenched and his body contorted to the right. Brock let out a muffled grunt as he clenched his jaw. He could see the expression on John Holcomb's face go blank. Brock's blackened, dirty face lit up as the referee raised his hand into the air and the flood of adrenaline filled his veins. Brock smiled for a moment, then he felt a hard slap on his shoulder and the harsh reality of that night came back all too quickly. It was all but a distant memory and a broken eye socket ago, a chance of fame and tremendous fortune gone asunder with a blindsided hit from a whiskey bottle.

Brock, the son of a Chicago lawyer, was now in a dark humid corridor, filled with the smells of electricity, fuel soaked dirt, burnt metal, perspiration and the hot earthen dankness of being several hundred feet below ground. The air, often dust filled, was palatable. The only light was thrown from acetylene head lamps and a few DC arc lamps that were periodically placed through the corridors of the mine shafts. Black nothingness sucked up light as if it were trying to keep from exposing the bare rock the men were digging and scraping at. The light from the glowing arc lamps casts large shadows, their light faded quickly in that darkness. A darkness that filled Brock with disgust, five years of his life lost to this wasteland. In that time he slaved underground for a company that treated him no better than the Chinese who were paid a third of his pay.

Brock was different. He was schooled in one of the finest boarding schools of the country. He knew how to study, and that he did. His work was his subject. He knew geology, he knew how to read and assay the sample cores he was asked to retrieve from his area. He knew where there was gold, but The Milton Mining Company loathe listening to a washed up, rogue saloon hall fighter. The company thought it best to utilize Brock as a tough disciplinarian that kept men in line.

Brock was on one knee and crouched in wait with the three men that made up his crew. The hand that rest upon Brock's shoulder belonged to his lieutenant, Jack Heilman who was tall, Barnumesque tall, even crouched he towered over Brock. He motioned to Brock that the blasting was complete. The men stayed behind their bunker until the collapsing sounds of the blast subsided. Jack was due topside for a meeting and pointed up then at his wrist to remind Brock. Brock grasped to his fleeting daydream, signaled to the other two men that it was safe to get up from behind the bunker built up of rock and large beams that sheltered them from the explosion. The men surveyed the blast and the several hundred pounds of rock that lay in rubble in the wake of its percussion.

"I still don't understand why we blasted here." Mic O'Hare, the youngest of the four was an Irishman whose parents immigrated to the Midwest fifty years earlier during the potato famine that devastated their homeland. He'd worked his way to California working for the railroads, and for the past two years worked on Brock's digging crew. Mic was the companies best spike driver and driller for the past three years and at company sponsored competitions Mic drove more spikes in three minutes, faster and deeper than any other hammer-man in a hundred and fifty mile radius. And with over forty mines in operation, that was a lot of competition.

His argument went unanswered, as his spike man Bill Thayer, prepared another road tie and spike for him to drive. "Damn you Brock! Why won't you answer me?" 'Pa-tang!' the blow of the maul ricocheted throughout the endless dark tunnels. "Why the hell are we digging here?" 'Pa-tang!' "The boss says

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we're to continue on down this gallery," Mic pointed toward the dark abyss of the corridor, the four had been working on for over a month, "and you're veering off of it." 'Pa-tang!'

Brock signaled to Bill, who kneeled quietly calculating where next to hammer, hoping the continuous activity would settle Mic down. It was an hour or two later, and most of the rock collected and carted in a collection of ore cars. Mic had settled down as the Brock and Bill had him carry the larger waste rock. All three men stopped as the flicker of a headlamp approached. Occasionally the light would go out then come back to life. John 'Jack' Heilmann was returning and ducked under beams turning his headlamp down. How a man of his stature could work in the cramped quarters of the mine was always remarkable to the three men now sitting on the large fragments of their earlier work. Jack was stoic, with reserve he would have things in hand before even being asked. Thirty-three and married ten years, Jack had a nine year old daughter named Grace that meant the world to him.

"What's the news from above Jack?" asked Brock.

"We're to keep digging on this gallery. No changes. They said they have a new geologist coming and that in time, they might change our course, but for now, we're to keep along the same lead. They are confident we'll eventually strike something."

"Those idiots!" Brock threw down a rock he'd been crumbling in his hands, it shattered against the wall of the corridor and fragments exploded in every direction. "What the damn hell are they thinking? We're the best crew, drilling, blasting, clearing. You name it, we're the best. We've brought more gold to the surface than any of twenty other crews. They're sending us on a wild good chase. I've been to the main office more times than I care to count. Well if they won't listen to me then they will never know what they're missing. Let's not show them. Grab my gear bag."

Bill Thayer, didn't talk much, and when he did he was quick to his point. He had come from the East Coast and had played professional ball for the Cincinnati Reds, during their transitions from Red Stockings of the American Association to simply the Cincinnati Reds of the National League. Athletic in build, Bill was methodical and meticulous about his work. He got up and walked over to the nearest ore car and retrieved a leather-canvas satchel and placed it at Brock's feet. Brock's eye lifted toward Bill to acknowledge receipt as his hand dug around blindly within the bag. He sat up and began to unfurl a map. It was hand drawn, and looked like child's pirate map with chicken scratches here and there. It did however, have a few notes written on it, and although rarely seen by the miners themselves. They immediately recognized the topography of their mine shaft, and knew the symbols associated with mining. In the corner was the well scripted name of the company and the place where they had spent the better part of two years together: Milton Mining Company, Emery Shaft, Nevada City, California. Brock claimed he found it one night at a bar, left by a company geologist, the three knew not to ask—they just figured Brock had stolen it. They knew the geologist Brock spoke of was found one morning drowned; slumped over a horse trough filled with vomit.

The map, known as a 'lead map', showed where samples of rock taken in exploratory drilling would yield the most gold ore. And there, less than a quarter inch from where they had been digging blindly the past three months were the notes of the geologist in red pencil: *ORE!*

Brock's experience at the mine included several years underground and he wasn't all too shabby at his own geology. He'd done some of his own research, bellied up to bars with company geologist whenever he could, and learned how to read the rock by sight, rather than microscope and assay. He had also had enough of the company, their resolve not to bring him up the ranks fast enough, and that the company benefited too much from his experience, and that of his crew. He was done, he couldn't have Fitzsimmons but he would have his payday.

"Mic, this is it. It's right here." Brock pointed at the map, then at the small cavity created from their recent blast not five feet away. Brock continued. "Here is the plan. We work together at the start of each day on the main route, then over mid-day we work in pairs on both. We work hardest together and try to get as much done as we can at those times." He reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a tobacco pouch and meticulously rolled a cigarette and asked Jack to light it. He took a deep pull and enjoyed it, slowly exhaling the thick smoke, before catching it in his mouth again and taking it in for one more pass through his lungs. The red cherry of his cigarette burned bright on top of some rocks as Brock laid out the map. "So does that work for everyone?"

"But why?" Mic carefully picked up the cigarette from the rock and slowly took his own drag. "The map means nuthin' to me Brock. You know I don't know my letters."

Bill reached for the cigarette in Mic's hand, took his own drag, held it deep and exhaled the white smoke through his nose. He placed a hand on Mic's shoulder, "Mic, you'll know soon enough." He handed the stub of a cigarette back to Brock and with a disconcerted look at it and the two men who had shared it, The tip glowed bright red as Brock took the last drag.

## LUNCH SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 1996

It was a gorgeous summer Saturday, the sun was bright, the skies clear, and the view of town from Mark's roof was remarkable. He was up there clearing out his gutters when the cordless phone rang. It was Camden Berg with the Gold Strike Mining Company. Camden wore a suit, but in his youth worked the mine as a hoist operator running the carriage that transported men and rock through the different levels of the mine. He pinched and saved every penny while living in a small room not far from the mine until he could pay for schooling. He got through his engineering degree in three and a half years at UC Davis, and finished a Masters in Mining Technologies at the Schools of Mines and Technology in the small South Dakota town of Rapid City. He returned to the mine and was well liked by both miners and administration and was a good liaison between the two. He worked in administration before moving on to become the mines Director of Operations.

As more and more development was occurring in and around Nevada City, Mark grew more anxious about the Forest Service and mine owned land behind his house. Mark appreciated the fact that he was buffered by a short strip of Forest Service, but concern grew as the mine began selling more and more parcels to shell off some of its assets and tax liability, with gold prices dropping. Mark had worked with the mine and knew the director and implored him to let Mark know when the acreage behind him would be up for sale.

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"Mark, is this a good time?" Camden asked.

Mark perched himself against his chimney, "As good as any. What's up?"

"You asked me to tell you when the parcel near your house went for sale. It looks like a developer from Sonoma is putting in a bid for 75 acres, and possibly as large as 250. He has a development plan he will present at Monday night's city council meeting, and we're suppose to be meeting with him in the next couple weeks about a sale and a land swap between the BLM, Forest Service and the mine to make it quite an inclusive parcel of land. The sale requires board and city council approval. It looks like it will be going for about 750 an acre; just over a quarter million."

Mark slumped down at the base of the chimney, holding his head, as he looked out over his deck and his small backyard that butted up against the land which drew his concern. He offered up a thank you to Camden before finishing up the gutters. After gaining composure Mark called Camden back at home. "Camden, what if the land had some historic significance? Would the mine be more apt to sell it to a land trust rather than the developer? Maybe donate it, or make it into a park or a memorial?"

"What are you talking about? Historic, how?" was the puzzled reply by the director of the gold mine.

"Well, like... let's say there might be something buried out there of historic importance to the make-up of the storied past of the town and it's fabled characters." Mark was making it up as we went a long, not knowing how to broach the subject of the gold nugget.

"Mark, you're going to have to be a little more specific than that."

"You know Gold Dust Willie?"

"Yeah sure, that old coot and his stupid lump of gold-painted lead."

"What if the nugget *is* real... What if he buried it out there before he was killed by those two mine-thieving twins."

"What if what? You're not making any... Wait! How do you know he was killed by the twins? From what I know, no one knows for sure who killed him, and besides, if it was real, whoever killed him would have headed off to San Francisco to sell it for sure."

Mark thought for a moment, then said, "Alright, well if you can do anything hold off on that sale, or set a long closing date with a bailout clause for such a contention." Mark hung up and used speed dial to make his next call. "Hello Greg. It's Mark. I need to talk to you."

"Hey Mark. First, is everything alright, you didn't get pulled over again did you?"

"No, no. It's nothing like that. I need to tell you something, it's going to sound very crazy, unbelievable and outright fabricated, but at issues is the land behind my house.

"Oh, ok, well, I'm due in court in about fifteen minutes, stupid Saturday session. Is this something we can talk about it over at a bar or over supper?"

"I guess it could, but it is a bit more serious than asking you about silly Supreme Court decisions."

"I'll call Marne, let her know you're comin' up for supper, the Cubs are playing. Bring Charlie, Tanker needs a playmate and they haven't seen each other since winter ended."

"Sounds good, I'll see you tonight then."

Mark went inside and started writing out ideas about what to do with the land. He was quite distraught and anxious about the land and even more so about telling someone about the first friend he made when he moved to Nevada City a year ago.

Mark got up and was lost in his thoughts for a moment then called Elke to ask her some questions about historic dates and other town history, then decided on seeing if she wouldn't mind meeting for lunch.

Mark finished up with the gutters, raked up the blackened, nearly mulched needles mixed with the colored sand of his shingles, and saved bagging them for later. He called Charlie over and had some words with her before mussing up her ears and neatly coifed hairdo, then gathered up his notes and headed for the garage. Mark rolled his shiny red cruiser with basket and bell out of the garage and perched it on its stand as he closed the door. Five minutes later Mark was at the Broken Mug, choosing a nice table that faced down Main Street and ordered a few frappacinos and waited for Elke to arrive.

The first thing Mark took notice of was the ratty, worn New York Yankee's ball cap; that annoying dark blue and dingy white NY on the front. The hat was well worn and the only thing he could give her credit for was the tight curve of the brim.

"Come on?" Mark said with a snicker.

Elke smiled at the comment as she walked into the iron-rod fenced area, and the smirk on Mark's face grew into a huge smile. Elke was pretty and with that one smile, Mark was hooked. The smile continued to grow and his face could hardly contain it. Mark stood to greet Elke and helped her with her soft sided briefcase.

"Come on' about what?" Elke strapped the bag over the back of her chair, "Thanks."

"Seriously, the Yankees? You're not from back east." Mark pulled up his metal chair which made an ear screeching sound on the sidewalk, "I ordered us some fraps."

"Why not. . .the 'House that Ruth Built', Mantle, Maris, Gehrig, eight Rookie of the Years, eighteen MVP's and let's not forget almost one in four World Series wins!"

"Blah blah blah, they don't play with heart, they spend so much mon. . ."

"You're just jealous, who's your team?"

Mark stood up, and slowly peeled up his sleeve revealing a tattoo of a walking bear encircled in red 'C' and larger blue circle. The waitress arrived with the drinks and asked for a food order, they both ordered the special, and Mark added a cup of soup.

"Figures you don't like the Yanks." Elke reached out to her drink, took a sip, nodded to show thanks and lobbed back Mark's previous comment, "seriously, the Cubs?"

"Hey it's their year."

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"It hasn't been their year since the men in this town wore holsters and guns." Elke said with a laugh.

"Touché." Mark's head dropped in dejection.

"Hey this is good." Elke set down her drink, "But seriously, my dad played Triple A ball in the Yankee farm system for about ten years and got brought up for a few games during their run in '78. So what did you want to ask me?"

"Impressive." Mark said about the mention of her father, he then went on to talk a little bit about the town, and some work he had done on researching Gold Dust Willie and some of the other characters in the town he'd grown to know. As the lunch grew on Elke didn't feel she had much to offer Mark but supported most of the historical concepts and timelines he mentioned and offered up any help she could. Mark then asked her what she knew about finding artifacts on public lands.

