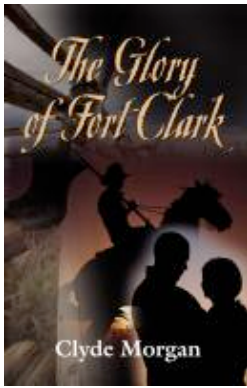


The background of the cover is a silhouette of a cowboy on a horse, set against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. A large, weathered wooden post is visible on the left side of the image. The title is written in a large, elegant, cursive script across the upper portion of the image.

The Glory of Fort Clark

Clyde Morgan



The young lives of Yolanda, nurse at Fort Clark, and Ignacio of Mexico intertwine with Cavalrymen of Fort Clark and area citizens at the close of the Civil War. Action, adventure, and love between Ignacio and Yolanda abound in the presence of violent adversaries, extreme hardships, and almost impossible odds. Truth and virtue triumph in the midst of a wild country where evil reigns.

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**THE GLORY OF FORT
CLARK**

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Second Edition

THE GLORY OF FORT CLARK

Clyde Morgan

I dedicate this story to the English Department of Abilene Christian University, and express my gratitude to the late Miss Jewel Watson, past Head of the English Department and Professor of English Literature at Abilene Christian College. Dr. Watson came within a nano particle of swaying me to major in English. Her heartfelt encouragement inspires me to continue the habit of reading and writing every day.

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I am indebted to Don Bedichek, English professor, St. Louis, Missouri, for his persistent encouragement and editing.

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SCENE ONE

LOST HOPE

She feels as if she is swathed tightly with the ranch's lassos, and is powerless to free herself from the poverty she knows as the daughter of a vaquero. Her desire to become a nurse and have her own family seems to be only a childhood dream. All day and all night the stench of spoiled meat in the fly trap saturates the air, and the incessant noise of the buzzing wings of the trapped blow flies breaks the stillness of the air from dawn until dusk. This is the home she knows, that of the vaquero's family living in a log cabin standing on a knoll back of the main ranch house, out past the corrals and the fly trap.

Drenching rains flood the low lands along the nearby rapidly rising Guajolote Creek. Her father works at a harried pace driving cattle from the creek pasture to higher ground. At noon he comes to the cabin tuckered out. He awakens from his usual afternoon siesta, to come face to face with his only child.

Thinking he will not rush out into the rainstorm, she grabs the moment and blurts out, "Papa, I want to become a nurse. If I stay home much longer, I'll be an old maid. I am like the flies caught in the trap. I am going to be here until I die."

"Yolanda, we have no money to pay for your schooling. You know it is impossible." But to stall for time in which to make up his mind on how to fully respond without discouraging her, Flores adds, "As soon as I treat a wormy calf, I will come back

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and we can talk.” By conveying his willingness to listen, he gives Yolanda a glimmer of hope.

Flores, a lean tall man and a native Texan, fetches his raincoat from hanging on a wooden wall peg near the door, and rams his arms into its sleeves, first the right and then the left. As he rushes out, a wind gust catches the door behind him, whips it from his hand and slams it shut. Large blowing rain drops pepper straight into his face. For better protection, he pulls his sombrero straight down on his head until both ears jut straight out. He tightly pulls the hat strings beneath his chin and ties them with the string-button pulled snugly beneath his chin.

Sloshing through mud, he leans into the harsh wind to hold his balance, and heads straight for the barn where he jerks open the partially stuck barn door. He reaches above his head to the top shelf of a cabinet for a can of worm-killer, and shoves it into his right coat pocket.

Once in the pen with the newborn calf, he ropes it on the first try, throws it down, and ties its legs together to keep it from kicking him, all as quickly as if he is practicing to participate in a rodeo.

White clusters of blow fly eggs surround the raw edges of a malodorous navel wound consisting of maggots burrowing their individual holes deep into the flesh. Flores double floods the wound with worm-killer and palms his right hand over the wound to keep the rain from diluting it. Once the biggest screw-worms stop wiggling, he uses the point of the long blade of his pocket knife to rake the dead worms out one by one, and scrapes away the blow fly eggs.

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After leading the calf through a gate to an adjacent holding trap, he briskly slaps it on the rump, saying, "Go find your mother."

Flores holds his head bent downward to shelter his eyes from the harsh blowing rain. The front brim of his sombrero obstructs his vision straight ahead. He fails to see the ranch's fierce man hating longhorn bull nearby. Upon planting his feet firmly in the mud and tugging at the end of the corral gate to close it, he suddenly senses the bull is charging him.

