



The Devil's Daughter

By Cindy K. Sproles

Diana Flegal – Agent
Hartline Literary Agency
diana@hartlineliterary.com

The Devil's Daughter

The Appalachian Novel Series

By Cindy K. Sproles

Represented by:

Diana Flegal
Hartline Literary Agency, LLC
123 Queenston Drive
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15235
(412) 915-1790
Diana@hartlineliterary.com

The Devil's Daughter

The mark of the devil colored Lochiel Ogle's cheek and eye. Snatched from the arms of her momma at birth, she was tossed out to die. Left for dead, she defies the prejudice of those who judge her by her mark. When she sets out to find her birth mother, Lochiel finds more than she bargained for and becomes what no one else can see – beautiful despite the odds.

Short Synopsis

Lochiel Ogle had no choice but to call them family. Bad as they were, this family was better than the one who left her to die as an infant. She bore the reddish mark of the devil on her face and Lochiel is determined to rise above mountain lore to discover who she really is. Abandoned again, she crosses paths with a man who leads her to her birthmother and teaches her that beauty is internal, and compassion and love cover a multitude of pain.

100 Word Synopsis

A thief, a swindler, and a liar. A body can't say much about them choices when you call them family. It is what it is. And they was blinded, mindless to her. Especially since she was one that bore the mark of the devil. But even this family was better than the one cruel enough to toss her into the wild as an infant. Lochiel Ogle was sentenced to hell because of a purple scarin' on her face. Called the devil's daughter, she was lucky to be alive at all. Abandoned, Lochiel makes the decision to be the opposite of what people think. As she searches for her birth mother and the truth, Lochiel wades through a mire of hate and prejudice in search of true compassion and love and yet, she chooses to be kind despite those who despise her.

The Devil's Daughter

The Appalachian Novel Series

by Cindy K. Sproles



Optional Title: Mark on the Mountain

Word Count: 85,000 words

Manuscript Status: Complete in 3 months

Genre: Historical Appalachian Fiction

Book 2 of 3: Book 1 – Mercy's Rain, Book 2 – All Momma's Children, Book 3- Coal Black Lies

LOCHIEL OGLE was born with the mark of the devil. Mountain folks feared her because of the reddish birthmark that covered her cheek and eye. Raised by a family who neither hated her nor loved her, Lochiel was free labor and was continually reminded of her status – the devil's daughter, hidden away and mocked.

When her stepbrother, **GERALD OGLE** attacks her and leaves her for dead, an elderly man, **WALTON GRUBBS** befriends Lochiel. Part Cherokee Indian and called a half-breed all his life, Walton understands the hardship Lochiel faces when marked as different. He leads her on a path to discover whom she is and guides her from a distance through a journey to find her birthmother and the truth – she was not tossed out to die, rather stolen from her mother after birth.

With Walton's help Lochiel learns her real name, Isabella, and that it means *beautiful*. He teaches her what it means to be compassionate and forgiving, showing her that beauty is not external but a choice that is made internally – and that when the choice is genuine, people no longer see the marks that mar her features. Walton introduces Isabella to a young man, who is missing an arm, **TERRANCE JOHNSON**, and together the two realize that the kindness is a choice and the kindness and grace of God cover a multitude of sin and pain.

The Devil's Daughter is the second in a series alongside *Mercy's Rain*. This epic tale set deep the Appalachian Mountains in the late 1800's teaches us that beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder and grace covers it all.



Cindy K. Sproles is the cofounder of Christian Devotions Ministries. She is the author of *Mercy's Rain* and is a popular speaker for women's conferences and a teacher at writer conferences across the U. S. Cindy is the editor of ChristianDevotions.us, a regular contributor to [Common Ground Christian News](http://CommonGroundChristianNews.com), and CBN.com. Cindy has a B.A. in Business and Journalism. She lives in the mountains of East Tennessee with her family.

The Devil's Daughter

The Appalachian Novel Series

By Cindy K. Sproles



Synopsis

LOCHIEL OGLE is born with the mark of the devil. Her face, half-covered by a deep reddish birthmark, cause the mountain folk to fear her, calling her the devil's daughter. **MOMMA AND POPPY OGLE**, who neither hate her nor love her, raise her and use her as free labor while reminding Lochiel her mother tossed her out to die.

Lochiel's life, at 19, takes a turn when her stepbrother begins to bully her, insisting, because of her birthmark, she can call the up the devil when she gets angry. Lochiel hits her brother, **GERALD**, with a tree branch knocking the wind out of him. He threatens to make her pay. Lochiel fires back she will kill him if he tries to hurt her. She turns to walk away and Gerald hits her in the head with a rock, knocking her unconscious.