"Well I'm familiar with the Antiquities Act, it was signed by the first Roosevelt in 1906, and I know that covers a lot of artifacts of more archeological kind, and was used to protect areas like Chaco Canyon in New Mexico which was getting looted by what they called "pottery hunters". It eventually became a way to allow the President and Congress to create National Monuments and Parks. There's also some federal regulation, and a fifty year rule about buried items. There are avenues to allow digging up artifacts that are found on public lands. If the artifacts are on private lands, then the point is sort of moot."

"And you thought you weren't being any help." Mark was impressed with her knowledge she'd shared, and the two continued to talk until well after the Mug closed down for lunch, more about baseball, California's Gold Rush and of course, Charlie. Elke couldn't wait to meet her.

Mark's curiosity got the better of him, and he asked if Elke had anything planned for supper. Elke replied with curiosity, and a big grin, "Nothing, you have a suggestion?"

"I'm meeting some friends this evening, maybe you could join us. We usually just barbecue and drink wine and enjoy the evening. He's a lawyer, and she works as a drug rep. I'm hoping we could talk more about your 'antiquated act of 1909, or whatever it was."

"Well, sounds too good to pass up. Can I meet you up there? I have some errands and shopping to do, and not really sure how long that will take."

Mark agreed and gave her directions and the time. Mark stood up to say good-bye and leaned in and caught himself before he kissed Elke on the cheek. He drew himself back, smiled then hugged, and thanked her for her time. He said softly, hoping she wouldn't hear, "I like you."

"I like you too," came the surprise answer from Elke.

Mark's grin was uncontainable, and as he rode away he reminded her about the meeting on Monday back at the office.

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## MAKING PLANS SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 1902

Brock completed paperwork for a claim with the city office for an area that was adjacent to Auric Creek. He headed up and off the gravel thoroughfare that connected Nevada City to the rest of the world scouting for the perfect spot. The claim was a small clearing protected by a large obtrusive rock out cropping well above the creek and protected on the opposite side by a stand of trees and a steep slope. The rocks, as large as ore cars, shielded the view from below and across the creek and a wooded slope the other. Only a small passage way made its way down toward the creek and toward the web of deer trails that meandered throughout the forest. Brock focused his attention to the small clearing and a spot at the base of the large rocks. He took a spade and slowly cut out a section of the heavy matted moss, and sheered its attachments to the ground, rolled the small section of sod up, and moved it off to the side. He dug into the moist earth, and worked tediously to dig a nicely shaped hole. When it was complete, it was as deep as his shovel handle.

Accessing the deer trail down to the creek Brock made several trips up and down freighting smaller river rock and later larger river stones. He slowly build up the base of the hole with the smaller rocks and gravel, then laid down a layer of flatter stones to make a flat base for the hole. Using some board timbers scavenged from the mine, he shored up the walls of the hole. With the wooden walls in place and a flattened stone floor for the hole, Brock filled the space with larger cobble sized stones then set down some canvas, covered it with dirt, and returned the rolled piece of sod to the surface. He gathered up some dead, broken branches and scattered them on and around the hole. The sun was low on the horizon when Brock stood back to admire his handiwork.

The day after, and back underground, Brock sat on a large support timber, and took a drag from a self-rolled cigarette, "Okay, I got some assignments for us. We're going to need some bags. They might have to hold a lot of weight, so I want to make sure they're strong, leather bottom, maybe with a drawstring top and a flap as well. We'll need four, somewhat square so they fit nicely together."

Sitting with his lower back against the wall of the corridor, Jack's beam glowed intensely on the ground between his feet, his arms remained cross as he looked up and his beam traced along the wall in front of him. "I've got that. Wife's uncle is John Jameson, the saddle maker."

"I know him," Mic laughed, "he fixed up my work satchel last month.

"Okay." Brock took another deep pull of his cigarette before flicking what remained of the red tip butt into the darkness. "I got one more. We need a way to get our stuff out of here. Any ideas?"

The brain storming session lasted a while as the men bounced ideas as farfetched as making false bottom lunch pails, to stuffing the gold into the fuel cylinders of their head lamps. The ideas subsided and out of nowhere Mic piped in, "I just got a new union suit. It's pretty comfortable."

The men all looked at him, and smiled.

## SECRETS SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 1996

Greg and Marne lived out of town in a small cabin with a couple of acres of trees buffeting them from any intrusion. Tanker was the first to meet them, a large Belgian Mastiff that could actually look Mark in

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the eyes as he sat in his pick-up truck. Charlie bolted out the rear sliding window into the bed and out of the box and began chasing Tanker toward the back of the house, then before too long they came racing back into the yard in the opposite direction and order.

Marne, on her way back into the house waved at Mark from the gazebo. "Hey mister, I got a question for you."

Mark walked up the hillside to the gazebo on the side of the yard and pulled up a chair. "Yeah, and what's that?" He drank in one gulp the glass of wine as Greg looked on in amazement through the screen of the back door.

"Who was the Yankee fan I saw you with at the Mug?" Marne asked as she kept busy with cooking duties, trying to catch Mark off guard.

Thrown back a bit in his seat, Mark sat up, "Oh. Umm. That's Elke Jennings. She's the town historic officer. She's originally from the Bay Area, and went to Santa Cruz, hippie grad, really earthy, pretty cool. And uh, I forgot to tell you, but she should be here in a bit."

"Oh ok, let me go make some more salad and a couple more kabobs then, and I'll leave you two to talk. I know there's something up if you're shot-gunning a glass of wine." Marne filled Mark's glass again and headed back inside.

"So what's up, haven't seen you in a while? I've been swamped with a couple of huge cases assigned to me by the county. I got that high school vandalism case, and that homicide over in Aurora last summer, and I'm working on some motions for a hearing on Tuesday."

"Damn, that's crazy, I remember that case, you weren't sure if you were going to get it, something to do about DNA testing and exclusion or something. Weren't you talking to some consultant from back East or something?"

"Yeah, it's crazy, he's going to cost the county some money. Ha." Greg sat back and drank from his can of Mountain Dew, "So what's going on with you? You sounded pretty worked up this morning."

Before Mark could answer Elke drove up in her hatchback, carrying a narrow paper bag. "I brought some wine. Mark said I didn't have to, but I always feel uncomfortable not bringing anything."

Mark made all the introductions and explained Elke's roll with the dig downtown. "Elke's come across some interesting items down there too."

Greg was well tied in with town politics, and heard some of the gossip in town about the dig, "I heard there's evidence of foul play. Will I be working on two murder cases before the summer is out?"

"Well if the Chief gets a suspect, I'll let you know." Elke chuckled, "The shoulder blade found among the remains has a bullet hole, and there is some damage to some ribs as well, it looks like there were multiple gunshot wounds, and I've located two bullets."

"Justifiable homicide!" Greg spoke up, "I'll defend, *pro bono* of course." Tanker came busting into the gazebo, and Greg tossed out a tennis ball into the yard, and off he went after it with Charlie in tow. "So Mark, let's get to it, you called this morning."

The four of them sat at the table within the gazebo as the dogs sniffed around in the nearby forest. Mark switched between standing and sitting on the gazebo's railing, and began to tell them about his first night in Nevada City. He told them of the series of encounters with William Evans; from the first shadows on the walls of his barren house, to the horrible sound of a pick axe on that cold night last fall.

Greg lit another cigarette, and Marne filled the three empty glasses full of wine, Elke got up and stood against Mark as the evening grew cooler.

By the time Mark started telling them about the murdering twins, the bottle was empty and Greg realized he had yet to take a puff on the cigarette that perched almost as all ash on the tips of his fingers.



The only reaction Greg managed was a low rumbling chortle. "Wow!" Was about all the well spoken Greg could say. It was soft and said almost in a whisper. "So, how big is it? And do you have it? Tell me you didn't rebury it."

"It's in a security deposit box at the bank. I didn't know what to do with it. I found it before I knew you, and there wasn't really anyone I wanted to discuss it with. I figured if it was an unknown for 125 years it could be

a secret a little while longer."

"Do you remember where you found it? Where the location is?"

"Yeah, I hike by it every now and again."

"Is it still undisturbed?"

"With the exception of the occasional motorbike," Mark twisted his right wrist, "I'd say so."

"Well, we'll have to get it surveyed to find out who actually owns the..."

"It's an old mining claim. Huntington or something, but no one has anything recorded on it in over half a century, but technically B.L.M." Mark interrupted. "I have access to mapping software at work. It's a small strip from an old claim, about seven and a half acres. Hey maybe we could do a land swap, or quick sale, it runs close to my property and along the empty lot at the end of the cul-de-sac. But there are about a half dozen foregone claims in the area and it's riddled between BLM, Forest Service, and mine property. And that's why I'm here. That land is up for sale and a developer already has plans for it."

Elke was equally stunned. She looked at Mark and smiled, "Explains all the questions this morning. We'll have to find out more about that claim. Perhaps we can speak with B.L.M. office and see about a special

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permit. I can do some research at the office, maybe we can come up with a reason to pull a special permit on the property, and see if we can't take over the claim."

"And I want to be clear; I would rather not have the nugget. I think its value to the community is greater than anything I could ever attain from it. Maybe we can use it to create some sort of park, or monument with it. Or start a land trust."

Greg mentioned the motion hearings once more, told Elke he might call on her about the ideas on some of the issues that may arise, and told Mark not to worry. Greg then went on to tell everyone that there were other pressing issues, and got up to start the barbecue. Mark leaned over and picked up the ball Tanker dropped at his feet, and chucked it out into the yard. Mark sat and stared at his muddy, slobber filled hand, looking for a place to wipe it; Greg tossed him a ratty old towel and grinned.

## **EUREKA! SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 1902**

Mic was smiling as he leaned over to collect up the gold ore from the latest blast. "That Brock, he's pretty good. Look this blast has to be a couple of ounces. That other dig hasn't given us nothin', and it's been three months." Mic shoveled the waste rock into some jerry-rigged carts. Bill towed the carts to the ore cars, where Brock and Jack met up with him.

"How'd that last blast go?" Jack asked Bill and Brock, as they all started to shovel the rocks into the ore car.

"Not bad, small like you told me to make it", came the response from Bill.

"Where's Mic?" Jack shot another question toward Bill.

"Crushing and loading rock." Bill, leaned on his shovel.

"Okay, well when he gets back, we'll stack the wall and get back to the main." 'Stacking the wall' was the code Brock came up with for covering the opening to their secret digging area. The large timber supports, weighing hundreds of pounds each, had gotten lighter with every ounce of gold they stashed behind them. They got a blast in and cleaned up on the main, mixed up the rock with that from their dig, then headed to the mainline cars that would take them to the lifts that would take them to the surface. Once up top, Brock stood with his men as the mine supervisor asked them what they'd pulled. "About two and half." Brock's crew got in the habit of throwing in some of their ore in hopes of keeping anyone from getting too suspicious.

"Sounds good." The supervisor started. "We got a new geologist, he wants to come down and take some samples, I told them you were on a dead leg, and that he needed to get our best crew back on track."

"When?" Brock said rubbing the grime from his face with his palm.

"Should be down tomorrow, he's a rookie." With a shift in his demeanor, the supervisor continued, "Let's not have any more problems with greenhorns."

As the crew made their way to their bunkhouse, Mic asked Brock what the supervisor was referring to with the last comment.

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"One of the crews on O'Hare, teased up a geologist. He'd never been below ground. Shit, never even seen a rock that wasn't in a classroom." Jack removed the large dark wad of chew from his cheek, flicked it to the ground, "he ended up losing his leg."

Back at the bunkhouse the four men gathered to eat, alone for a moment, Brock spoke, "No digging tomorrow. One of us stays near the stack, waiting for the rock hound. We'll give him a quick tour and hopefully he'll be out of our hair." The three men replied with a look or a nod. "We're not losing three months of work."

Mic was on watch at the stack, dragging on a cigarette and throwing rocks down the gallery when he saw a light coming down the corridor. It moved side to side and in circles, and would dim behind something white. It's got to be the geologist, Mic thought to himself. First timers in the mine would always move their heads side to side and around trying to get their bearings. Most miners use to the blackness, just walked straight ahead, unless you were Jack of course. "Hello, I'm Mic."



"Hi Mic, Jonathon Meyer. I'm the geologist. Aren't there suppose to be four of you?"

"Yeah, we're taking turns waiting for you. 'Case you got lost, come on follow me, I'll get you to Brock, he's the boss."

Jonathon turned and looked at the side of the corridor near the stack, as if something caught his eye. He grew up in an upper class family, his father a prominent businessman in New York. He attended private boarding school from the age of thirteen

and graduated from Pennsylvania State University not two months before with a degree in geology. He was wearing a grey suit with a simple black tie; currently covered by a shop loaned coverall. The silk tie was clearly visible at the collar. He pulled a small notebook, and squinted at it in the poor light. Mic looked startled and Jonathon noticed, then Mic turned and started walking. The two men proceeded down the gallery several hundred feet until the dim headlamps of Brock, Jack and Bill could be seen. The geologist stopped every so often and examined the walls of the mine. The five men met, and Jonathon started to ask some questions about where they were digging.

"The four of you have been here how long? I mean working in mines?"

"Jack's got six years in the hole, I got five, Bill and Mic barely three and two a piece."

"Well you've got to know there's nothing here." Holding some of the rock and gravel from the ore cars near to where they were standing and examining it. "Haven't you learned anything in all that time?" Jonathon said as he tossed down what remained of the rock in his hand.

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Brock's fist closed at the tone in his question. He could see the place on Jonathon's chin where it would land. Brock scratched his unshaven face, and thought to himself that facial hair was a distance dream for Jonathon, and continued listening to Jonathon with less and less interest.