Attempting to jump back into the pen, both feet slip from under him. He hits the ground with a loud mud splattering thud, face-down near the end of the open gate.

Yolanda, anxious for her father to return, is watching through the kitchen window. Upon seeing the bull lower its head to make a wild charge toward her father, she races to the cow pen screaming, "Papa, Papa," and finds him lifeless and limply crumpled against the end of the gate. Throwing her hands over her eyes, she screams, and blames herself, saying, "God, it is my fault. Papa rushed because of me. Please forgive me."

She grabs hold of the wet handles of a nearby wheelbarrow used for hauling stove-wood, and dumps the wood and water out. Terrified for her father's life she single handedly loads his flaccid body into the wheelbarrow in a chest up position, but turns his muddy face to the side to keep the rain from pounding his eyes. His wounded legs dangle over the back edge of wheelbarrow bed and down between the handle bars. As she wheels him in a run to the house, the heels of his boots drag

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backward along the muddy ground and a watery stream of rain and blood trickles down his legs to the wet earth.

The ranch owner rides his fast paint horse to Brackettville to fetch Doc Howell. Doc, sensing the gravity of the emergency, expedites his response by mounting his horse instead of taking his buggy. His horse, one of the fastest in Kinney County, outruns Señor Escopedo's fast paint back to the ranch. He gives Flores pain powders, bandages his leg wounds, and says, "I'll come back about this time tomorrow."

On a later visit, Doc takes Yolanda's mother aside and says, "Seferina, I hate to tell you, but Flores has gangrene in both legs. To save his life, I have to amputate both high above the knees."

Being in need of a vaquero, Señor Escopedo checks on Flores daily. One Saturday morning he sides up to Seferina, who is stirring a pot of beans, and moves in close to her face. Looking straight into her large doleful brown eyes, he speaks in a low soft voice so Flores cannot hear him, and says, "Seferina, I am so sorry Flores can no longer do the work of a vaquero. Your family may continue to live here free of rent if you will go to work selling for my wholesale supply company, and if Yolanda cleans the main house once a week. Also she must do the laundry every Monday for Señora Berta. You will earn a commission for all the supplies you sell to Fort Clark in addition to the free rent. What do you say?"

She haggles with Señor Flores to gain a more favorable commission. Ultimately she says, "Señor Flores, I thank you for your kindness. I will work hard for you," but she knows she will never earn enough money to send Yolanda away for nurse's

Clyde Morgan

training. She will struggle to buy groceries and cloth with which to make clothes for the three of them.

CHAPTER ONE

GUAJOLOTE RANCH

Yolanda tackles her house cleaning job for Señora Berta Escopedo with renewed hope.

Berta is from a high society family living in Chihuahua City, Mexico. Through her family Señor Anastacio Escopedo has connections with wealthy business people. In addition to inheriting his Spanish Land Grant Ranch and the wholesale supply business for which Yolanda's mother works, he owns and operates a tanning yard, and a wood carving business.

Both Berta and Anastacio are able to answer Yolanda's many questions, and recognize her aptitude and determination. Due to the wide range of knowledge the Escopedos possess, Yolanda's mind begins to dwell outside the putrid odor of spoiled meat in the fly traps, the unpleasant scent of the cow pens, the calves with the scours, the indelible reek of Señor Escopedo's limestone tanning pits on Guajolote Creek, the man hating long horn bull, the butting horns of the rams, her disabled father, the ranch's front gate, the county line, and beyond the Texas-Mexico border and utmost of all beyond herself.

One day Señora Berta says to Yolanda, "You may someday need to know how to set a table for a formal dinner. Let me show you how to do the table cloth, use the silver napkin rings, silver ware, china, and do the seating arrangements the way my mother's maids did when we had dinner for the governor."

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From Señor Escopedo, Yolanda opens wide to other things, such as the spirit of Texans and the courage found in Texas frontier life. One day he comes home to find her trying to play one of his violins. He says, "Let me show you the correct way to hold the violin and how to hold the bow and stroke it over the strings so you can practice properly. But first I must teach you how to play the chords on the organ."

As soon as Yolanda excels at playing the chords on the organ, the two families begin to gather in Anastacio's living room on the first Saturday night of the month. From dark until midnight, Yolanda accompanies Escopedo's fiddle playing by playing the chords.