When Lochiel wakes, she's alone on the mountain summit. Injured, she calls out to Poppy. No answer. An elderly man, **WALTON GRUBBS**, steps out of the woods to help her. Lochiel can't understand why, Walton doesn't run in fear seeing she has "the mark." When she questions him, he explains it's not his place to judge her by her appearance and tells her they are alike. His father was white and his mother, Cherokee – he's called a half-breed. He feeds Lochiel, builds her a good fire, and prepares her for the storm rising over the mountain. He hints to her that he knows her past.

The next morning Lochiel heads across the ridge toward Thunder Mountain and the little town of Gap Creek. Socially awkward because she's been hidden away most of her 19 years, she's unsure how to approach the people. Walton continues guiding her and teaching her. Lochiel finds that Walton, the mountain peddler, knows most all the folks on the mountain and understands how the residents fear her. He knows the hidden past even Lochiel doesn't know and he makes it his mission to help her seek out her birth mother. Being born with the mark of the devil was a rarity, and unsure of where she will live, her journey begins. She encounters a group of hunters and when Lochiel's mark is exposed by accident the men see her as an asset and take her prisoner with the plan use her as a pawn to take the mountain people hostage and steal their land by telling them the "Devil's Daughter" will curse them if they fail to comply.

The men threaten several mountain families and when one family, who nurses a sick daughter, finds the child dead, they are convinced Lochiel, the devil's daughter, has sucked the life from her. The men, now afraid of Lochiel, take her to the river to drown her. Walton prevents her

death. He takes Lochiel across the mountain to an old woman whom he claims, remembers the birth of a child with the mark of the devil. He teaches her who God is and her beauty is inner – the external doesn't matter. He convinces her the label "Devil's Daughter" is simply a wives tale, spun from ignorance and misunderstanding. He teaches her anyone can take on the name devil simply by their actions, but when you do good, choose kindness, and love, people hardly notice the exterior, instead they see the real beauty of the person.

The hunters run into Gearld, and Poppy and tell them about this woman who was said to have sucked the life from a little girl. When the Ogles realize it is Lochiel, they threaten the hunters until they tell them where Walton took her. Gerald, disappointed Lochiel did not die when he left her on the mountain summit, finds she is with Walton who knows all the secrets of the mountain people. Afraid Walton will help Lochiel discover her past, he is determined to hunt her down and kill her. He rallies the mountain men, telling them Lochiel must die before she curses them all. He reassures them it was her fault the sick child died. A posse sets out to hunt Lochiel and Walton down.

Walton and Lochiel arrive at the old woman's house who tells them the story of helping a young mother through childbirth. When the baby girl was born she was marked and woman, afraid, ran to get the pastor. When she returned she saw a man leaving the house of the girl's mother carrying a burlap bag. The woman was unconscious and the child gone. The old woman talked of how this child's mother, **Cora** hunted relentlessly but never found the baby. She feared the child was murdered. The old woman offers Lochiel shelter in a broken down shack up the mountain and Walton begins to find a way to clear Lochiel's name while they search for her mother.

Gerald and the posse catch up to the old woman and try to force her into telling them where Lochiel is. The woman refuses to tell them, and when she finds out these men are calling themselves Lochiel's brothers and father, she realizes that Poppy was the one to take the child. When she calls him out, Gerald kills her to keep the secret.

Walton and Lochiel make their way to Thunder Mountain where they meet up with **TERRANCE JOHNSON**, a man who lost his arm in a sawmill accident. Terrance hides Lochiel and Walton in hopes the posse will not find them. but as Lochiel is cutting wood she finds a small child, injured. She take in the child, cleans his wounds, and begins to care for him while Walton and Terrence head into Etowah to try and locate the child's parents. While they are gone the child's mother comes. She fears Lochiel and when Lochiel looks around the woman takes her son runs.

The posse, led by Gerald, finds Lochiel and drag her to the river. Gerald gives Lochiel a knife and tells her to kill herself. If she kills herself her death is on her hands not his. When she refuses, Gerald shows her Walton, bound with ropes and being pulled into the rush of the river. Gerald tells her to choose – Walton or her own life, and when Lochiel tries to help Walton, Gerald's men turn him lose into the rush of the river. Lochiel can't get to him before he's washed down river and drowned. In a rage, she fights her way from the river. A fight ensues and just as Gerald pins Lochiel to the ground and lifts the knife to kill her, Terrance and a woman rush from the woods. The woman cocks her rifle, takes aim, and shoots Gerald. Terrance follows behind

bringing several of the mountain men with him. The posse scatters. The woman, Lochiel's biological mother, found by Terrance, goes to comfort Lochiel.