"You've been down here long enough. You have got to know veins and ore's don't look like this. This is just wasting the company's time and resources." Jonathon interjected mine lingo to seem more familiar with mining than he actually was, "the supe' say's you're the best crew, I find it hard to believe diggers like you wouldn't do anything to produce more." Jonathon was sounding more like a good ol' company man, and it wasn't sitting well with any of the hardened miners he was addressing.

"We just dig where we're told mister." Brock spoke up.

"Yeah, sure, where you're told." Back there where you met me, Jonathon pointed at Mic, the rocks different there. Didn't you notice that? Here." The geologist pulled a folded paper from his coat, and a small notebook. He laid both on the rock in an ore car. Bring your lights over here. Bill sat down and pulled out what remained of a cigarette. Mic sat next to him and slapped Bill in the chest with the back of his hand and there it remained until Bill handed Mic his tobacco pouch. Brock's patience was fading, fading fast as he leaned over the map.

He opened the map and Jack stared at it for a moment then slowly raised his gaze while he almost undiscernibly shook his head. Brock, still looking at the map barked toward Jonathon, "What am I looking at?" He asked as his stomach sank and his wide opened eyes met Jack's. It was the same map Brock had—less some scribbles and tattered corners.

"It's an ore body I think. I found some notes in this book yesterday morning and asked the supervisor if I could come down and take look and maybe get a sample." Jonathon fumbled through some pages.

"So this is your 'edumakated' guess, some notes you found?" Brock's mocking sarcasm rang through as he tried to put the geologist on the defensive. "Fresh out of school and you think you can come down here and talk to us like some adolescent school children in trouble for breaking windows. Your education doesn't give you any amount of respect down here kid. You come down here and tell us we don't know our mine. Well damn it all to hell. You could have started with introductions for one." Brock, took a few steps toward Jonathon, who leaned back a bit. With his finger pointing right in the kid's face, every muscle in Brock's body was clenched as he continued his tirade. "I tell the suits upstairs where there's gold, and I'm told to just keep on digging." Brock adjusted his voice for the next line, "What would a miner know? I'm sure they tell each other. And some wet-behind-the-ears kid that's read a couple of books these past few years comes into the room in a suit his daddy bought him, tells them some tall tale from school, where they keep rocks in boxes on little shelves so the class can examine them through some fancy fandangle microscope, and they all turn and listen. Well look here kid. I know my mine. My men know this rock, talk to us as equals, listen and learn, but don't come down here like some overbearing schoolmarm and tell me how to do *my* business. This granite with intrusions of quartz, mica and pyrite has been our home, and since they don't listen to me up top, I just dig where I'm told. So don't expect to come down here and it's all ears to the kid with the glasses. So do you still want to stand there and tell me and my men we don't know what we're doing?"

"Well, no. I mean well. "Jonathon took a step back and away from Brock's menacing finger. "You've been here for months, the best crew, and you haven't produced much gold. And I think, that back by the stope, you cross-cut a vein near where your man was waiting, there might be something. Don't you notice how the rock changes from over there? We're in a different rift, and this one, this one is empty."

"Jack, you ever notice how men with a tie, come and tell us how dumb we are? Son so what you're telling me, is that all those times I've been up to that damn office tellin' them where we should be diggin' and they tell me 'come back tomorrow' that one word from you—some...schoolboy geologist and, and what! We're going to be digging gold. Eureka kid, thanks! But no thanks." Brock was furious, as he took a better look at Jonathon's chin. "Gee, you're so smart Mr. Rock-man, why don' you jus' show us where we ought to be diggin' son."

Jonathon was quiet as he gathered up the map and notebook and with the four miners in tow, walked back toward the stack of timbers that protected the secret drift. He stopped feet from the stack and pointed. "Here, here, the rock changes see. Move that wood."

"Ha, schoolboy. Get a load of him. Wood. Those are timbers." Mic piped in, and chuckled, "Dumb, rock hound."

"You need to dig here." The men didn't so much as breathe. Seeing he would have to do this on his own, Jonathon grabbed for a long pry bar that lay at the base of the neatly stacked timbers. He struggled with its weight at chest level, Bill smirked at his efforts, but he managed to get it wedged in behind one of the upper timbers and began to pry at it.

"Listen kid, this is hair-brain. No one else says there's anything down here. If there was gold, we'd a found it by now. You've got the best crew standing before you, we know what we're doin'. Who did you say you told about this?"

"What? No, I didn't say." Jonathon began pushing on the bar, he asked for help, but there were no takers. "If you could just help me. . . ." Jonathon continued to struggle with the bar.

Brock placed his hand against the timber, and leaned against it, and with that, all of Jonathon's efforts were lost, "Kid, it's too heavy. We'll move it for you. But just tell me one thing. Did you tell the supe' about this?"

"No, I found some notes from a previous geologist." He gave up his efforts on the pry bar, and it fell to the ground with a tremendous clamor. Jonathon walked over to where he placed the map. "Here in this book." He found the page quickly for it was well creased. "See, here he mentions a map, but I couldn't find it in the collection. I redrew it best I could from his notes. We need to move that woo—" Jonathon looked at Mic and corrected himself, "those timbers and dig there!" His voice raised.

"So this is the only map?" Brock asked, as he pointed to Bill and Jack and then his satchel. Bill went over toward their stash of belongings and retrieved the satchel. Bill handed Jack Brock's satchel, from which he pulled the map and unfolded the tattered and worn paper fortune.

"Yeah, I pulled one that was a bit older and just added on as best I could from your notes and his. Jonathon flipped through some pages in the book." Then looked up inquisitively and continued, "I looked

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for it, but for some reason I couldn't find it. This is curious too, see the date." Jonathon pointed to some text in the notebook, "I found out that's the day he died. I think he was out celebrating and got . . ." Jonathon cut himself off when he saw what was unfurled before him. "Where did you find that?"

Jonathon knelt down to get a better look; before him lay Brock's map spread out on some timbers. Included were notes and markings directly out of the notebook. Aside from wrinkles and some tears, it was a worn and torn version of his very map.

Jonathon surveyed the men then noticed glints of light through the stack of timbers he tried so desperately to move. Jonathon took to his feet, and slowly collected his belongings and himself. Nervousness filled the hot humid air.

"Now before you say anything else Jonathon," Brock began.

"I don't believe there is much to discuss. I will have to inform. . ."

The rail spike sunk in almost half its length, and Brock strained as he pushed it in further. The geologist, reeled back, reached at his neck and felt the flat circular head atop the squared shaft next to his collar bone. He pulled at it desperately as he tried to look over his shoulder at Brock, hardly breathing he fell to his knees He gripped the portion that remained exposed and held it as tightly as he could, but try as he might, it would not budge. He coughed into his hand and look to see his blood laden hand before slumping to the ground.

Brock stood over Jonathon, looking as he did that St. Patrick's Day so many years ago. "There's no way you're going to hit me blindsided kid." Bill and Jack approached him, Mic was white as a ghost, and still as a stone as he watched the pool of blood under the geologist's neck continue to grow. "We'll need to get started on getting this mess cleaned up, and getting our stuff out of here. Whatever it is we do, we have to do it together, and talk out the story of the cave-in that Jonathon got himself stuck in. Get the union suits." Brock spoke clear and evenly. "Let's get this stack moved, Bill you load the suits get them ready for us to put on. Jack, get those charges ready. Unfortunately our digging has come to an end boys. We'll put the rock hound's body in the rubble and we'll make it look like he was caught in the cave-in. Lay him next to an arch lamp, put some charges next to him—make it look like he knocked an arch lamp into them." He leaned over the listless body of Jonathon and removed the blood laden spike, wiped it on the inside of Jonathon's coat and threw it down the gallery. "We've got about six hours of our shift to get this mess taken care of, so let's get a move on." Brock folded up the new map, placed it into the notebook and shoved it into his satchel. Brock went through Jonathon's pockets, but found nothing more than a watch and a few dollars in his billfold.

Bill took out some union suits that were at the bottom of one of the ore cars. He had spent several evenings on his own sewing pockets on the insides of them to transport their gold cache out of the mine and they had worked flawlessly on their four previous sorties. Jack prepared a long series of charges the entire length of their main dig, and beyond the front portion of their stack. Mic however, was falling apart. He was dry heaving continuously and was mumbling and talking to himself as he dragged the lifeless body of the geologist out of the area. He started yelling at the other men. Telling them he was out. "I won't say nuthin' bout the gold. I want out. I'll get a job somewhere else, another

crew, another hole, another mine. I won't say nuthin'. I can't do this. You never sed nuthin' about no killin'.

Bill looked on as Jack tried to calm him down. Jack sat Mic down on a timber told him things would be ok. They would say they headed up and the geo just wanted to stay down and keep looking around. They'd delay a charge, and he would be found by them in the morning. Mic calmed a bit, but the tension among the other three was very high. Deep stares were exchanged. They sat together near the stack, planning their story, while Mic just kept staring at the body. Bill rolled a cigarette, hoping it would calm the panicking Mic, it didn't.

Jack explained how the charges were set. "I've got them timed for a few hours. So they go off after lights out. They're small, steady, shouldn't be noticed up top. They'll start at the end of the dig. Work up the shaft toward the stack. I have it timed so the stack will start in and should get to this point about the same time. We should move the timbers of the stack even further down the corridor. Don't need to be supporting a hole that we're trying to hide."

"Sounds good." Brock responded, "Bill and I will work on that, you talk some sense into Mic, if he goes, we're all done."

With the last of the timbers moved, Mic sat alone at the entrance to the drift, his head nodded in rhythm with his breathing. Practically hyperventilating, he was unraveling, and with it the three men felt the last few months of work would not result in a pay day. Folded neatly next to Mic were the four special suits, laden with about 140 troy ounces of lode gold, a sweet addition to what they pulled out over the past few months. This would be the last addition to the stash. The plan would be to meet that night, and bring the gold for hiding. Probably burn the coveralls, and make plans for the future of their special cache.

Jack and Bill talked softly to each other as Brock changed into his coveralls, they fit well but the extra weight was noticeable. Jack and Bill cut the line to an arc lamp and set it down on some charges near the body. They walked up to Brock, and told them their concern that Mic was now a liability. "He's just a kid." Brock said.

"Yeah, but a kid that knows too much." Bill spoke slowly. "My wife works at the mine. So does Jack's. If we get caught, it'll ruin their lives too. I am not about to let that happen."

The three men sat quietly, contemplating and exchanging looks. Brock knew they'd all put themselves on the line for him and his crazy scheme, and it was working. He thought about that dark alley in Reno so many years before when his fortune came crashing into the right side of his face. How he swore to himself he would get another chance. And now it all lay in the hands of a twenty year old kid who was losing it right before his eyes. What was his problem? Brock thought to himself—it was gold. It was a fortune for all of them, a chance at a better life. Brock put his hand out toward Jack, "Like hell I am going to let him take that chance from me again."

"Bill's right, Brock." Jack conceded, and placed a knife in Brock's waiting hand.

"Okay." Brock walked toward Mic, who didn't take notice, and kneeled in front of him. "You okay kid?"

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"I don't know. I'm trying, I'm trying. I can't wear that coverall today, not tod—"

Mic would never say another word. Before he could finish, Brock slid a knife across the side of his neck. Mic tried to cough as tears welled in his eyes. He groped for his neck. He looked toward Bill and Jack, both of whom stared him in the eyes, then slowly turned their heads downward. Mic knew why they had done it. His body collapsed forward, Brock caught him by the shoulder, and gently lowered him onto the ore car rail. After a few moments, Brock kneeled down and closed Mic's eyes, then slowly dragged his body toward the geologists.

"His gold?" Bill asked.

"Do any of us have enough room?" Brock turned. "Can one of us wear two of them? We can't risk leaving it down here, if we're not the first ones down when the alarm sounds."

"Not sure, they're pretty full. It would be really heavy and thick on us. It wouldn't fit Jack. It might fit over yours. They weren't planned for such a large take. Let's try and spread it out, anything else we could get it out in?"

## **COLD CASE FILES MONDAY , JUNE 17, 1996**

Mark was in a hurry to get to the city offices before noon to see Elke. He let himself in through a side door and made his way into her office. She was all smiles as he walked in.

"Hey, what are you doing after work today?" Mark asked somewhat embarrassingly.

"I dunno. Do you have something in mind?"

"Well, I am need of a volunteer to run the concession stand for little league. I have to umpire two games, and my worker called in sick. So I thought you, being the big Yankee fan and all, could come fill in."

"I suppose, but not to be too much of pain in the ass, what's in it for me? I mean filling in at the last minute and all." Elke said with a smile on her face.

Mark melted at that, and offered up, "Well you can eat all the popcorn you want! And if you do a good job, I'll take you out for pizza and a beer afterwards!"

"Well damn, you had me at popcorn!" Elke replied, "But pizza sounds great! What time?"

"Five thirty?" Mark said as he headed out the door. "Wait, you need to be there a little earlier."

Mark came out of the umpire shack sporting his new shin guards and a new, pressed blue buttoned shirt contained the new chest protector he was sporting. In his hands was a new face mask that Mark was struggling with the straps to adjust to his huge noggin.

"I see you tired of the league's worn out mask and the large waffle." Came the comment from his field partner for the day, and good friend Eric Granger.

"Yeah, I had my dad buy them from our old neighborhood sporting goods store. They were waiting for me when I got home today."

Eric worked for the Mining Museum in town and with Mark's enthusiasm for baseball had managed to make some major upgrades to the ball fields, league equipment and uniforms for the kids.

Mark and Eric took their places on the field and after some infield warmup Mark issued the proverbial "PLAY BALL!"