Anastacio's woodcarving business encompasses primarily violin making. He obtains the wood for making the backs, ribs and gnarled necks from the boles of black persimmon trees growing south of Fort Inge in the wooded flats above the east bank of the Leona River in Uvalde County. After hand sawing the trees down, he seasons the wood using a secret process, and hand carves and assembles the violins. Always short on time, Anastacio is training Yolanda's father as an apprentice in the wood carving shop.

Because of the mellow tones his violins produce, people travel great distances to come to his Saturday night events to hear him play, and many buy his instruments. Yolanda enjoys helping to entertain so many people, and grows in social skills.

Even so, all is not good at Guajolote Ranch. A church sister and former girlfriend of Señor Escopedo is busy spreading a rumor, saying "Berta has an unsavory background. Her wealth comes from tainted sources. She is associated with underworld

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characters. Señor Escopedo keeps his big bee apiary in order to bury her treasure under the tallest bee hive in the midst of it. She will corrupt the innocent little Yolanda.”

Escopedo’s bee apiary of twenty five hives stands in five rows facing south on high ground, along the south side of the ranch house. On a row of rolling black hills a half mile to the east, thorny huajillo brush, white-brush, and catclaw trees bloom to supply ample nectar for so many bees.

Possibly the Nueces Strip bandidos do not try to rob the hidden treasure because they do not believe the rumor, or they may be afraid to do it without the help of their ruthless leader, Fermin Hernandez, who stays away because he is severely allergic to bee stings. All the people in Kinney County know Hernandez nearly died from bee stings as a boy, so the rumor takes wing.

The tales grow, adding, “The south wall of Escopedo’s ranch house master bedroom has a hole in it through which he looks directly to the center of his bee apiary. If anyone comes prowling, his barking dog Nina alerts him. The prowler will face the open end of his shotgun barrel pointing out of the hole.” No one ever sees the gun, but everyone in Kinney County knows Campbell’s General Store in Brackettville stocks 10 gauge shotgun shells loaded with buck shot just for him.

Yolanda and the Escopedos live in continual fear that Hernandez’s gang will come in search of hidden treasure, even without their leader. Consequently for Berta’s protection and safety, Escopedo hires Sheriff O’Meara to teach Berta and Yolanda to use firearms, and to shoot moving targets. In hiring O’Meara he says, “Sheriff, I want them to be able to hit the

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head of a match at ten paces so as to strike it without fail, and to hit a bird in the eye in the top of the tallest tree.”

Señor and Señora Escopedo often say to Yolanda, “We wish we had the money to send you to train as a nurse.” Yolanda knows Escopedo is wealthy, but struggles to keep his businesses going and to pay for his supply orders. Therefore she believes he is short on ready cash.

To a stranger, Escopedo creates a penetrating look of intimidation, but once anyone learns to know him he becomes their best friend. He immaculately combs his pure black hair, and cuts it long enough to curl softly on the edges. It matches his neatly trimmed mustache. He speaks clean and precise words, as cleanly and precisely as he dresses. From him and his many friends, Yolanda learns how to behave around men other than her father.

The only suitable bachelor in the county for Yolanda is Brackettville’s Mayor Red Parker. He cannot keep his eyes off of her, but she despises him. Consequently she withdraws to the ranch, refusing to go into Brackettville.

She has a recurring nightmare of being caught in the fly trap. In her dream, she struggles and scratches at the screen wire walls of the trap until her fingers become so raw the blowflies swarm them. She awakens to the loud buzzing sound of the flies, and impulsively checks her fingers for blood, after which she prays, “Thank you God. I am alive.”

As a sales person, her mother works long hours. She smiles kindly and presents herself with a soft beauty that pleases the Fort Clark personnel who buy supplies from The Escopedo

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Wholesale Company. Indirectly she brings the glorious world of Fort Clark into Yolanda's life. But the sum of her commission is not enough to have money to save and to send Yolanda away to school.

Regularly Seferina delivers special supplies to the dispensary. Even on days when she has no need to visit the dispensary, she drops by and talks with a nurse friend, Rosita. One evening Seferina comes home and says to Yolanda, "A while ago I left from a visit with Rosita. They brought in a sergeant who attempted to jump Las Moras Creek on horseback at full gallop. His horse fell short, and came to a sudden stop when it hit with great force near the top of the far bank. The sergeant catapulted out of his saddle right over the neck and head of the horse, and hit his own head against a large rock half buried in the bank. He is out of his head and blood is dripping from his left ear canal. Rosita believes the base of his skull is fractured, and he won't live. I reached to wipe away her tears. I wish I could console her, but I am of no help to her. She is so upset."