With Gerald dead, Poppy surrenders to the Sheriff. Some of the mountain people round up Momma Ogle and take her and Poppy to Gap Creek for trial. The woman introduces herself as **CORA MURRAY**, Lochiel's birthmother. She tells Lochiel she was stolen from birth and that she has been looking for her for years. Terrance, Cora, and Lochiel go back to Terrance's homestead where Cora tells Lochiel her birth name is Isabella and that it means "beauty."

Lochiel takes on her birth name and makes a decision to live up to the name's meaning. When she's called to the sheriff's office to tell her side of the story about Poppy and Momma, she pleads for their freedom. When the sheriff agrees to free them they want to know why she would not be vengeful. Lochiel, now Isabella, tells them stealing her from her mother at birth was wrong, but that she wants to be better. She tells them kindness and inner beauty are a choice and she vows to be the face of goodness to others. Isabella promises to show people the mark of goodness in her heart, not the mark on her face.

The story ends with Isabella and Terrance, both with physical afflictions, growing to know one another and choosing to rise above what others think. They eventually begin to build a life together. They are able to bury Walton and honor him by growing closer to God and letting others see His face through their kindness and generosity.

Characters:

- Lochiel Ogle (aka Isabella) Nineteen-year-old girl with the mark of the devil
- Momma and Poppy Ogle Abductors who raised Lochiel
- Gerald Ogle Step-brother
- Walton Grubbs Elderly man who helps Lochiel
- Terrance Johnson Farmer who steps in to help Lochiel find her mother
- Cora Murray Lochiel's birth mother

Intended Audience

Though this will be read primarily by adult women who enjoy deep stories of self-discovery and overcoming physical hardships. Men will find this book edgy and captivating. This novel will be a success with book clubs, women who love historical fiction and study groups who delve into mystery, abuse, vengeance, and repentance.

Comparison and Marketability

The Devil's Daughter, the follow up to *Mercy's Rain* is highly marketable to adult men and women who enjoy stories of self-discovery and overcoming physical hardships with true-life resolution. Women who love historical fiction, book clubs and study groups who delve into inner beauty and being the example of Christ when others look at their lives. Similar success is found in the conversational style and story of redemption found in books such as *Mercy's Rain* by this author (Kregel), *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café* by Fannie Flagg (Ballantine Books). The mixture of theology and imagination found in William Paul Young's, *The Last Sin Eater* (Tyndale House Publishers) and the universal experience of pain, sadness, love and happiness found in the classic *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston (Harper Perennial Modern Classics) or in the flavor of Alex Haley's *Roots*. This novel emulates the transformation of the protagonist spiritually and physically as in *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier (Grove Press) and it takes the memoir quality found in *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCort (Scribner; 1st Touchstone Ed., 1999 edition) transcending the reader to a new place.

★ Groups who work with families who experience disabilities, or physical deformities, will find this story of forgiveness an excellent “go to” for the discovery of hidden emotion and healing.

★ Through talks to women's group, classes, youth groups and civic clubs, plus teaching at home school events and writing conferences, the author of *All Momma's Children* has the ability to develop a large speaking platform in support of this book.

★ Through her devotions and articles in *Common Ground Christian News* and on CBN.com, DevoKids.com, and ChristianDevotions.us, InspireaFire.com, AWSA, and CAN the author has the ability to tap into a wide range of media outlets for the promotion of this book.

★ Upon publication, the author can reach over 2,000 readers through an extensive subscriber-based email list, several hundred through women's retreats and conferences, 20,000+ readers through her non-fiction print book and newspaper articles, 30,000 through her on-line columns and over 90,000 listeners on her weekly radio show. The author will also promote and sell her book at scheduled speaking engagements as well as utilize her website and networking connections through a large Facebook following and Twitter.

★ The author will capitalize on National Disability Awareness month by contacting agencies and scheduling speaking engagements.