It was fifth innings into a rather normal little league game. Some eleven years have it down, while others still can't quite get a hold of it. Mark watched as the pitcher walked yet another player and the strike zone grew. 'From the knees to the chest' slowly became 'from the shins to the chin'. With a runner at third and one at second, Mark surveyed the field and watched as Eric headed over toward second, and stood just on the outfield grass, about eighty-five feet separating them. A helmeted Giants player stood in the third base coach's box talking to his player—surely about what to do should the ball be hit toward the other side of the infield—well maybe. The coach at first was Jerry McAdams owner of the Burnham Bar. A savvy coach, he had played second base for Pepperdine University. The Astros coach was a contractor and was wearing his work as he stood in the opening of the fenced in the dugout on the third base side, and yelled encouragement to his pitcher.

Mark reset his new fancy clicker, smiled thinking about his old one, then pointed at the pitcher and crouched down. The pitch came in low, and as the catcher slid across the plate to contain it when Mark felt it ricochet off his shin guards. Hey they work, Mark thought as he stepped out toward the third base side to watch the developing play. The catcher flung off his mask and raced toward the back stop fifteen feet away. Echoes of 'he's running' could be heard from the infield, the stands grew louder and Mark clearly heard Eric yell 'at the plate' signifying there might be a play. The catcher dropped to one knee a few feet from the back stop, turned and fired toward the plate. Mark was in position for the developing play. In foul territory some five feet from the plate, the runner began his slide, the ball was in flight and the pitcher barely arrived. Mark heard the pop of the ball into the mitt, the sound of gravel being scraped grew in intensity, then the sharp slap of the mitt against the players leg, and the slide ended abruptly. Ball, mitt, player, plate. Mark hardly had to think. A splendid play by a player of any age.

"Runner's OUT!" Mark threw his thumb over his shoulder.

No sooner had the words been spoken and Eric fired out an immediate. "TIME OUT!" from across the field.

Mark was puzzled. Was he going to overrule him? Did he make a mistake? Had the pitcher dropped the ball? What was going on Mark continued confused. It wasn't his first rodeo.

Eric told Mark to survey the infield and count his base runners. Mark recalled, first and third, then looked to see first empty and a player at second. Makes sense he thought, but as he looked toward third base, there stood the runner that was there only moments before. "What gives?" Mark asked Eric.

As Eric began to explain, Jerry headed down the first base line, his head held low as Mark learned that the player who was coaching at third, in all the excitement of the pass ball, ran home.

"What do we do now?" Mark said containing his laughter.

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After some discussion the Astros were awarded an out—the play was just too good not to be rewarded. Play ensued. The scorekeeper asked how it should be recorded, and Mark just shrugged. “Me umpire, you scorekeeper.” He said with a smile.

After the games, Mark helped Elke count out the till and deposit the money in the league safe then they headed over to the Pizza Bazaar across town. They sat next to each other in a small booth and laughed heartedly at the story of the kid who ran home. They both enjoyed each other’s company, and Mark kept his hand on her thigh most of the night.

The next morning Mark was on his way to work listening to *Morning Edition* while he drank his hot chocolate and downed a blueberry scone from the Broken Mug. The work radio crackled to life asking for Mark’s location. Mark was not all too excited about answering it in the middle of his scone. About the only person who ever called him on the work radio was the public works director to complain about something. “This is Mark,” he answered, “I’m over by the ball fields.”

“Mark, you need to come to the dig, we got ourselves a crime of the century.” Elke could hardly keep a reign on her excitement.

“What do you mean?”

“Get down to the hole. I’ll fill you in when you get here.”

In five minutes Mark was pulled up in front of the hole, with the flashing light on his truck at full tilt, people were gathered around the site watching. Elke had set up a small kiosk with information about the site, included were references to Mark’s faulty valve.

Mark quizzed Elke on his way down the ladder. “What couldn’t you tell me.” He asked as he quickly stole a kiss from her. “What’s so important you needed me down here?”

“I found a gun.” Elke said in a loud excited whisper. “I got a hold of you before Chief Milken.”

“A gun, no way, where?”

“It was a few inches below the rest of the body, and there are telltale signs of gunshot wounds, damaged ribs, two bullets and get a load of this.” Elke pulled back the drape on the bones and revealed the shoulder blade, “This hole,” Elke was pointing to a half-inch hole smack dab in the middle of the shoulder blade, “it’s a bullet hole!”

Above them at the edge of the excavation people let out sighs as they saw the bones, and Elke pointing to the hole in the shoulder blade.

“No way! Anyway to know what kind of gun, or who it belongs to?” Mark’s interest was piqued.

“I got the serial number, I called my friend over at UC Davis, see if he could get a lead on it before the Chief did. I think he thinks my job’s a waste, so every chance I can strut my stuff, you know. . .”

“So now what? Aside from the gun, does that mean this hole’s going to be here a little longer.”

“Yeah, we were less than a week out, but this will definitely put us here until at least late summer if not longer.”

"Okay, well that's not a big deal, it's not my department. I don't want to be here when everyone else gets here. We're still on for dinner right?" Elke nodded back, "Fill me in when you get home, and we'll go out to Maya's for supper to celebrate." Mark reached for the ladder as he leaned in to kiss Elke.

"Sounds good." Elke headed back to her work area.

"Good morning Chief." Mark said as he shook the Chief's hand through the window of his truck.

"Morning Mark, so the girl found some sort of historic artifact I hear." The Chief inquired.

"Seems so, looks like you'll get to work on this case a bit more," Mark said as he slowly drove off.

Elke showed up to Mark's a little later than expected and Mark was six innings into a ball game and on his second beer when she came in.

She said the bones were being sent to Santa Cruz forensics lab, and the gun to the local branch office of the FBI in Sacramento. It would be a few weeks before anything would really be known. Elke reached in her pocket, took out her keys and flipped open a beer, and put on her tattered Yankees hat she had stuffed in her back pocket, and sat down next to Mark. Ordering pizza was a lot easier and there were plenty of innings and beer left to make it a nice evening to stay at home.

## **BURRIED TREASURES SUNDAY, AUGUST 17, 1902**

Sunlight barely danced on the tips of the trees across the creek from the men, as it painted the clouds above in purple hues. Sunset was not that far off. "Okay, change in plans." Brock stood in the small clearing. "We wait it out a bit. Let's meet here in two months, and take it from there. We'll have to wait some time to cash it in. Tomorrow I'm sure we'll work on recovering the bodies. We'll have to keep our eyes out, cover each other and the drift. We've come this far we just need to go a little further. I'm sorry about the geologist, you two where there you saw what was going to happen."

"We're good Brock. We knew what we were up to when we agreed to start digging that drift. I never thought it would be so rich. I half questioned you the first time you brought it up. We're just as guilty as you are in all of it. The deaths, though tragic were necessary." Jack said, "And besides, I needed out of the mine, and this 'accident', as it were, is the right time."

"It's good, Brock." Bill spoke up. "We need to burn these coveralls. The misses is going to want to know what I did with all her material."

"You'll be able to buy her a warehouse of fabric, in time." Brock interjected. "We're all good, no one's going to get stupid and try to dig this up sometime."

"Not me, Brock." Jack said

"Me too." Followed Bill.

The men shook hands, finished organizing the hole, picked up the fishing gear that was the cover for their excuse and made their way back down the deer trail along the creek.

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Days grew into weeks, and weeks into seasons. The men spoke to each other only briefly in that time. By the end of the year, both Bill and Jack were on different crews and Brock was having a tough time adjusting to the new men assigned to work with him. Brock's frustration grew every time his new men did not anticipate his every move. He missed having steady hands that were one step ahead of him and ready with a pick when he needed one, and not having to ask and point out that fact.

Bill missed his old crew and would often think about his time below and the experiences they had together. The thought of the gold rarely passed through his thoughts, and would often lead to the memory of carrying Mic's body out that fateful day. Bill's new job was comfortable, and he worked his station alone, with other men in the same building. It was a large tin sided building with so many openings it was just a bit better than being outside. He was working on the surface setting up ore cars to deliver rock from the shaft toward the mill. It was fairly routine work and complacency was beginning to find its way into his work.

Bill missed his old crew, Brock, Jack and Mic. He spent his days thinking about to do with the gold, and it became bothersome, but the cost was time, backing up ore from below set off a chain reaction that was too complicated to explain.

Bill ran cars into the delivery bay of the mill, stop them, then using a mine patented technique, they would be rotated in place and their contents delivered into the mill. Bill would latch three or four lever each time, then reverse the procedure. His task also included checking if any slag was caught up in the rail lines for the cars. And that's when it happened. It was routine, fifty or sixty times a day he did it, and never once was there any debris. But one of the men had thrown in a torn work coat into the car. It went unseen by Bill and was hung up inside the car. As the car slowly settle back onto the track like a sling shot it sent slack rock onto the track. As the Bill released the next set of levers and a new set of cars came barreling into the station Bill reached for the hand brake. But the last car had not cleared its location. Its wheel jammed on some rock, there was no way for it to roll. By the time Bill realized it, his right hand was still reaching toward the hand brake as new set of cars slammed into the remaining set.

Bill's head reeled back from the pain. He punched his hurt hand into the clutches of his left hand and buckled over in pain. He was afraid to look. Some men on the other side saw Bill as he leaned forward. Within moments they had Bill on his feet when one of them said, "There's easier ways to visit your wife Bill, why'd you go and do that?"

Bill was in tears as his wife finally convinced him to let go of his hand so she and a doctor on staff could take a look. The eventual cost of the accident were Bills his right pinky, half of his ring finger and the tip of his middle finger. Bill was at a loss as to what to do after the accident. He was tired of the mine, and his fingers still hurt.

When Jack heard of Bill's accident he had had enough of mining. Good with machinery, Jack moved into the machine shop and began working on the milling equipment, generators and machinery. He was good at tinkering and after a few months began to call himself a mechanic of sorts. Though still good with explosives he did on occasion head into the shaft to set of charges, and was also commissioned by the city to create fireworks displays for the Fourth of July.

**UNDER LIGHTS  
FRIDAY, MAY 24, 1935**

"Night baseball." Bill exclaimed to himself. "This is the end of baseball." Bill Thayer listened intently to the radio from his hospital bed, as the first ever Major League night game was broadcast across the country and the announcer's voice crackled the 2-1 box score of his old team, the Reds over the Phillies. His body ravaged by pneumonia which was compounded from the silicosis—a common ailment of miners. Bill straightened himself up in the bed, wiggled and stretched as he began to write on some paper. It had been days since he'd been outside, and he had grown very uncomfortable in the bed. When the last out was recorded on that historic game he called his nurse in, and handed her a note. "Nurse, I need to speak with him. Please, it is very important."

The nurse slowly unfolded the paper:

*John Heilmann*

*"Jack"*

"Where do I find him?" She said placing the note in the pocket of the blue sweater that covered her white uniform.

"I'm not sure. Try around Nevada City, maybe Aurora or Placer. His wife's name is Laura. Please, I need to tell him something." He reached out to touch her hand.

"I will do my best." She smiled and turned toward the door, she knew better than to ask, but did so anyways, "What if he doesn't want to talk with you?"

"He will. If not tell him I'm dying." With that, he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

The phone rang, and Emily ran to answer it. "I can get it! Hello, Heilmann residence." The sweet eleven year old stated politely.

The voice on the other end, simply asked to speak to a John Heilmann. Emily was somewhat at a loss, there was no John, but the last name was the same. "There is no one here by that name. My gran'pa's name is Jack. Bye."

In a blink, Emily was back in the arms of her grandfather, and the phone began to ring again. Laura Heilmann stood up, "I'll get this one Emily, you stay and play with your gran'pa." She walked to the kitchen and picked up the phone. Although he continued to play with Emily, Jack watched Laura on the phone. He could see her nodding and the curious look on her face. She took out some paper and began to write. She hung up the phone and came back toward Jack, who slowly lifted Emily off his lap.

"Who was that?" Jack took the memo from the soft hands of the woman he loved so dearly. "What's this?"

"She said there is a patient at Sutter Hospital in Sacramento that requested you come see him." Laura spoke softly. "Bill Thayer."

Jack was silent for several moments.

"Didn't you know him from the mine? You haven't spoken with him since Grace was a little girl. Why would he want to talk to you now?"

"I'm not sure." Jack finally responded.

"There is one more thing, Jack." Laura said with trepidation, "She said he's very sick." Jack took his playing pieces and set them down next to the board game he was playing with Emily and stood up and Laura continued. "I never met him, but his wife was a nurse at the mine infirmary. I would run into her from time to time when I worked in bookkeeping. She got sick with the flu I remember, she died of it, Spanish flu. It killed a lot of people in town, and everywhere." Again she questioned Jack, "Why would he want to speak to you now, after so many years?"

"I'm not sure." Jack said trying to comfort Laura; knowing full well the reason for the contact. The gold. All that work so many years ago. "Thirty-four." Jack hadn't realized he had said anything.

"Thirty-four, what?" Laura inquired.

"Uh. Years. We worked with Brock." There was no reply, just more thoughts racing through Jack's head, "Where is Sutter Memorial? In Sacramento?"

"Yes. The nurse said he is in the long care ward, with pneumonia and some other lung ailments, most likely from working in the mine. I remember Brock he was your lead when the..." Laura dropped the subject of the accident. "What do you think Bill wants with you after all these years?"

"I'm not sure. I will head out in the morning. I can be there and back in a day. I'll let you know as soon as I get back what this is all about." Jack knelt down and rolled the dice. "Double threes! Oh looks like a good roll for me, Emily." Emily reached out and moved her grand-father's piece for him. He turned back toward Laura, "It will be alright."