"How dreadful. Mother, I want to be a nurse like Rosita. I ironed Señora Berta's clothes this afternoon and she tipped me. I want to save my money for nurse's training."

"Child, you can never save enough. Get that foolish idea out of your head."

The Civil War begins. Texas joins the Confederacy. Union Solders abandon Fort Clark. Señor Escopedo no longer needs Seferina for his supply business. Flores' income as an apprentice in the wood carving shop is nil, but Escopedo does not want to lose his help and lets his family continue to live in

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the log cabin. Seferina has to take in washing and ironing for the family to survive.

The wife of a rancher in a more remote part of Kinney County, Tennie Winants, usually visits Señora Berta Escopedo on her way into Brackettville. On a visit when Yolanda is at the main ranch house cleaning it for Berta, she asks Yolanda, "You are a beautiful young lady. What do you plan to do in life?"

"I want to be a nurse. I would like to have a husband and children. But we have no money, and there is no man here for me. I am soon to become an old maid. Sometimes I dream I am a fly trapped in the fly trap. And now with the war as it is, I will never get out of here."

"I may be able to help. In turn you can help me. My cousin in Arkansas runs a hospital for the Confederacy. She needs nurses and can train anyone willing to learn. I'll send a letter, and inquire if she still needs nurses. I can recommend you to her. Mister Winants suffers from malaria. If you can come back and nurse him when the War is over, Neal and I will pay your expenses to Pea Ridge and back."

Two weeks later Tennie Winants drops by to visit Yolanda and Berta.

She says to Yolanda, "Cousin Elizabeth in Arkansas sent me this letter. It says, 'We need nurses more than ever. Send Yolanda with a letter of introduction for identification purposes. I will give her on the job training, and lecture to her and the other students as often as possible.' Mister Winants and I will give you money each way for the trip."

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Due to the war, Señor Escopedo no longer has his monthly Saturday parties. His sales fall off, and he no longer needs Flores in his wood carving shop. Tennie Winants agrees to move him to a cabin on their ranch and care for him during the time Yolanda and her mother are in Arkansas.

Yolanda undergoes training in Burke's wartime nursing school. Elizabeth Burke makes a hospital out of the Elkhorn Tavern in order to take care of the wounded at the time of the battle of Pea Ridge. During the battle, Yolanda works day and night, gaining training and experience treating wounded soldiers from both the Union and the Confederate armies. Her heart dwells among the soldiers near her age and aches for the ones who are younger.

At the end of the Civil War, she returns to Kinney County with a Certificate of Nursing signed by Elizabeth Burke, and begins nursing Neal Winants.

SCENE TWO

THE WRECKED WAGON

After obtaining legal papers in St. Ignacio, Mexico for taking a baby girl to El Orfanato de Ceballos, Mother Mendoza begins their return trip by wagon. The mules are edgy due to the noisy street crowds and of the venders hawking their wares. She holds the reins in both hands, and Antonia sits to her right, holding the newly acquired orphan in her lap. Antonia fears the mules may break with runaway speed, and impulsively says, "Look Mother, past the mission the street is clear."

Mother Mendoza says, "The mules will calm down now."

Climbing a steep grade up the mountainous road out of the valley, the mules hold their heads down with necks bowed in stiff arches. Their nostrils flare in the thin air. She repeatedly coaxes the lead mule by slapping it on the back with the leather rein straps.

At times they turn directly into the rising sun, and the clear air of the high mountains brings the sun in close. Its glare reflects brightly off the slippery frost covered rocks. The road winds tightly between big boulders uplifted and turned on end by past earthquakes.

"Mother, I am so nervous. The road is so close to the edges of these bluffs it makes me dizzy to look."

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In a self-scolding voice, Mother Mendoza says, “I should have brought the bridles with the blinders.”

Suddenly a speeding wagon comes head-on around the curve from above them. To avoid a collision, Mother Mendoza jerks the reins hard right toward a turn-out. The other wagon misses by the width of the thickness of the frost on the rocks and speeds onward.

“So close, Mother.”

“Antonia, it is a miracle for us this turn-out is here.”