Website Promotions

- Create a web presence and Facebook page for the book.
- Register the website with top 30 Search Engines.
- Secure web links back to website from over 1000 affiliated sites, thus driving key word search engine traffic to the Website.
- Provide sample pages for readers to review.
- Include endorsements from other prominent authors within the Christian publishing industry.
- Announce the release of the book to a target list of readers familiar with the authors' writing.
- Contact 3000 book clubs across the country with material introducing the book
- Offer a free monthly electronic newsletter to anyone who visits the site. Newsletter content will include samples from the book, writing tips for kids, audio readings, and a reminder they can still purchase the book.
- Create and sell merchandise with the name of the book on the website.
- Offer contests with real prizes for the winners.
- Swap display ads with other Websites featuring books, writers, authors, etc.
- Advertise on DevoKids.com, The Vessel Project, and ChristianDevotions.us (over 10,000 visitors each month) and Christian Devotions Speak UP! Radio show (90,000 listeners and two syndications through other outlets).
- Hold online author chats.
- Participate in virtual book readings and signings.
- Develop a blog tour that will cross the country within three months of the book's release
- Include a blog feature on the Website that encourages reader's comments of how the book has impacted them.
- Develop a "press room" on the site where media reps can visit and see relevant info, including a book review, author bio, FAQ's, etc.
- Become a Sponsor of the "I Love To Write Day" e-newsletter (30,000 subscribers).

Media Promotions

- Secure advertising in all six *Common Ground Christian News* (circulation 20,000), plus, the *Tri-County News* (circulation 10,000); Local and regional daily newspapers and weekenders (circulation 70,000).
- Send press releases to local and regional media outlets.
- Send press releases to newspapers featuring book reviews.
- Send press releases to local and regional Christian organizations, civic groups and writers groups.
- Create an "author interview" blurb and send to programming directors at radio stations that feature author interviews.

- Send press releases to relevant print, broadcast and online outlets that feature articles about books and author interviews.
- Make and distribute a book trailer for posting on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, GodTube and other video sites.
- Do television interviews, radio interviews and

Library Promotions

- Send press releases to local and regional libraries.
- Visit local and regional libraries; offer to hold a presentation about the book.

Personal Appearances

- Contact schools, churches, and bookstores within a 50-mile radius and offer to do a book signing and presentation.
- Contact local churches, writers groups, civic groups, and professional groups who deal with disabilities and offer to do an author presentation to small groups and classes.
- Teach at local, regional, and national conferences. Back of the room sales included at each event

Miscellaneous Promotions

- Mail a postcard, with book cover art on one side, to family members, friends, business associates, etc. The other side will be a request for them to share the information with at least 5 friends, and information on how to order the book.
- Contact local stores (other than bookstores) and ask them to carry the book. Be available for a book signing, author presentation, etc. My local retailer has sold 400 copies of Mercy's Rain.
- Offer copies of the book as prizes for various contests.
- Create a magnetic sign that features the name of the book and the Website, and attach it to all vehicles owned by the author.
- Contact local Chamber of Commerce, Lion's Club and other service organizations and offer to be a guest speaker at an upcoming event.
- Create a "sell sheet" and e-mail to top 50 Independent Bookstores.
- Participate in local and regional book fairs and festivals like, Book'em, Book Lover's Affair, For the Love of Books, etc.
- Author will promote this book during National Disabilities Awareness week to help bring awareness to physical disabilities and deformities.

Note:

Hartline Literary Agency now enhances the platform, marketing strategies and the building of name identification of all their clients. In-house publicist and marketing adviser, Jennifer Hudson Taylor is a long-time career publicist, working with Hartline authors advising them on marketing and promotion in addition to or in cooperation with the efforts of the publisher.

What Others are Saying about Cindy's Writing

"Cindy Sproles writes an authentic Appalachian tale of grit and mercy. Her voice is lovely, her story captivating. Cindy Sproles is an author to watch."

--Gina Holmes, Best selling and award-winning author of *Crossing Oceans & Dry as Rain*

"I was blown away by Cindy Sproles' *Mercy's Rain*. There are two things I look for in a good story: unique, interesting characters I come to care about and an author's ability to transport me to the time and location of the story. Cindy achieves both and makes it seem effortless. Her prose is fresh and captivating, the kind you want to take your time with and savor. And the characters she's created come to life and hang around in your head long after you've finished reading. I'll definitely be looking for more from her."

--Mike Dellosso, author of *Darkness Follows, Darlington Woods, Scream, and The Hunted*

"Author, Cindy Sproles, takes the concept of Mercy and crafts an unforgettable story. Her authentic Appalachian voice rings with simplicity and sincerity, as she explores issues as relevant to today's reader as those of yesteryear."