Jack arrived early at the railroad station, purchased his ticket and within a half-hour the train pulled into the Auburn station just after nine. Jack stared out at the motley of people that were gathered waiting for it. He watched as the porter collected tickets, and a cart full of parcels was loaded into the mail car behind the one he was in. Jack heard a long whistle, and the train started again with a couple of jolts, before settling into to acceleration. He was leaning against the window of his coach class seat staring at the pines that graced the mountains on either side. The rhythmic sound of the wheels and rail settled Jack into thoughts. He remembered how they would take turns digging on their main gallery, the plans for the eventual collapse of their project, picking up the tattered body of Mic and pall bearing at his memorial. The train slowly gained elevation as it prepared to leave the valley. The sky, except for large white puffs, was bright and blue.

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## TALE OF A GUN MONDAY, JULY 1, 1996

The Chief called Elke into his office late in the afternoon. "Have you gotten the forensics back from your lab pals yet?" He asked Elke.

Elke replied, "No, not yet, I think this week though, I called on Monday and my old roommate said they found some interesting facts about the bones."

"Well, I got the gun information. It was a Smith and Wesson Model Number 3 Top Break," the Chief continued, "shipped to Mettler Gunsmithing, which stood where the fire department is now, before the fire in 1912." He handed Elke a copy of the ballistics report, and the letter from Smith and Wesson regarding the serial number.



Elke took the report and looked at it for a moment, then pulled a Post-It note out of her pocket, "It was purchased in 1909 by one, William Thayer. He worked for the Milton Mining Company, and retired as the custodian of the school here in Nevada City. His wife died as a result of that horrid Spanish Flu Pandemic in 1919. He died of respiratory failure in Sacramento in 1935 at the age of 63."

"Nice work. Hmph." The Chief nodded his head, "Where'd you find all that out?"

"Well, I've gotten to know Eric down at the museum quite well. And although Mettler did burn down, the records were kept in a safe. And a few years ago, one of the Mettler grandkids came across them in the attic of their home and donated them to the museum." Elke went on to describe the records, "and the penmanship is amazing, how did they write so skillfully?"

"That's what they did. The person who wrote in the ledgers, that was all they did. That was their job, they probably went from business to business just to transcribe records." The Chief took a gulp of coffee as the phone rang. With the phone wedged in his neck, he turned up his head and waved good-bye. "Elke, keep working on that John Doe. Good job."

Elke smiled, nodded in confirmation and headed out of the police office. She stopped by Mark's office, and was updating him on the results of the gun forensics. Mark was fascinated but overburdened with work, and Elke headed out once his phone started to ring.

## GOLDUST WILLIE FRIDAY, JULY 5, 1996

"This is Mark."

"Mark it's Camden. The developer is filling the papers for the land swap today, there's still about a month lead time for all that, so you should be okay with whatever you got in the works, I just wanted

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to let you know about that. Also, Greg called me and let me know what your concerns were, so I did speak with the board and mentioned the possibility of historic nature of the town and area, and that it would be in our best interest to the community if we had to, to completely supersede the sale in the event anything should arise, so we set aside quite a considerable amount of money, and land. I hope that works for you."

Mark couldn't count the number of times he said thank you.

"Don't thank me, thank Greg he forwarded me all sorts of judgments, and precedents with similar issues. He was on the ball. Can I ask you one question?"

"What's that?"

"What the hell is out there?"

"Meet me at the bank in fifteen minutes." Mark laughed, said good-bye, and raised a fist in the air as he hung up the phone, and told the office he was headed out for an early lunch.

He was waiting in the bank when Camden walked in, Mark signaled to the cashier, and they walked down the stairs to the security deposit boxes.

The bank was intricately designed. From the frescos on the soft arched ceiling to the brass rod gates that separated the tellers from their customers. The safe seemed more a decorative piece of the architecture than an actual working piece of security. Its large brass workings were external, and all the interlinking parts were polished to the same shiny brassy yellow. The door itself was like a ziggurat, stepped several times to mate with the jamb that it set against each night. A light rod gate stood closed during daytime hours and Mark could make out the drawers that were the keyed security deposit boxes within.

Once in the secured room used for people with boxes, Mark set his box on the heavy oaken table. He opened it and underneath some documents, was a wadded up rag from a t-shirt. Mark laid it on the table and began unfolding the tattered memory from the Topanga 10K. Camden reached out to lean on the table, looked at Mark, and asked if it really was Willie's.

"Yes, I found it buried on that land." Mark looked up at Camden as he placed the nugget into Camden's hand. "You see. That's why we can't let that developer have that land. We need to make it a memorial, a park or something. There are a ton of trails up there. We could name it after Willie, make it a wilderness area. I've been doin' reasea'..."

"I got the picture." Camden interrupted. "I'll get the board together. You start working on that co-op or whatever it is Greg was talking about." Camden placed the nugget into the shirt and started to help Mark wrap it back up in the rag.

## TRAVAILS SUNDAY, MAY, 27 1935

Jack arrived in Sacramento in the early afternoon, and found his route to the Sutter Hospital via bus lines and a short walk. The large white building, Art Deco in architecture stood out in the large greenway in which it was located. Jack was amazed that a building could stay so white. The gravel roads and

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mountainous area of Aurora and Nevada City took its toll on keeping things white, let alone clean. After a few moments of discussion with the candy striper manning the front information desk Jack arrived at Room 222. The room was ghastly white, the freckles and seams in the linoleum provided the only contrast in color. Everything down to the furniture was white.

Bill coughed, turned and saw Jack in the doorway. "My old friend, it's been to long. Your granddaughter is a doll, well so the nurse told me." The coughing fit continued, "Was your trip ok?"

For the next few hours, interrupted by occasional visits of a nurse, the two spoke of their time in the mine, and their campfires above the creek not far from town. Their conversation bantered back and forth like the volley of a tennis ball.

"Oh, and then Mic, remember the first day down, that cock-sure boy, talking to Brock that way."

"Yeah, Brock made him run, chase the car back to the cage."

"Oh, and that fight in the bar with that other crew. Brock threw what? Three punches and took out five guys."

"Had he ever punched you? That man had hands of stone, a fist that would hit you as solid as a maul."

The two laughed and continued to reminisce. After some time, the room went silent. The soft foot-steps of the nurse could be heard.

"It's yours. Take it." Bill whispered. "Take it before she gets too old. Give it to your granddaughter."

Before Jack could reply, the nurse knocked on the door and told Jack that it was time to go, that Bill had foregone supper, and now it was well past visiting hours, and he needed rest. It was well past ten, their eyes met. Bill leaned forward, tipped his head as he shook Jack's hand, whispered his earlier command, then a brutal coughing fit erupted. He assured Jack of his well being and said good night.

Jack paid \$2.50 for a room across the street, the hotel did not have a phone, and the late hour didn't make it easy to find one. When he came to visit the next day, Bill's room was empty, two candy stripers were cleaning and taking down sheets in the room. The nurse, whom Jack remembered from the day before came in with fresh linens and set them down.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this. But last night, Mr. Thayer passed in his sleep." She reached into a nearby hutch, the inside of which was also white and pulled out a small basket. "This is all he had. He has no family. No friends other than you have visited." The nurse looked down into the near empty basket and continued, "There's not much there, this wallet, a pack of gum and this notebook with some drawings and writings in it." Jack thumbed through the wallet which held a few bills, less then \$30 dollars, some receipts and an ID listing a house address in Sacramento.

Jack thanked her and headed down the hall. "Mister? Do you know what we should do with him?"

"What do you mean?"

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"His remains. Since there is no family, and you are his only visitor. . . Let me make a call." The nurse walked to her station and placed a call. "Okay. At the bottom of the stairs, turn left, it is the third door on your right. The hospital administrator can tell you the details."

Jack was informed that Bill's body would be placed in the Potter's Field at the nearby cemetery. The other option was to have the body cremated. After lightly explaining the situation, the administrator said the cremation would not take long, and between transportation of the body, and retrieving the ashes, he could probably be on his way home by late afternoon. The administrator took a call, while Jack thought about it. He could scatter the ashes out by the bury site, it was lovely and would have meaning for Bill. He concluded his conversation with the administrator and was given directions to the funeral home a few blocks away.

Jack sought directions from the information desk at the hospital: hopped on a bus just outside the grounds and with one connection found himself a few blocks from his destination. Jack stood just outside the address on the identification card from Bill's wallet. A gentleman wearing a suit was just leaving the large Victorian home. "Good morning, is this the home of Bill Thayer?"

"Formerly, yes. He is currently in the hospital. He called our landlord earlier this week informing him to vacate his room, and to donate his belongings to any local charity."

"I worked with him many, many years ago, he passed last night at the hospital, I was just wondering about his belongings."

"That is terrible news. He was a great story teller. But, really there wasn't much, two of us took some furniture and clothes to a nearby church. There were a few books, *Lord of the Flies*, and *Gulliver's Travels* among them, but really he didn't have much in the way of belongings."

Jack thanked the gentlemen, and then walked the several blocks back towards the hospital and funeral home. Along the way he stopped into a mercantile, made a purchase and found a sandwich bar. After lunch, Jack collected the remains, and placed them in a satchel he purchased for just that purpose earlier in the day. Jack trotted up to the ticket window just as the salesman was reaching up to push the glass divider down. He pointed to the tracks and Jack gingerly walked over to the passenger cars and climbed aboard the train. He was barely into the corridor when he heard the whistle and the jerky dance to his seat began.

## LOST RELATIVES FRIDAY, JULY 12, 1996

It was late on Friday when Elke's office phone rang. "Nevada City Archives, Elke Jennings."

"Elke. It's Kim. I got your results."

"That's great, you can fax them to my office." Elke said.

"Well actually I was going to meet my mom for her birthday in Sacramento this evening. Thought I'd stay with her tonight, then drive up and bring you results myself. I haven't seen you since you got your job, and I want to see the town, and meet this guy you've been telling me about. As for the results there's something quite interesting about it, my professor is really interested if we can find out who it

might be. We did a search for people fitting the description, but this might be better suited for a more oral history approach. So I'll be there first thing in the morning."

"Sounds good. I still rent that room from that cute old lady, so I don't have any room for you at my place, but Mark's got a spare room, you can stay there this weekend." Elke cringed as she thought about the mess Mark had in there, "I look forward to seeing you." Elke quickly called Mark and told him about the visit, and said they would need to spend the evening cleaning his house, and he would have to finally do something about that spare room and all his baseball memorabilia.

Kim arrived at Mark's and Elke was in the yard playing fetch with Charlie, who as usual just looked at the ball, and looked back at Elke as if to say, you're turn. Mark helped Kim with her bag, and Kim held the report.

"What are all those boxes?" Kim asked as she placed the report on the dining room table.

"Uh. That would be all of Mark's baseball crap. Little league uniforms, cards, signed baseballs and programs. There wasn't an inch of floor visible in the spare bedroom."

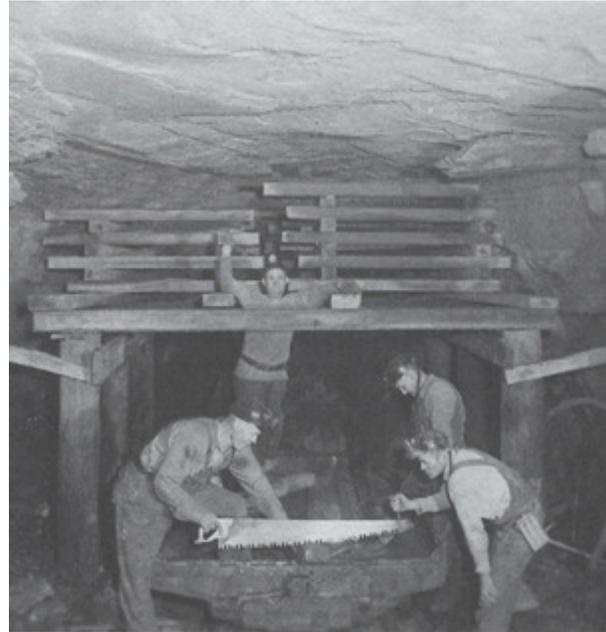
"Little league uniform?" Kim inquired.

"Yeah, Mark's all-star team made it to the Little League World Series in Kenebuc-something. They lost in the semi-finals to a team from Florida." Elke said as she shrugged her shoulders, apparently the numerous times the story was told amongst friends and co-workers hadn't made much of an impression on her. "Mark's inside making breakfast, let's catch up, then we can talk about the report."

"He cooks too! Impressive." Kim said with a smile. "And I believe it's Williamsport, Connecticut."

When the last of the crepes was done, and the mess cleaned up, Kim pulled out the half inch file that held the report about the remains. She approximated his age at fifty, his height around six feet, and that the pugilistic orientation of his body and the look of the bones, the body was definitely in proximity of fire. Mark mentioned the boardwalk fire of 1912 that started with kids playing with matches ironically, where the fire station stands today. She continued on about damage to the bones, most noticeably the bullet hole through one of the scapulas. She also noted extensive arthritis in most of the upper body consistent with mining, however the most interesting was the heavily damaged hands, healed fractures on several carpals, the long bones of the hand, as well as some ribs. Those two items alone with certain damage to facial features were consistent with a fighter, specifically a boxer.

Mark could hardly keep quiet, and Elke told him to wait for Kim to finish. Charlie fidgeted, groaned and whined as she started to dream, causing the three of them to laugh. Mark got up and refilled the mimosas, as Kim continued, and explained there was also a tell tale sign that the person had lost the



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vision in his right eye. There was extensive damage to the socket, and severe signs of calcification and healed fractures. Mark wondered if it was from the fighting, but Kim seemed to conclude that it looked more consistent with a blow from a solid object, maybe a rock from mining, a board or something equally as hard.

Mark grabbed the keys to the car, and told Elke and Kim to come along, there was someone he wanted them to meet. The wooden stairwell creaked as much as it did almost a year ago. The hardwood landing at the top of the stairs showed the wear of a hundred years of use, and the door opened before a knock was made. Robert Hermann stood tall in the doorway and pushed Mark aside as he let the women in first. He shook Mark's hand, and introductions were made.