Next they approach a sharp turn above a ravine where the road runs briefly downhill, levels out along the top edge of a bluff, and climbs upward again. Antonia says, “Look. Look. There is a wrecked wagon in the canyon. It is upside down and all broken up. Look. It slid off of the road at the turn where the ice on the road is melting. See the skid marks going over the cliff.”

“You wait here with the baby. I will scotch our wagon and try to get around the end of the bluff and make it down there.”

Once at the wrecked wagon, she stretches out the tips of her stubby thick-bodied fingers to touch a freshly congealed clump of blood stuck to the wagon tongue.

She yells back to Antonia, “God have mercy. Both are dead. It is a young man and his wife. The mules, too.” She weaves in and out of the wreckage to get a closer look. “Look. The rent in her breast,” and, touching it with her right pointing finger, she says, “It is dripping warm milk.”

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Mother Mendoza turns and begins the rugged climb around one end of the bluff to get back to the road to go for help. Surprised by muffled cries coming from beneath the remnant of the wagon bed, she whirls back toward the rubbish and begins jerking away the splintered boards to uncover twin baby boys and an older sister, all in rag diapers.

After carrying the twin boys to her wagon and leaving them with Antonia, she returns to the wreckage site for the baby girl.

CHAPTER TWO

EL ORFANATO DE CEBALLOS

Taking the three new babies in her wagon, Mother Mendoza clutches the reins and whips the mules to rush back to St. Ignacio to report the accident.

She and Antonia go house to house in search for anyone who is able to identify the three babies. Finally they speak to the owner of a blacksmith shop who barely notices them. His eyes are fixed on his work, repairing the rim of a wagon wheel.

When he does look up, he says, “These three babies? They are from the logging camp below Cusarare. The father came in yesterday to have a wagon wheel repaired. His first time here. He watched, paid, and left, saying he had to leave for Chihuahua City before day break today.”

“Can you tell me his name?”

“He called himself Pedro. He told me the midwife from here went to Cusarare three months ago to deliver the twin boys. The mother, she is shy; stayed in the wagon the whole time. Your biggest baby there I do not know. She is not one of Pedro’s babies.”

“No, we got her from The Mission. She is an orphan; I am taking her to El Orfanato de Ceballos. The midwife, can I find her?”

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“Go to the house next to The Mission. It is the one with a winter garden growing on the sunny side of the house.”

Mother Mendoza cradles a twin in each arm and raps on the door.

She asks, “I am Mother Mendoza from Orfanato de Ceballos. These babies, do you recognize them? Their parents were killed early this morning, when their wagon skidded on ice and fell over the big cliff.”

“I am so sorrowful. They are the only twin babies around here.” Touching the baby that Mother Mendoza is holding in her left arm, she says, “This one, he came last. Their father, he worked for the logging camp at Cusarare.”

“Are you positive you recognize them?”

“Look” and pointing with her finger, “See the jagged shaped birth marks on the left shoulders of both boys. On this one, see the knot on his right collarbone. That is because he delivered breech-first. Look. His brother is all bruised up from the wreck. He is hurt”

“Is there anyone to take them? Do they have relatives?”

“No. I knew their entire family. They all lived here, but died in the cholera epidemic except for Pedro and his wife. There is no one here to take them. If you can wait for the injured one to get well, you should take all of them to your orphanage. A man from the border village of Piedras Negras is visiting, looking for a baby boy. He inquired this morning. If you cannot wait for the hurt one to heal, he might take him.”

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Mother Mendoza seeks the help of a priest at The Mission. They spend the remainder of the day with the authorities. By evening she has in hand all the papers needed for taking the younger twin and his sister. The man from Piedras Negras is eager to take the older twin. He says, "This boy needs a doctor. I can take him to one in Piedras Negras."

The next morning, Mother Mendoza attends the burial ceremony of the parents, and then sets out on the journey to El Orfanato de Ceballos. After several days, she arrives at the orphanage near nightfall.

She christens the new baby siblings in honor of her mother's parents, and names them Guadalupe and Ignacio Salazar. Because they carry the family name of her mother, she favors them over the other children.

SCENE THREE

LOOK OUT POINT

On a night like a thousand other nights in Kinney County, Texas, coyote packs bark and howl to keep anyone awake not accustomed to them. For rancher Neal Winants, it means rest from a long day of sliding freshly cut red cedar logs down the mountainside. A few more logs and he will have enough to build a log cabin for ranch hands to live in.