--Edie Melson, co-director of the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference and author of *Fighting Fear: Winning the War at Home When Your Soldier Leaves for Battle*

"At once chilling and compelling in its honest portrayal of 19th-century mountain life, *Mercy's Rain* is a beautifully written story of man's depravity and God's mercy. Its pages are filled with memorable characters and gripping scenes, and at its heart is a message you won't soon forget."

--Ann Tatlock, Christy award-winner and author of *Promises to Keep*

"Cindy Sproles is a beloved public speaker who focuses on matters of faith. Now, she writes of the Appalachians and its people with sensitivity and devotion. This labor of love is Cindy's opus. Cindy writes from the heart about the people she knows, in the place where she lives, all on journeys of faith and ultimately redemption."

~Adriana Trigiani, New York Times best-selling author, *Big Stone Gap* and *Big Cherry Holler*

Like Francine Rivers's *Redeeming Love*, *Mercy's Rain* is a story of betrayal and suffering and a woman-child's anger facing the world as a means of survival. It is a story of one man's use of the word of God to damage and distort, and another man's expression of God's love and grace and, yes, mercy beyond measure. Don't let the hardness of Mercy Roller's life stop you; read to find the hope at the end." ~ *Jane Kirkpatrick, best-selling author of *A Light in the Wilderness**

Sample Chapters

Summer's Mountain, 1893

One

“Come on, Devil’s Daughter. Let me see that demon.” Gerald bumped my shoulder as he walked past. That did it for me. All my anger unleashed. I took hold of his coat and whirled him around. He grimaced from the pain. A groan seeped from his lips. My finger went into his face. I gritted my teeth and huffed.

“You try it. Just try it. You try your best to get even.” They was no way to harness my squalls at Gerald. Years worth of anger bellowed out of me. Despite the fact he was my kinfolk, a brother of sorts. . .I hated him. And if I could have called up the devil – I woulda.

“And you’ll do what?” He squirmed to break my grip.

“You better take heed, Gerald Ogle. My best advice to you is to sleep with one eye open. Cause Momma has a skillet that will crush your skull. You understand me? This ends here. I *will* kill you. I promise.”

Gerald spit.

I turned to walk away.

“Lochiel!” Gerald hollered. His voice rumbled like a grizzly.

I stopped.

“Turn around and let me see that devil one more time.”

One, two, three. Walk away Lochiel Ogle. Just walk away. But I couldn't. I never was one to listen to anyone, much less myself.

“Come on. Turn around devil girl.”

I spun around on my heels. All I saw was a rock the size of a melon as it smashed into the side of my head. My knees grew weak and a curtain of darkness slowly covered my eyes. I felt my head droop to my chest and the cold bite of the winter snow.

The breeze cut across the gap sendin' a chill through me. But that's the way it is on the mountain unless you're lucky enough to be on the side that turns its back to the wind. Them hills can shelter a body, or open 'em up to be froze solid. I fingered at the spotty portions of ankle-deep snow. *Another month 'til spring.* The clouds hung heavy. I remember Poppy tellin' me these mountains was called Smoky for a reason. On mornin's like today, a body could look across the pass and see smoky mist of clouds rising so thick you could scratch lines in them.

I raised myself up enough to rest on my elbows. Overhead hung a boulder just wide enough to shelter me. A small fire smoldered at my feet. My jaw ached and my eye was swelled shut.

I knew from the time I was a youngin' this mark – this purplish-red mark that covered my cheek and neck, would be my death. I just didn't think it would come so soon.

He'd marked me. Least ways that what Poppy and Momma told me. Satan burned his mark on me and that led folks to call me the Devil's Daughter. It was enough to make them run away at one glimpse of me.

“You shoulda died. Shoulda been kilt.” Momma never seemed to hesitate when she reminded me I was a stray picked up outta the woods by Poppy. Left there to die by my real momma. I reckon she was right proud of ownin’ a freak . . . a workhorse.

My head throbbed and even with the cold, a trickle of blood dripped over the marked cheek. Funny, blood wouldn’t never clot over that mark. Was it really the heat of hell that seeped from it? Or was I really a child of the devil?

“Poppy? Poppy, where are you?” My voice echoed off the summit. The only sound was the wind whipping and dancing around the ledge, whistling an eery melody.

“Poppypy!” Nothing. *Where am I?*

I crawled to my feet. Not a soul in sight. Nothin’ but the tips of the summits lifting like fingers through the foggy mist. “Poppypy! You surely ain’t brought me up here to die. . .*die*. . .*die...di...*” The echo went on for an eternity.