"So what do we know about the remains, I have my guesses." Came the deep voice of Robert.

"He was a boxer. . ." Mark spoke up.

Robert put up his hand toward Mark who promptly stopped speaking, "Was I addressing you young man?" Robert looked at Kim with a flirt in his smile. "Please continue."

Kim went on to describe the injuries most likely credited to his demise, and the injuries and characteristics of the bones that would most likely give them clues as to who the person was found on the side of Robert's building. Robert grabbed a sweater from the hook on the back of the front door, a set of keys from the faded, kitschy, key-shaped, lacquered cedar Mt. Rushmore key holder next to the door and asked them to follow him. He opened the bar downstairs and explained how he helped out the young owner of the bar by sweeping the bar up in the morning and making sure the place wasn't in all too bad of shape when it opened for lunch.

The bar was a living museum, a collection of historic artifacts, pictures, junk and memorabilia. The dust on some of the items was as old as the town itself. The bar was hand carved and brought in from St. Louis at the turn of the century, worn in elbows could be seen at most every part of the bar top. Robert turned on the working lights, which lit up the bar like Mark had never seen. Robert went along the walls and there alongside pictures of some of the town's most historic and famous citizens was a picture of Maggie with some miners panning gold along a creek, a head shot of Willie holding up his fingers signifying the size of the nugget. "Not that big Willie," Mark thought to himself and smiled.

Robert stopped in front of several pictures of miners in different dress. "Here, these are the competitions the mine use to have like spike driving drilling, mucking, fire hose pulling and some sports like boxing. Here this guy, Bruce, uh, Huntington. No, that's not it. Damn. Mark, there's a cordless phone over by the register, can you go grab it and dial Tim Gregson, he's at 2334." Mark brought back the phone and handed it to Robert.

"Tim, it's me Robert. Can you come over to the bar?"

Tim arrived in a few minutes and started up with Robert. Mark, Elke and Kim looked on as they heard stories of the old town that very few people would ever know. The two men talked and traded stories about the town today and yesterday. Then all at once, "Brock Hutchinson!" Tim shouted out.

"I knew you would know. What more do you know about him." Robert asked of his friend he schooled with, in a single room for six years a half a century ago.

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"Not so sure. He was a boxer. Good one. There's a story about him and Doc Holiday. Get my brother over here." Mark hit redial on the phone, and again handed it over to Robert.

Almost passing for twins, the two brothers took over the stone engraving business from their father, and the business had been viable for over a century. If you needed to find someone, or needed to find an unmapped cemetery, or a headstone, these were the men to ask; both bachelors, both in their sixties Tim, slightly older.

"He boxed that night in Nevada City." Tom began, "The Douglass upset over Tyson, pales in comparison to what happened that night. Corbett, most know him as Gentleman Jim, lost the championship to this skinny legged barrel-chested fellow from Down Under. Hutchinson fought that night, uh." Tom was searching the cob webbed corners of his head. "Holcomb. Yeah, John Holcomb, he went to Hollywood after the fight and got into pictures or something. Was like one of the first stunt men, he died doing a stage coach stunt." Tom asked for some water, and went on to tell the story about Brock. "He won that night, there were a few fights that night, the last of which was that big championship one. I even think it was a filmed by Thomas Alva. Brock was a good fighter, he would come into bars and tell his story about fighting that night and meeting the likes of the Governor, but his highlight was meeting John L. Sullivan, Wyatt Earp and *compadre* Bat Masterson, of OK Corral fame."

Elke broke in, "Hey, yeah. When I gave tours in Tombstone I remember something about Wyatt Earp refereeing a controversial fight in San Francisco."

"How did Brock end up mining in Nevada City?" Mark asked.

"He fought again in Tahoe." Robert and Tim listened intently, the women were mesmerized by the knowledge the three men had, "And apparently some bookie didn't take kindly to his quick dispensing of punishment on one of his fighters. They followed him out of the arena in whatever town it was and pretty much left him for dead on the side of the street. Brock lost his eye, he tried fighting, but being a southpaw, his right eye led, and after two failed fights he packed it in. He came to Milton Mining at the turn of the century. He was a good foreman, lost a couple of men in the hole and took to the bottle. The rest of his crew, three of them, they worked in fours were the first ones down for the rescue. Rumors had him working down at Bodie. Huge town, bigger than The City, San Francisco at the time. Once that mine washed up and a fire destroyed most of the town, it was pretty much abandoned, those that remained were hardened people. Bodie's a ghost town now, Park Service I think, near Mono Lake. Cold desolate place in winter, summer is hot and bare."



Mark asked about the lost men, "You said couple men, but that three went down the following day."

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"Yeah there was a story about that. The mine had sent down a geologist, Brock had left him with the junior man on his crew, O'Mally I think, not sure—Irish anyways. Near as they can figure an arc lamp torched off some explosives. Soon after the accident the mine switched the lighting system down there. The mine never produced much, and a few years later it was worthless, and the company went belly up. The land is BLM now, you can see some of the remaining pilings and foundations of the old buildings as you drive out o town up on the hillside. The tailings were used to gravel the road to Aurora."

Jerry McAdams, the owner of the bar came in to see the crowd collected in back, Robert spoke to him, and made introductions. Jerry thanked Mark for his help with the little league season—and asked him not to bring up the best play in little league all season—and for keeping the softball teams in the standings, then went on to get ready for the onslaught of lunchtime. The Gregson brothers headed out, Mark walked with Robert up the stairs and thanked him for his time and everything else. "You let me know if you find out anything more."

"Sure thing, Robert." Mark and the women headed down the street to the mining museum. Eric was there, he was a history major from Wisconsin originally and his wife worked for the county. Mark and Eric coached the little league team together, and Mark stopped in to see if Eric could help.

Mark gave a quick rundown to Eric and his young intern Jeff. Eric pulled out some old employment division ledgers. They were from the mine, donated only a few years ago by a widow who was moving into assisted living. Eric hadn't spent much time with them, but had some ideas how they worked. He found the one that listed injuries and accidents and found dates where men were lost. Elke and Kim had the intern do a search for news articles about the geologist and miner that were killed on Brock's crew.

"Here it is." The young intern said, "August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1902. *Bodies of Geologist and Miner Recovered*." It looks as though the accident happed a couple days before. They mention the bodies were recovered by Brock Hutchinson, Jack Heilmann, and Mark, get this, your gunslinger Bill Thayer.

The young intern continued softly, "Jack said he felt somewhat responsible for leaving so much explosive in one area, but that the four of them never thought much about it, being together for so many years. The company found no fault in any of it."

Eric and his intern listened intently then went back to searching the employment records, and it showed the crew had worked together for a couple of years and that they were very productive. The four received merit awards for their work, and were in on countless rescues. Notes suggest they were highly trusted by the company but the accident seemed to be the end of that unity though. Mic was with them the shortest amount of time. The records showed that Jack Heilmann's wife worked in accounting and that she stayed on until retirement it seems, while Jack only worked a few more years. Thayer having lost some fingers months later left the mine in August. His wife stayed on in the infirmary as a nurse. "So three of the four are accounted for, who is this Jack guy." Mark thought out loud.

The intern quietly dialed the phone on the office desk. "Pop, it's me Jeff. How are you? I have a question for you. Do you know anybody by the name of Jack Heilmann?" Jeff asked frantically on the phone. "Pop. Pop! Are you there?"

There was silence. Elke asked Jeff if everything was ok.

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"Really! Pop how come you never told me any of that?" Jeff's fragmented replies were followed by silence as his grandfather spoke on the other end. "I'm at the museum. Some people here, the water guy from the city, and the lady who does the digging downtown, they mentioned some other people and John Heilmann's name came up and I thought you might know since you were the sheriff and all."

A half hour passed and everyone was looking up old articles and anything that mentioned any of the



four men. Eric came across the poster announcing the "Fight of the Century" on St. Patrick's Day in Nevada City 1897. There in black ink with a puncher pose was a sketch of Corbett and Fitzsimmons, and Brock's name listed below the much bolder print of the champion's names. The bell on the door jingled as the former Sheriff, Todd Battles walked in. He was tall and thin, wearing a sharp white shirt, a flat black hat, and wearing a large silver and turquoise pendant on his bolo tie. His grey slacks reached to his wingtips, and he held a wooden cane in his right hand.

"Good afternoon. I hear you are interested in my grandson's, great-great-great grandfather?"

Sheriff Battles went on to tell the tale of a man that came to the Sierra Nevadas in 1890 at the age of 21, a bright kid looking for adventure. "He set out on his own to prospect, learned the ropes had moderate success. He ended up getting married and started working at the mine at 30. He was there for a time, then lost a friend in a collapse in ought-two. He dug the kid out, the same age he was when he started out mining and soon after decided never to go underground again. He was good with parts, and when cars started coming out west he took a job as a mechanic." Sheriff Battles took out his handkerchief and mused with his nose a bit. "My mom remembers playing *Life*, the basis of the game today, but played much differently back then—when the phone rang. She remembers her grandma coming back with a piece of paper." The former sheriff pulled a time-worn piece of paper from his pocket and passed it around the room. "She remembers him leaving the next day, wearing a grey suit, a top hat and carrying a paper sack she helped her grandmother pack for his trip on the train." He again pulled out his handkerchief but this time rubbed the tears from his eyes. "She cried for days she said. That was the last time they ever saw him."

Jeff almost flipped off the back of his chair as his grandfather said those words.

"John Heilmann, 'Jack,'" Kim read the note aloud. "The phone call?" Kim asked.

"Apparently it was a nurse saying that a man, William Thayer was sick in the hospital suffering from miner's lung. She said he was dying and needed to see my great-grandfather. My mom said she heard them argue that night, and that Jack couldn't or wouldn't offer up much more than a series of 'I don't know's' before heading off to Sacramento. My mom's last memory was of him walking down the walkway carrying that bag lunch."

The former sheriff wiped tears from his face, "both my grandmother, and great-grandmother went down to Sacramento to talk to the hospital. They met with the nurse, who dug the note from her

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sweater pocket and said she remembered seeing my grandfather the day Mr. Thayer died. He died later in the evening without so much as saying a word to the staff or leaving any clues as to what the visit was about." The sheriff stood and looked at some of the records and continued, "My mom found out they had worked together for several years before an accident at the mine."

"What about the name Brock Hutchinson?" Mark asked, "Does that mean anything?"

"Jack worked on his crew. Tough man, he was as strong as an ox." Said Sheriff Todd Battles, "My mom remembers how sad they all were after the accident."

"Well this is beginning to be quite the mystery." Elke said.

"What do you mean by that?" Asked the former lawman, in a tone reminiscent of his old hat as a sheriff.

Elke and Kim proceeded to share the tale as well as they could to that point. "And now you tell us that Bill Thayer met with your father on the eve of his death, then went missing. It all seems so mysterious, three men who all worked together, and now they're all dead."

"But Thayer died of lung sickness, in the hospital, no mystery there." Came the retort from a lawman who'd seen plenty of circumstantial evidence throughout the years.

"Yes, but only after he sent a plea to his former co-worker to come visit him." Kim replied. "Maybe a death bed confession."

"Uh, can I say something." Jeff raised his hand as if he were in a classroom.

"Go on," said more than one in the room.

"Well you only mention Brock, Jack and Bill, what about the other guy." Jeff said quietly, and in a shy voice so as not to offend. "He died too, in the accident." He searched the books, journals, ledgers and articles for the name. "Mic O'hare. He died first. I know there were two of them. . .this um." Jeff searched the article for more information, "a geologist named Jonathon Meyer. The article. . .Here. Here. Brock Hutchinson was reported as saying 'he said he wanted a tour, wanted to take some notes and learn about us miners. Fresh kid, too bad too, I think he might have helped the company find more gold, lord knows they don't think we (miners) know how to.'"

"That seems like a fairly critical comment." Mark said.

"Yeah but critical at who?" Tugging on his bolo tie, the former sheriff spoke up. "Well it's a hundred years ago. I'd conclude William Thayer killed Brock,, that much we know for certain, but beyond that it's anybody's guess."

"You want my take on it Pop." The young intern said excitedly. "I think the four men in that crew were in cahoots about something and maybe the geologist stuck his nose in a little too far so they had to kill him, then the other three men watched as Mic couldn't take the strain of killing a man in cold blood." Most everyone in the room nodded their heads in what would seem agreement.

Todd Battles lifted his cane and pointed it around the room, "I think all of you have been watching too many of those crime dramas." The grandfather continued, "Okay, *Columbo*, you want a former lawman's take on it. The gun, it was stolen and used to mug Brock, only thing, Brock didn't go quietly, so he was

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shot and shoved under the decking of the boardwalk." The former sheriff slammed his cane down emphatically, "There, case closed!"

**"GOOD-BYE GOD,  
I'M GOING TO BODIE"  
TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1910**

It was nearly three years since being in that clearing. Brock was still at the mine, which was taking its toll on his mind and body. Jack was working as a mechanic in town and Bill, after losing some hearing and a finger or two at the mine, was working as a custodian at the school. The three men knew it was time. Hardly a word was spoken as the first spade stabbed at the dirt that hadn't seen light under some rocks and logs in those three years. The smell of earth filled the air as Bill's shovel hit the first of the rock. Jack laid down some canvas at the edge of the hole. They leaned in, and with gloves cleared the dozen rocks or so they'd placed to protect the bags from the shovels years before. The leather bags had held up well. They were damp, but intact.