His finest red cedar trees grow on a high ridge along its east slope. In the draw below is a hot water spring, El Ojo de Agua Caliente. Past Indians placed a burial ground near there, overlooking the spring.

The hostility of the Comanche Indians toward Winants for settling near the sacred ground festers among their braves. They plan to scalp him and to torture him with a slow death. The next morning Winants reaches the east edge of the ridge to gather a few more logs. A band of three young warriors surround him with drawn bows. His rifle leans against the fork in a tree too far away to be of help, and it goes unnoticed by the Indians. Having only his double bladed axe in his hand, he surrenders without resistance.

Winants instantly recognizes them as Comanche, the most hostile Indians in the area. Nothing scares him more than Comanche Warriors. Inwardly he trembles with fear, but outwardly he stays calm and brave. They escort him quietly along the top of the ridge for about a mile westward to Look

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Out Point. It overlooks a peaceful valley to the south. On the precipice of the point, they bring Winants to an abrupt halt to scalp him. After the scalping, they plan to leave his bare body hanging head down on a scrub oak tree.

The smallest brave firmly grabs him and shoves his back against the scrub oak in readiness to strap him to it with buckskin strings. An argument develops over which brave gets to do the scalping and gets to keep the scalp. A fight breaks out between the two largest braves.

Winants courageously gambles on a long shot. He looks directly into the eyes of the brave holding him, smiles with a weak smile, and quickly uses the pointed toe of his boot to kick him where it hurts the most.

The Indian lets out a yelp and turns loose of Winants to grab himself between the legs. The other two stop their fight, and stare in amazement as Winants makes a clean jump over the precipice of Look Out Point. Fortunately he lands in the soft top of a switch cedar bush approximately twenty feet below, and hits the bush tumbling out of it and down the slope for a few feet. Quickly regaining an upright position, he runs a jig-jag course. By the time the warriors string their bows, he is sprinting full speed downhill. The slope drops off sharply, and the three arrows whiz over his head and hit the ground to lay there and rot with time, leaving only the arrowheads as evidence.

CHAPTER THREE

FRIENDS OF WINANTS

The people in Kinney County respect Neal Winants for his kindness and fair-mindedness. He makes friends with everyone he meets, and in time he does so with hostile Indians.

Winants helps a neighbor friend pen his horses, and on horse-back they ride into Brackettville to bring out Mayor Red Parker, a buyer who wants his pick of two horses out of the herd. Upon returning to Bostick's ranch, they discover an empty horse pen with its gate left open.

Bostick's wife says to them, "When I carried in an arm full of clothes from the clothes line, I spotted Indians on their ponies coming through the brush out past the horse pen. I eased quietly through the back door, and locked it. I don't think they saw me. They let the horses out and drove them away to the northwest."

Mayor Parker asks, "Did they bother anything else?"

"No."

Red Parker hastily organizes an Indian chase. At Winants' ranch house, a few older men gather to guard the women and children while others take part in the mounted chase.

Winants joins the chase. After riding most of the day, they lose the trail and spread out in search of it. Winants' soot-colored mare hesitates upon coming over the top of a knoll.

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From behind a large boulder and a few feet ahead to the right of his path, an Indian sticks out his head and smiles with a big grin. Neal Winants recognizes him as the one he kicked below the belt at Look Out Point. He holsters his pistol, returns the smile, and keeps riding. Afterward the Comanche no longer bothers him.

A few weeks later, a group of men known as The Friends of Winants go searching for gold along the Devil's River. Winants is unable to join because of malarial chills on the day they leave. One of the men wanders off to the west and alone, looking for gold on the Pecos River. When he fails to return, the others search for him and find where Indians scalped and killed him.

When the man's oldest son learns about the killing, he goes to Mayor Parker, and requests him to organize a posse.

The Friends of Winants are all afraid to join the posse. Their spokesman tells Parker, "There must be tracks of two hundred horses where they scalped him." Mayor Parker promptly goes to the Cavalry Commander at nearby Fort Clark to request the Cavalry to help.

The commanding officer sends out Company B of the Cavalry under Lieutenant Garrett's command. Lieutenant Garrett is not only a friend of Winants, but is married to Tennie Winants' cousin.