“Aaaaaghhhhhhh! What kind of man are you? What kind of family are you? You pick up an infant, marked like me. Raise her, then abandon her again?” I tightened my fists and beat them against the rock ledge. The pain in my chest felt like someone had gouged a knife in and ripped me clean down the middle.

Momma used to say a body’s heart thumps in their chest, but the real heart of a person was in their spirit. And my spirit was broke. Shattered. I was forced to grow up ashamed. And Momma never hesitated to remind me of the ugly reddish mark that trailed down the side of my face. Now I know better and I couldn’t say which pained me the most – the side of my head Gerald smashed with a rock or the love that wasn’t real.

“You oughta be grateful Poppy saved you. You shoulda been destroyed. Killed before you had a chance to hex a soul. So you atone for your sins that rise up from hell and you pray hard the Devil hisself don’t come lookin’ for you. ‘Cause from the day you was born, your soul belonged to the Devil. He done marked you as his.” Momma’s words dug into my soul like a dog diggin’ at the ground for a rat.

Fear crawled under my covers at night and nearly took my breath while I waited for Satan to slither into my loft and eat my soul . . . lay claim to me like a miner stakin’ out his territory.

I scooped a handful of snow and pressed it into an icy ball. *Cover my eye or bite into it?* I was thirsty so I bit. The wet of the water tasted good. Despite the cold, I sweated under my heavy coat.

A neat pile of sticks and arm-sized branches lay to one side of the tiny fire. Shoved into the crevice of the rock overhang, was a bag. I wanted to cry, but considerin’ the cold, I decided it was best to keep my eyes dry. On the ground, a set of tracks, boots bigger than my feet. I figured Poppy or Gerald hauled me up here to die, but at the last minute the somethin’ must’a tugged at their conscience, forcin’ them to show me an ounce of mercy by building a fire.

I pressed my hand over my eyes and shaded the low hanging sun. *If I could just get my bearings’. Figure out where the sun sat in the sky. I could get a good idea what time it was.*

“Looks to be close to noon.” A voice boomed from behind a stand of trees. I jumped like a scared cat. They was no words that come to me as a tall, lanky, man stepped into sight, his arms filled with firewood. He leaned to one side and spit a stream of amber juice as long as his arm.

“Cat got your tongue?” He dropped wood and untied a dead rabbit from his belt. “Good to see you’re up and about.”

I stared as he worked his way around the fire, jabbing sticks into the gaps between the logs.

“You was out for the better part of the day. I was beginnin’ to figure you wouldn’t never come round.” He heaved on a large log and placed it in the center of the flame. Embers jumped toward the greyish sky. The fire commenced to gnaw at the bark, sparking and rising high enough to warm my hands. “We need to build this fire up. Get plenty of hot coals to last when night falls.”

I watched as he took hold of a branch and brushed away the snow. “Don’t just stand there staring. Help clear the snow so the ground will heat and dry a bit. Lest you wanna be sleeping on a froze ground.”

The ground was spotty with snow. Not solid – and the midday the sun teased us with just enough warmth to fool us. But when night hits, the cold’ll creep up on you, and chill a body to the bone.

“I see you and your brother had a brawl.” The man didn’t bother to tell me his name and he made no mention of my mark.

“You know me? And how’d you know me and Gerald brawled?”

“I know of you. Whole mountain knows the legend. A family hexed by the devil to raise his child.”

“I ain’t the devil’s daughter.”

“I know that. But the mountain folk are easily taken in.”

I walked toward the man, and when he turned we stood toe to toe. “I said, I ain’t no devil’s daughter.”

“And I said, I know.” He paid me no real mind, so I eased closer and started to kick a path around the fire.

“Hey now. Kick that snow away from the fire unless you want to rebuild what you wet down and put out.”

In all my days, I’d never known anybody outside my own family, who didn’t take one look at the horrible mark on my face and neck, then hightail it away. The fact this man paid me no mind, made me suspicious.

“You ain’t screamed and run from me yet. How come?” I blew warm air across my numb fingers.

The man pushed his hat back. His smile seemed as warm as the fire. “Well, I reckon everybody has a story.” He tinkered with a stick in the fire. “Ain’t my place to judge. Least ways that’s what my momma always taught us youngins’. I figure every soul deserves a fair treatin’.”

I stepped closer. “You ain’t blind are you? I mean you can see this here mark that plagues me?”