With his drinking taking its toll on his life, Brock was finally fired by the mine. The reality of losing his job, and the loss of most of his vision in his eye, led Brock to contact Bill and Jack. He conceived of a plan to head to Bodie, located in the White/Inyo Mountains east of the Sierras and just this side of the Nevada border. There he would set up a claim, work it sparingly, and use it as a front for their stash of gold. The three met earlier morning that day and Brock told them about his idea.

"I heard the mill in Bodie is starting back up. I figure I can get down there, work a small claim, and if need be work at the mill. It will take some money for staking the claim, tools to work it, and a little to get by on while I get things going."



Bill and Jack had heard about Brock's problems, they knew about the drinking and bad behavior that got him let go from his job. But they knew they had to stick by him. They decided to give Brock some money, and to dig up some of the gold so he could try and get things started.

It wasn't eight months and Brock was back in Nevada City. Not a penny to his name. He wired Bill with instructions to meet him at the site. It had been raining steady for nearly two days, a steady rain, good for the land, but not much else. Bill and Jack were waiting together when they saw the beaten figure of a man. Brock's body was worn, his posture showed weakness and the fire in his eye was gone. This was not the man that had seemed so sure of himself when he presented them with his well-organized and thought out plan. He was broke. He'd spent the money on booze, till every drop was done. There was no claim, there was nothing. The several ounces they'd given him, ended up as empty bottles at a campsite just north of Lee Vining. Brock was begging them for more, another

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chance. This man of thirty-seven, looked twice his age. His hands swollen from years of abuse, his face ravished from gloved fists and that broken bottle. The vision in his right eye completely gone, his eye was completely shut, and his pugnacious facial gesture were collapsing around it.

Bill and Jack gave in one more time to Brock's request. Brock promised he'd lay off the booze, slapped his own face to assure them he was sober and clean. They bagged some gold for him, and gave him what cash they had on them. Brock thanked them, and with his head held high like that night in the ring with George Siler, he walked back up to the trail and towards town.

"Jack, I know there's plenty." Bill Thayer spoke softly, as the rain had yet to let up. "But we can't keep this up. Sooner or later something is going to give."

"I know what you're saying, Bill." Jack took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his brow, "But what do you want to do?"

"He's got to lay off that bottle."

Jack dropped his head, as rain ran down the front of his face and off his nose and splashed at his feet. "And if he doesn't?"

Bill looked at Jack as he turned his head and asked. "Do you trust me?"

"You know I do. I trusted all of us."

"Okay then, you get home to your wife and Grace, take care of them. I will worry about this." Bill reached out for Jack's hand. They shook and went their separate ways.

It was hours later and the rain was still falling just as hard as it was when Bill was standing in the forest with the men he formed an agreement with years before. Now he sadly followed Brock into the third bar of the night. Brock was down to the last of Jack and Bills pocket money. He took a pinch of gold from the small bag and sprinkled it on the bar. The bartender filled a glass and Brock started in about his fight that night in Carson City. Brock described in detail his last flurry of punches and the left to the chin that dropped his opponent. Brock took a sip of his drink and surveyed the bar. Save for the bartender, who'd heard it all before, there was no one there to hear the story.

Bill waited alone, leaning on a post outside the Burnham Bar, in the near distance lightening lit up the sky, and the rumble of thunder could be heard and its vibrato felt. He waited patiently for the barkeep to ask Brock to leave. Rain ran down the bearing beams of the boardwalks' roof and onto the rim of Bills hat. He played with the water as it poured out the front of his hat and onto the deck boards at his feet.

He heard the bartender make a few last remarks and Brock staggered through the doorway. Brock looked out the door, and left and right down the street he tipped his hat at the man in the shadows who was back lit by lightening and made no acknowledgement of Brock's gesture. As Brock stumbled on the small step at the turn in the boardwalk and made his way around the corner, a crack of thunder sounded as his foot hammered itself into the wooden plank for balance. It was loud. Somewhere in his memories from outside the ring and the grime filled mine, Brock remembered the closer the strike the sooner the thunder. The next crack was closer yet, though not nearly as loud. His balanced lost, his shoulder flung forward, his body contorting as he fell to one knee and still stumbling drunk he slumped against the side of the building. He reached into his jacket breathing heavily. He stared at his palm in

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the darkness of the side street. A flash of red lightning, or was it. His palm was red, dark red. The next flash of lightening was simultaneous with the clap of thunder. Brock's body fell forward, his shoulder glanced off the wall of the Burnham Bar as his face fell into the worn, wooden deck boards. He struggled to breathe the gaps of the boards, behind him the muzzle of the gun sizzled with each drop of rain that hit it.

In the shadows of the building, Bill dragged Brock off the boardwalk, straightened his body then rolled him under the boardwalk. Brock was coughing, gurgling rain and blood.

"I'm sorry, Bill."

"No, I'm sorry Brock. We loved you. We trusted you, but we can't any longer." Bill shoved the gun into the wet earth under the body, heard one last yelp from Brock, took to his feet and made his way toward Main Street. He walked in the rain, and disappeared between flashes into sheets of rain.

### ON DISPLAY WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1996

The Chief of police called Elke into his office and handed her a folder. "Well, I'm going to close out the case." The Chief continued, "I spoke with the DA and he says with both the victim and gun owner known to be dead, and any other suspect presumably dead after so much time, there really is no remaining crime to prosecute. We amended the death certificate, but officially, there is no case. We are going to conclude that William Thayer's gun in fact killed Brock Hutchinson, although we cannot place William Thayer at the scene, so with no living witnesses, the only conclusion we have is that Hutchinson was killed in a robbery. He had an appreciable amount of gold with him, and we can assume he had more, and theft was most likely the cause for the murder."

Elke thumbed through the documents and read over the death certificate. She expressed satisfaction, but the Chief could sense she wasn't. She thanked the Chief for the files and told him she would put the amended death certificate alongside other documents in the display about the dig.

Elke headed to a side room of City Hall, it would be a temporary display for the artifacts unearthed during the excavation. Among the items in the display were cast replicas of the bones used to identify Brock with description of the gunshot wounds as well as the features leading to the identification of Brock. The gun was included as well, and several articles and pictures from the Mining Museum featuring Brock Hutchinson and Bill Thayer. Alongside Brock's death certificate was a copy of his arrest in Bodie, CA in 1909 as well as references to the fire of 1912 that burned the boardwalk in the vicinity of the Burnham Bar. Elke had written up an article concluding that Brock Hutchinson died sometime between those dates. Elke was almost finished with the display when Terry arrived with a large wooden box. He carefully set it on a table and opened it.

"Well this is it." Terry carefully picked up a large hydraulic valve, "Where is it going?"

"Place it there, next to the pictures of the digging."

"Okay." Terry placed the broken valve that started it all, next to a picture of himself operating the backhoe he used to clear the original site, "Oh that was a bad hair day." He surveyed the rest of the display, "Wrongful, possible felonious death', Chief just write that up?"

"Yeah, he and the DA went over it and they gave me a copy of the new death certificate." Elke said. "Pretty neat, huh? Did you bring the sign?"

Terry agreed, said good-bye and before leaving changed out the marquee on the door with the one he created back at the shop: 'A Murder Story/A Historic Display/All Welcome'.

## **PARKS AND MEMORIALS TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 1996**

Mid morning the next day, Mark and Elke headed over to Greg's law office. They were greeted by his assistant Gwen, and escorted to the conference room where Marne was sitting across from Jeff and his grandfather Todd Battles.

"When are you two coming up again for supper?" Marne asked, pointedly toward Elke.

"Oh, very soon I hope." Elke replied, "I loved the kabobs you made the other day."

On the main table of the conference room there were several documents and forms laid out with 'sign here' tags all over them. Gwen explained the colors and said that Greg was at the county jail and should be back shortly to go over everything. Marne and Elke continued their giggled conversation, as they sat patiently waiting for Greg. Terry showed up a few minutes later and was a bit heated since he had been out resurfacing some of the residential streets off of Main. He questioned Elke and Marne as to why he needed to be there, while Mark went over some details with Gwen.

Robert Hermann arrived and Gwen promptly escorted him in. "Mark, my good friend, how are you? Had any unwelcomed visitors over at the house lately?" His voice resonated, his smile and warmth comforted everyone in the room. Mark smiled, shook his outstretched hand. And thought about how excited and stunned his friend would be in a matter of moments.

Mark was eager to start, and Gwen prompted him to do so once Greg called in that he was on his way. Mark closed the door to the conference room and explained the paperwork. He had chosen the people in the room to be the board of directors for a coalition to commemorate William Evans.

Robert spoke up, "You want to do something for that ol' coot that scared you near to death, or enough to come see me to figure out who he was?"

Mark continued, explaining his first night in his house and the shadows. He followed with descriptions of the collage of the visits, the digging of the hole, the placing of the two entwined pans, and he recalled his conversation with Robert the year before, and the parallels in his dreams.

"You need to slow down son." Robert spoke putting out his hands and slowly fanned them at Mark.

Mark, went to the sink, filled a glass and drank from it, then told of the cold night that the heartless twins arrived. How they scared off Maggie, taunted Willie, and left him lying in a pool of his own blood. He told them about the initials in the tree and the two entwined gold pans. Mark stopped and the room

was quiet as Greg entered carrying a small decorative box, a hand carved, antique. His timing couldn't be better. Mark hurriedly motioned for Greg to bring the box to him. He opened it slowly, reached into it, and placed the wadded up t-shirt remains onto the table. He set the box to the side and slowly untied the twine that held the rag tight.

Robert could not believe it. All these years, all the times telling the tale, he was certain it never existed, certain it was folklore that had grown through the years with exaggeration. But it was there, unfurled, a nugget of gold the size of a pinecone.

Save for Terry's initial outburst, "Holy shit!" The room was silent. Robert got up from his chair and walked toward Mark. He shook his hands then asked if he could hold it. The weight of the nugget in Robert's hand was substantial. "This is unbelievable, Mark. When, how long have you had it?"

"I dug it up the morning after I talked with you, back in October of last year. I returned the pans and tidied up the area where I dug it up, which is why you are all here today." Mark continued. "Greg's going to explain how this is all going to work. I chose all of you because you are good friends, and I feel you have the integrity to stand for what's right and what should be done with this artifact and the area in which it was found.

Greg spent an hour discussing how the organization would work, and that the goal was to protect the area where the nugget was buried and the area behind it that ran toward the creek from development. Gwen came in with sandwiches she had fixed up in the office kitchenette and Terry quickly dove into the platter. The women were slightly more composed when the platter reached them. With the papers signed, Greg headed off to have them filed and directed Gwen to call Camden over at the mine.

### **ALONG THE CREEK MONDAY, MAY 27, 1935**

The train pulled into Nevada City just before noon. An excited Jack stopped at the local hardware store where he purchased a spade. He walked the few miles in the warm spring sun until he came to a small deer trail near Willow Hollow. The trail meandered around a bit until it came to a creek. He stopped for a moment and listened to the sounds of the gently flowing creek. His heart resonated as the songs of birds filled the air and the breeze caused the tops of the pines to bristle together as it flowed through them. His eyes looking down the creek a distance, he could hear the voices; the voices of four men who gathered there thirty-five years before to listen to their foreman's plan to rob one of the richest veins of gold the West had ever seen. In a flash he saw them draw out their plans, make the assignments, schedule digging, transport their cache and how one by one, three of the men had fallen. Mic who could not take the strain, Brock whose boxing dreams went asunder and Bill, whose lungs had failed him. And now here, Jack stood to make all the gains. Somehow it wasn't fair. A fish jumped and splashed and Jack was shocked back to the present. His vision grayed as he made his way from the brightness of the creek to the shaded canopy the pines provided. His eyes adjusted onto a trail that slowly ran up-slope along the creek, which turned sharply at a large rock. He leaned the spade against a tree, then made his way up onto the rock which overlooked by a substantial height the creek he was just alongside. He set down the satchel, and retrieved the vessel containing Bill. He opened the box,

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and slowly gave the box a tilt. A cloud of ashes began to appear, gravity and the spring breeze did the rest. Jack placed Bill's box back in the satchel and climbed down the rock.

A deer and its fawn startled by his presence watched him carefully before precariously making their way through some trees and up over a slight rise out of view. Jack set the spade against a tree, took off his coat and tie, and then began to work. Just as before on that rainy evening some twenty years before he hit rock before too long. He kneeled on the satchel and removed the large river stones they'd placed to protect their fortune from shovels. He sat on a stoop for a moment to catch his breath. He felt more winded then normal, but could not rest. It had been three years since he had seen the stash, before that like clockwork the men met every two years on the date of the fatal cave-in.

Jack got up, as his excitement grew, and he hurriedly lifted out the canvas, and there were the four leather bags, moist and covered with some dirt. His heart raced. Thirty-four years they had held together, the saddle makers stamp still readable on the flaps. He rubbed his left arm and shoulder which began to hurt. From the digging he thought. He lifted one bag and placed it with a thump on the ground next to him. His breathing was harder now. With barely room for the leather bag in the satchel, Jack placed the box in the space previously occupied by the bag he removed. He covered the amalgamated stash with the canvas and stones. And after wiping his forehead of sweat, he clutched at a sharp pain in his shoulder. He made an attempt to completely re-cover the hole, but was too tired—what was the difference, he would be back shortly for the remaining bags.

The late afternoon sun was hot. Jack carried the satchel over his shoulder; he grew more tired as the weight of the bag wore on him, his leg dragging. He set the bag down, removed his coat and placed it over his shoulder. He leaned in to collect the bag, the sound of the creek and some birds were all he heard as he strained one last time to lift the bag. Once again looking down the creek he heard the voices of those four men, their dreams and the what-are-you-going-to-do's. The reminiscing came to a sudden end. The satchel didn't make it past his knee as he slumped forward, his knee driving hard into the ground, he let go of the bag which tumbled toward the creek bank, above him birds still sang, and the pines still rustled in the soft breeze. Before him he saw his leg trembling, his right hand clutching at his shirt, buttons popped as he fell with a thud on his side, he could hardly breathe as he reached out desperately for the bag which splashed into the bank of the creek. His last breath, "Emily, for you." But she didn't hear him.