When Garrett finds the Indian trail, he states, "These are the tracks of several hundred horses. To be so many, the Kiowa and Comanche Warriors are banded together. Their trail leads back toward Brackettville. We need to head them off in case they

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plan an attack on Brackettville. I bet they used this killing to draw us out here.”

Lieutenant Garrett, a former Texas Ranger, has more experience in fighting hostile Indians than any of his fellow soldiers. His men respect him, but even with his skills and familiarity with this part of Texas he loses the trail at a water crossing.

Garrett’s best scout, Private Blair, finds fresh signs of a small band of Indians traveling toward Sycamore Creek. Garrett decides to head a highly trained unit consisting of himself, Sergeant Stephens, Corporal Rutledge and Private Blair to search along the banks of the upper reaches of Sycamore Creek and around the water hole near the mouth of Javelina Draw. He sends the others toward the Pecos River, concluding the Indians may have left the trail coming back toward Brackettville for a decoy.

SCENE FOUR

THE SHAKE RAG RANCH

At Mother Mendoza's orphanage, Ignacio Salazar is the smallest for his age. The other children call him, Enano. Guadalupe says to Mother Mendoza "The big kids constantly pick on Ignacio just because he is so little."

Mother Mendoza tries to make up for the way they taunt Ignacio by reading bedtime stories to him and by having her maintenance man teach him to do odd jobs. A quick learner and having much determination, Ignacio finishes the seventh grade two years early. By the time he becomes a teenager, Mother Mendoza depends on him to do most of the maintenance work and gardening.

Ignacio also possesses quickness of body and endurance. He becomes the best distance runner at the orphanage. Recognizing his Tarahumara Indian ancestry, Mother Mendoza enters him in one of the annual Tarahumara distance runs. He travels on foot from the orphanage to St. Ignacio, runs a seventy-two-hour race, and wins in a close contest against the Tarahumara Indians' best runner. Afterward he gains the admiration of everyone at the orphanage, including the bullies.

One of the major supporters of the orphanage is a native Texan, Ridley Foster. He ranches in Mexico, lives there, and visits the orphanage frequently. After observing Ignacio at work, he goes in to see Mother Mendoza, and asks, "I like your maintenance man. He knows how to pace his work for

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maximum efficiency. I want to take him to my ranch here in Mexico. Señora Foster and I will give him a good home. He is about the same age as our son we lost. Will you let me hire him?" Eventually Mother Mendoza consents to let Ignacio go, not wanting to lose Señor Foster's generous contributions.

Ignacio reports to Señor Ridley Foster at Shake Rag Ranch late one afternoon. Ridley greets him warmly. He instructs Ignacio by saying, "You can live in the workers' house. I want the house clean at all times. You can start to work in the morning, but tonight I want you to gather eggs before you eat. Groceries are in your house.

"Each Saturday you will help Señora Foster with her garden and flowers."

"Sí, El Patrón, as you know I cared for the garden and flower beds at the orphanage."

"Every morning and evening you will milk the cows. Milk pails are kept on the back porch. Leave the milk on the table by the pails. Also gather the eggs every day, and leave them in the crate on the table."

"I have never milked a cow. You will need to show me."

"There are two Jerseys. Both give plenty of milk. I leave the left hind teat for the calf. You always sit on a stool and milk from the cow's right side, using both hands. Hold the milk bucket tightly between your feet and legs just in case the cow kicks. You don't want to lose a bucket of milk. I'll help you tonight, and show you how to bring the milk down and how to strip the cow. Take whatever milk and eggs you need for

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yourself. You may take one chicken once a week for yourself also. Cut the stove-wood and fill up Señora Foster's wood-box every day."

"Is that the axe I am to use?"

Ignacio points to a double bladed axe he sees through the open door of a tool shed.

"Yes, all the tools you will need are in this shed, and you will find files, grind stone, anvil and sledge.

"Each Sunday morning you may rest, and I will do the morning chores unless I tell you otherwise.

"Tomorrow take this sack of seed and sow the Water Well Field, the freshly harrowed field by the well there. Do your morning chores early so you can finish sowing the field before dark. The sky looks as if it may rain by tomorrow night. It's necessary to finish sowing before it rains. If it rains, we can still drag it before the birds eat the seeds."

"Sí, El Patrón."

Apprehensive about pleasing Señor Foster, Ignacio spends a restless night. At dawn he walks about looking from every side of the corrals, sheds, gates, and rail fencing behind Foster's house.