“Yeah. My eyes is pretty crisp. I can spot a doe huddled in a thicket.” He commenced to clear away the snow and lay down a bed of brush. “This will make you a warm nest for the night

and we'll pray to the good Lord for rain and not snow." He pointed toward the black cloud that hovered over the summit.

Trust him or not? A stranger. I didn't know him from a hole in wall. He coulda been a bootlegger for all I knew. A murderer. Rustler. Poppy warned me against strangers. Especially harborin' this mark and all. He said they'd just as soon slaughter me than to wait for me to conjure up the devil.

"You got a name?" He asked.

I pressed a handful of snow against my swollen eye. "I reckon I can ask you the same question. But seein' as how you know all about me, I figure you already know my name."

"I reckon you got me figured, now don't you?" He nodded as he stirred the fire and added a new log. "Fair enough, Miss Lochiel. Name's Walton Grubbs. I live across the gap."

"I figured as much. Seein' as you know 'the legend'." I shook my head. "Walton, heh? And I thought my momma named me something wicked." A smile parsed my lips.

The man stuffed a new wad of tobacco between his lip and jaw. He chuckled then and spit.

"Let me hear you say your name. I wanna know how to say it."

I snugged my coat around my neck. "Low-kill. You got it? Lochiel."

"Maybe it's best we change the subject."

"You think it's a rancid name too?"

“Ain’t got no meanin’. Lochiel. It’s made up.”

That was the slap in the face. The reality that woke me up from my nativity. A woman, bearin’ the mark of the devil and harborin’ a name with no meaning. I was dirtier than dirt, less than nothin’ – I was nobody.

TWO

He pointed his finger at my face. The skin around his nails was cracked and rough from hard work. “You know, they is a lot in a body’s name. It sets you in life. My momma is part Cherokee and so she give me the Indian name, Blue Water. Means free movin’. So I reckon my name set me in life, bein’ as I’m a peddler and all.”

“Your momma is Cherokee?”

“Part. Her momma was took advantage of by a Confederate soldier. That made my momma a half-breed. And so it’s passed on. Been called a half-breed the biggest part of my life. But seein’ as I carry a wagon of goods, ain’t many folks who turn me away. But you, on the other hand. You got a mark to contend with.”

I dusted the snow from a rock then kicked the powder from my boots. “Well, it didn’t take long for you to remind me. Now did it?” I huffed in deep breath of warm air from the fire. “I’ve heard Poppy talk about half-breeds. You don’t look no different.”

“Blood that runs through the veins is still blood. It’s the men that make it different. I reckon you know about bein’ different though. Don’t you?”

“How do ya figure that? People call you the devil too?”

Walton went to slingin’ his head from side to side. “Lordy, no. Ain’t no body never called me a devil, ‘cept maybe my brother when I poked at him as a kid.”

I leaned toward the fire facing my palms near the warmth of the flame. “Then I ain’t seein’ no likeness betwixt the two of us.”

He cocked his head and sighed a long sign. “If you have to know, the Cherokee ain’t exactly the ripe pick for a neighbor. I was raised bein’ called half-breed. With a name like Blue Water, a body can’t exactly hide from who they are. That’s why I took on Walton. Folks can’t tag on me like a deer.”

I hung my head and remembered cryin’ as Momma, Poppy, and the boys climbed into the wagon to ride into Etowah. Poppy tied a rope around my waist and then to the porch post so I couldn’t wander off.

“You stay close to the cabin. This here rope is long enough for you get to the outhouse and water trough. You can get in the house and close and bar the door. You’ll be safe tied to the house. Momma made you biscuits. You’ll be fine. And you remember this is for your own good. People won’t take to you bearin’ that mark.”

I’d sob into my hands and beller like a calf, but Poppy’d just press his finger against my mouth and shush me. I remember him sayin’, “Now, Lochiel. You get in that house. And remember, they is folks who has things a lot worse than you. You remember that. You got shelter, clothes, and food.” Like that really was enough. *What about puttin’ your arms around a child and showin’ her some love.*

I felt ashamed feelin' sorry for myself.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Walton. I didn't know."

"And now that you do, does it change your mind about me?" He tossed me a chunk of hard bread.

"Of course not. I mean I don't know you, but what little I've met, you seem to be kind. You helped me. And I'm a stranger."

He ran his finger between his gum and jaw and scraped out the chaw of tobacco at the edge of the fire. The coals sizzled as they ate the damp spit.

"There you have it. I think no less of you because of that mark on your face. We are alike."