## ATLATL SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 1996

"What's this thing called?"

"It's called a 'Huck-It'. It's like an atlatl. Like what pre-historic man used to hunt with, it increased the speed and power of impact for spears." Elke reached down with it and grabbed up a tennis ball. "See, then you flick it." The ball went sailing down the field twice as far Mark could ever throw it. And as usual, Charlie just looked at Elke with a well-you-go-get-it look. "Why doesn't she fetch for me."

Mark had no answer, as he walked and retrieved the ball and tried it himself. Charlie shot off like a rocket and brought back the slobbery bright green mass. The two continued their walk up along the trail

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behind the house, up the slope to the opening, where Mark's initials overlooked the once buried nugget. Mark cranked up for another toss and the ball went wild, releasing too soon, it sailed high into the canopy and ricocheted off some branches and boughs. Charlie took off after it, tossing up needles and dirt. She stopped and stood waiting for its initial fall. It suddenly dropped and bounced out of view down the slope on the other side. Mark trotted over to the edge of the opening and the ball hurriedly made its way toward a rock outcropping and the creek. Charlie barked furiously at the ball to come back as she slid partially down the slope, Mark started side-hopping and running down after Charlie, with not enough eyes to watch Charlie, the ball and his step, he caught an exposed root, high-sided and began a slow tumble down the hill. Charlie turned sharply and came up to Mark, who was shook up bit. He was a bit scratched up, but mostly just dirty. He remained on his side, his feet pointing uphill and Charlie licking his face, who without thumbs wasn't really being much of a help. Elke made her way down and helped a lightly laughing Mark to his feet. Charlie barked and wiggled a bit before shooting off after the ball. It was only a few moments later when they heard a sudden yelp, and an immense thrashing in the brush. Followed closely by Elke, Mark ran off toward Charlie. They came to a small clearing and Charlie laid there licking a bloody paw. Mark looked around and found the culprit, an old rusty dilapidated spade. Mark kneeled by his dog, as she stopped licking to lick at Mark's face. Mark examined the bloody paw and noticed the upper pad by the dew claw was nearly severed. Mark pulled out his pocket knife and asked Elke to cut a portion of his sleeve off. He took the ragged fragment, and after wiping the area tied it around the pad and forepaw of Charlie. She sniffed at it, then got up and with hardly a noticeable limp, scampered over to the ball and tossed it at Mark's feet.

Mark looked at the shovel. It had been there quite some time. The steel was darkened with aged rust, the handle could be made out in the ground, but was long since rotted. Mark looked around and saw a depression near the base of some large boulders. Elke and Charlie watched intently as Mark kneeled down and began to scratch at the depression with what remained of the shovel. The concavity was well protected by the rocks and slope and saw little vegetation. Within a few moments Mark's shovel snagged something. As he scraped more of the top soil away he saw the remnants of some canvas. Then neatly under it was a layer of stones, river stones. Though close to the creek was not near enough to account for their random presence. He slowly removed them, setting them down, and Elke positioned them a bit further away. As the last of the stones were removed Mark made out a neatly dug hole, with three leather bags, and a column of rocks.

As Mark reached in for one of the bags Elke spoke. "Stop. Take up the . . . better yet, I'm the one with digging experience, let me. Besides, you've already had your opportunity to find buried treasure."

Mark slid over, and looked at the bandage on Charlie, as she gently licked at his exposed ear. "Thanks Charlie."

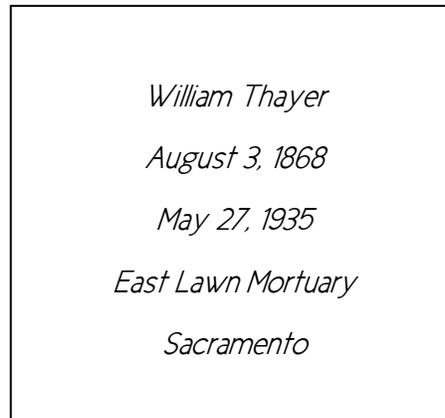
"I think if we remove the rocks from this side first." She slowly set the rocks outside of the hole and Mark placed them with the others. "We'll not have such a mess if they start to tumble into the hole." Then she stopped. As she leaned in harder, she turned to look at Mark in amazement. "You have to see this." Elke leaned to the side as Mark peered into the hole. There, placed in one of four spaces was a small square box with a decorative design on top. "Do you know what that is?" She quizzed Mark.

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"No idea." Mark shrugged his shoulders. "Just pull it out."

Elke gently took hold of the box and brought to the edge of a hole and placed it on a rock between Mark and herself. They both stared in amazement at the decorative label atop the box:



"How the . . .?" Mark said in amazement as Charlie leaned in and gave it a sniff. Elke lifted the box and gave it a gentle shake, "There's something in it." Mark said while Elke slowly opened it revealing the contents within.

"See that powder? All that dust?" Elke pointed into the box, "That's Bill. This is a crematorium storage box. They use these to store remains before they are transferred into an urn, if at all. They still use boxes like this now." Elke handed Mark the wallet that was inside, while she took a closer look at the rest of the box.

"But how did it get here?" Mark read the identification card that was inside the wallet and the few receipts that Jack had read some seventy years earlier.

Elke examined the wallet as well, and gently placed it and its contents back into the box. "Jack brought it here. He prob'ly scattered the ashes around here or along the way. Jack must have been given custodial responsibilities for the remains. Given that Sacramento is the capital, the hospital most likely sent out the body for cremation to this East Lawn Mortuary, which is prob'ly contracted with the county and the hospital to take care of bodies." Elke handed Mark back his pocketknife. "Depending on the municipality, the county is responsible for the tab, and the remains are either cremated or buried in a potter's field in a simple, inexpensive casket, literally a pine box."

Mark raised an eyebrow, "Ok, now you're scaring me, how do you know all this?"

"My dad's a county commissioner," Elke reached in and hoisted one of the bags, its weight coming as a shock. "Whoa, that is much heavier than it should be." She continued, "He once told me all this because he was on the accounting committee and each year the line item for the remains of unknown and indigent peoples was quite substantial and increasing every year. Can't have bodies piling up, that's a health issue."

Mark mustered an 'oh' to her comment, then squatted and examined the first bag. Jameson Saddle Company, Nevada City." He carefully undid the buckles, as Elke, now finished removing the remaining bags from the hole, kneeled beside her boyfriend and followed by unbuckling the second.

Mark looked at Elke, "On three ok?" Then stared down at the bags, "One. . .two. . .three."

Mark, was the first to make a sound. And that's all it was really. Nothing audible, just coughing grunts and laughs. Elke, slowly turned to Mark as she reached into the bag before her. They stared at each other, "Elke, open up that last one."

Buckles unfastened and flap turned over, it was just like the first two. Gold. Gold dust. Gold nuggets. All filled with gold. More gold than they had ever seen. Elke could barely move the last bag. Mark stood up and looked around not trusting if anyone was watching them. "Elke, I'll take one bag, run up to the house, I'll call Terry, see if he can run Charlie to the vet for me, then I'll get Greg over to the house. I'll come back with a pack, and we can take the other items. Elke, are you okay here for the time being?"

"Yeah, I'll take a look around, follow some of the trails. Oh, and maybe today, you might want to lock the door. Oh, and don't forget to grab a key!"

Terry was at Mark's house within a few minutes, and had Charlie loaded in his truck, and started to speak as he rolled down the window, ". . .my sister said she'd stay and stitch her up, and she will just keep her overnight at the office since it's so late."

Mark nodded, and let Terry know how much he appreciated the favor.

"That's ok. I gotta raise the flower beds in the backyard for the old lady sometime this fall. You'll make up for it then." Terry winked, and was off to his sister's vet clinic.

Mark returned to find Elke, above the hole on top of the large rock outcropping that overlooked the creek that rippled below. She was holding something in her fingers and carefully examining it.

"What is it?" Mark yelled from below.

"Pick up the box. Is it missing one of the brass corner things."

"Yeah, how did you know?" Mark yelled back down after a careful examination of the box.

"I think this is where Jack scattered Bill's remains. It's a brass corner. Elke made her way back up toward Mark. "It was on top of that rock. It's a good view up and down the creek from there. It was grown over a bit by the lichen, thankfully it grows slow." Elke gave Mark a hug, and asked about Charlie. Mark nodded, and they began to pack up the bags in the packs Mark had brought up from the house. Elke said she would carry the box in her hand, as she placed the brass corner into it.

I think Jack prob'ly brought it here. There was room for four bags—I think Jeff was right. Elke noticed the puzzled look on Mark's face, "The intern from the museum, the great-great whatever of Jack Heilmann. I think he was right, there were four of them, the Irish kid, Brock, Bill and Jack." Elke counted on her fingers. She looked at Mark as he nodded and continued, "Jack most likely came here after visiting Bill at the hospital, scattered the ashes, then took one of the bags. Maybe he didn't have room or a way to carry the box, so he left it in the hole with the rest of the stash."

"Do you think he just got back on the train and left for good? Sacramento? The City, LA? Mexico?" Mark interrupted.

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"No I don't think so. The granddaughter cried for days remember. I think he was a devoted family man, a loving grandfather. He left the shovel, and didn't quite top off the buried spot. It was depressed, and there were still rocks and a small pile of dirt left. I think he intended on returning."

"But he didn't." Mark once again looked at Willie's and his initials in the tree as they passed by that familiar place, "If you're right, he wouldn't have gone far. Home most likely, they said he lived in Auburn. That's between Nevada City and Sacramento. I think he would have headed there. He just never made it. How old was he?"

"Sixty-six, I think. Not old by today's standards, but back then, fairly geriatric I would think, especially if he was worn out by the mine." Elke searched for some sort of logical explanation.

"Hmmm, maybe he could only take one bag. Maybe to a bank. A safety deposit box." Mark attempted to shift the weight of the pack on his shoulders.

"But why after some thirty years, take it to a bank? This was as good as any safety deposit box. They obviously thought it out, the hole was well dug, shored up on the sides and the top carefully constructed to avoid damaging the contents.

By the time they got to the house, Mark could see Greg's car in the driveway. Mark placed his bag on the kitchen table, and went to let Greg and Marne in.

"What's with locking the door?"

"Stop it." Marne piped in with a stern look at Greg.

"So you could get a smoke in, smart ass?" Mark fired back at Greg.

"So what do you have now? More buried treasure." Greg could see the torn up shirt sleeve, dirty hands and muddied knees of Mark. "Bags of gold I suppose?" Marne handed Mark a bottle of wine and apologized for the behavior, and Greg continued as he entered the kitchen. "More ghost stor'..." He couldn't finish.

Elke had the rusted shovel head, the cremation box, its corner and the wallet on the table. But what caught the attention of Greg was the one open bag. Elke had decoratively placed it like a Thanksgiving Day cornucopia, open in all its glory with its contents spilling out onto the table.

Mark had done it again; made a well-spoken man speechless.

Marne looked at Elke, "Explain, please?"

## **LAND RESERVE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 1996**

"And the best part, is the cache of gold." Mark could hardly contain his excitement, "It was located within the acreage set aside for the park. So there shouldn't be too much issue with the Antiquities Act of 1906. The mine agreed they will take the gold, and use the proceeds to offset the price of the land, so the foundation is clear and free with the land. And they left a descent sum to start some work on making some trails and interpretive locations and information with the park."

The committee sat in the conference room of Greg's law office. They were all smiles as they heard the good news. Camden stood up and thanked all of them for their commitment to the project. He also stated that the mine would create a scholarship for any graduates that pursued historical or mining engineer studies in college.

Jeff Battles raised his hand, they all giggled and said you're not in class. "What about Brock and the rest."

Elke fielded that question, "The mine has purchased the Sawyer Building and we're looking at making our offices there. Within it we'll have permanent displays about Goldust Willie, and the four men, including your three-times great grandfather, we believe were involved with the stash of gold found along Auric Creek. There will also be temporary displays featuring different aspects of mining and the history of the Gold Rush. An anonymous donor has also purchased us some security devices so we can keep the gold nugget on display there with the gold pans, as well as other mementos of Willie's time spent in Nevada City and the Sierras."

"To thank our anonymous donor, you can always give Jerry a shout over at the Burnham Bar. Buy a beer or in your case Jeff, a burger!" Mark said with a wink.

After a long winter, and a spring which never seemed to end. Mark, Elke and Charlie made their way up the small deer trail out the back of his house. A short twenty-minute walk later and there, overlooking some of the town was the rest of the committee. Robert's rumbling chuckle could be heard over the wind that made its way through the tree tops. In the distance the low purr of heavy machinery could be heard, as Terry brought the city's articulated front end loader up the gravel roadway he had been working on the past few weeks as he prepared a parking area for the new park. He stopped the orange-yellow piece of equipment near the group, and unfurled some ribbon. The committee helped him tie it off, and he pulled out the large ceremonial scissors that were in the loader's bucket and handed them to Mark.

They were all smiles as Mark announced they were ready to commission the new recreational area, and cut the ribbon. "For the historical preservation of our city's past, I hereby declare the William Evans Memorial Park open for recreating." The scissors failed in their first attempt to cut the four inch ribbon, resulting in some good laughs and with their success a round applause erupted.

The mine made off well with the sale of their gold, and the map found within one of the bags gave them renewed hopes that Brock's vein might yield even more gold. The park coalition was off to a good start. Trail work had already begun, and the Gregson brothers donated the obelisk that now stood twenty-seven paces east of the tree Willie Evans had carved his initials in over 150 years ago.