Walton was right. My name had no meaning. And if it was one thing that was true amongst the mountain people, it was givin' their youngin's names that held some meaning. After all, Momma gave Gerald his name 'cause he come out of the womb demanding to be king. He was a thorn – a spear in everybody's side. But my name . . . was meaningless. *Lochiel. Empty. Lost. Nothing.* It was like Momma just walked out on the mountain and made up a word to call me.

I sat there chewing on the bread, starin' into the flame. And for a minute I felt like a person who had some worth. This man's kindness was honest.

Walton cleaned the rabbit carcass and hung it on a stick over the flame. The scent of fresh cooked meat made my mouth water. In my life, I'd had very little meat. Momma fed that to the

boys. I got taters, kale, and bread. Walton grabbed his knife and swiped it clean against his trousers then in one swift motion, he split the rabbit meat in half.

“Here.” He handed me the stick with my portion. “You need to eat. See them clouds over the ridge?”

I nodded.

“Looks like rain. Body would have figured for more snow, but them is black clouds. Spring’s easin’ over mountain. We need to get us some shelter set before the rain comes.”

So we ate. Said little. Then commenced to burrow out a spot deep under the rock’s overhang. Walton carried hot coals under the ledge and started a second fire.

“You spread your blanket over your wood so it stays dry. Lay on that. You’ll need it once it starts to rain.”

“Where are you goin’ rest?” I asked.

“Oh, you don’t worry about me. I got me a camp just down the mountain a bit.”

“You’re leavin’ me here alone?”

Walton smiled. “Miss Lochiel. You listen good to me. We ain’t never alone. That’s a promise the Good Lord made us. We ain’t never alone.”

I wasn’t sure what he meant by that ‘cause I was always alone. Just like back at the house when Poppy and Momma left me.

“Can I ask you a question?”

He poured me an extra cup of coffee into a leather water pouch. “Keep that close to the fire and it’ll stay warm.” He stacked extra wood under the ledge and gave me an extra blanket and a knife.

I watched as he packed up to do what ever body I’d ever known had done. Leave.

“Cat got your tongue? Thought you had a question.”

I stuttered from a chill in the air. “Where will I go?”

He leaned against the rock and shoved his hat to the back of his head. He rubbed his chin with his finger. “You start here.” He lifted his hand and pointed over the mountain. “Then go to there. But you never stop until you find what feels like home. My best guess is, you’ll know it when you find it.”

Walton handed me the rest of his bread. “Stay up under here till the rain passes. That second flame has warmed the cliff rocks so that should keep you snug as a bug in a rug.”

He knelt at my feet. “Lord, I ask for your protection over this young woman. Guide her to the name you have give her. One that has meanin’.”

“Who are you talkin’ too?” I touched his shoulder and he raised his head.

“You’ll learn. I figure you for a smart youngin.’ You’ll cypher till you put your finger on it. But I’ll tell you this. My momma always told me God is a person you find. But for Him . . .He’s already found you. Walton Grubbs prays over ever thang. And you best get to figurin’ ‘cuz you’re gonna need the help of the good Lord.” He stood and brushed his knee with his hat.

I'd never heard anyone pray before, especially not over me. And I never heard nobody talk about the good Lord. All Momma ever talked about was how the devil would get me. But in the few short hours I'd known Walton Grubbs, I'd been cared about more, than I had been, in all my nineteen years.

I reckon I'll have to start cypherin'. But it's hard to sort through what you ain't got no knowledge of.

“Since you seem to know it all. You reckon Gerald and Poppy think I'm dead? Or do you think I outta sleep with one eye open?” They was no answer. Walton kept stacking wood and feeding the fire.

“Figures.” I said as I kicked at the fire. A howl echoed off the summit. One long woo wooooo. Then in seconds, a second howl, and a third. The sun had set and the wolves had commenced to call to the wind. A crack of lightening lit up the mountain and I could see the outline of the wolf standing, head arched, and nose to the sky, howlin'. . .callin' out to the pack. Waitin' for me to close my eyes.

A cold wind rushed around the side of the bluff causing the flame of the fire to flicker. I tossed on another log and watched as the flames licked at the bark. I pulled the extra blanket tight around my shoulders.

“I reckon, you was smarter than I figured. The rocks are warm from the fire.”

“Yep, well, my momma raised a wise old bird. Now you get you some rest.”

Over the mountain, the clouds bumped and rumbled. Drops of rain commenced to fall, and when I turned to say thank you . . . Walton was gone. I was, once again, banged up and alone.