The buildings are erected on the flat top of a point that reaches out toward Sierra Mojada to the northwest. An expanding valley is beyond the point. A cross made from the barked limbs of an oak tree stands erectly between him and the

Clyde Morgan

pale east sky of early morning. It marks the grave of Ridley's only child. One limb of the cross points out over the valley toward heavy storm clouds boiling up from beyond Sierra Mojada. Ignacio walks around behind the cross and uses that limb of the cross to aim at the approaching storm clouds. After calculating their rate of movement toward the Shake Rag, he finishes his morning chores and sets out for the tool shed.

Ridley finds him with sledge and anvil making a needle with which to mend a tear in his shirt. Realizing he has not been in the field, Ridley barks out, "Ignacio, you have to finish sowing the Water Well Field before milking time, not tomorrow."

Ignacio replies, "Sí, El Patrón. No es problema."

A hard blowing north wind hits and does most of the work for Ignacio. He finishes the sowing on Ridley's planned schedule.

CHAPTER FOUR HEADED FOR TEXAS

Neal Foster's wife, Elizabeth, a buxom and matronly lady, always wears a bouffant and moves with a graceful inherent beauty. Educated in London, she speaks proper English. She is a former school teacher and has a knack for quickly recognizing the most apt students.

Being secluded on the ranch, she lacks opportunity to continue teaching. Recognizing Ignacio as a prospective excellent student, she requests permission from Mister Foster to teach Ignacio every night except Sunday.

A staunch Christian, she teaches him to sing hymns, mostly those written by Charles Wesley. He masters modern English, learns old English from classical sources, learns English of the sixteenth century from the King James Bible, and rapidly advances in mathematics.

Suddenly smallpox strikes at the "The Shake Rag Ranch." Señora Foster becomes ill with high fever and chills, requiring isolation. A blistering rash with the entire blister bumps coming at the same time covers her body and face. A husky voice follows, and later the crisis. She never completely recovers. Afterward, Ridley lives a confined life. He rarely leaves the ranch.

On a beautiful calm day, he and Ignacio are cleaning out the water well and repairing the windmill pump. While they work,

Clyde Morgan

Ignacio inquires, saying, “El Patrón, Mother Mendoza once made a trip to San Antonio. I think I would like it there. Why did you move your family to Mexico?”

“First we lived in Buffalo Bayou, Texas, there by San Jacinto where Sam Houston won Texas’ independence. We married there. I worked in the saw-mill, and Elizabeth taught school. From there we moved to Bell County and lived in Tennessee Valley on the Leon River to get away from the coastal malaria. When Governor Bell became governor, I circulated a petition requesting him to send troops from Fort Gates for protection against the Kiowa and the Comanche. They used the Leon River area in Bell County as their principal hunting ground. Bell County was a new county formed out of Milan County, and I got upset because I couldn’t get the governor to help his own county. We moved from there to get away from those hostile Indians, and have lived at The Shake Rag ever since.”

“I don’t know about governor Bell. When was that?”

“We came here several years before the Civil War. I’m a loyalist. During the war, I chose to remain here. I wanted to join the Union Army, but neither did it seem right to fight against my own brother and uncle living in Buffalo Bayou. They opposed my loyalist views. Our family ties are strong. I am loyal to my family, except for helping the loyalists escape from Texas. Several came through here on their way to the coast to board Union ships going to New Orleans where they joined up with The Union. The Union held New Orleans at the time.”

“And Señora Foster, she is from Wales?”

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“Elizabeth came from a family of Welsh miners. When we moved here, the small wooden tower is one of the first things she wanted me to build for her. In Wales they had a custom of shaking a rag from the top of the mine in order to call the miners at mealtime. That’s how the ranch got its name, her shaking the rag to call workers to dinner.”

When they finish work on the windmill, Ridley gives Ignacio new instructions: “I need to make a business trip to Chihuahua City. You may know where it is. It’s a long way the other side of the orphan’s home where you grew up. I’ll be gone for almost two weeks and need you to take charge while I’m away.”

Ridley Foster retains “The Shake Rag Ranch” in partnership with a native Mexican citizen, who lives in Chihuahua City. The partnership enables Ridley to make Shake Rag Ranch his permanent home, and remain in Mexico.

Following Señora Foster’s near death and lingering illness, Ridley has come to depend upon Ignacio to run the ranch and to make necessary decisions. Every day except Sunday Ignacio works from before sunup until nightfall. Time passes rapidly, right up to the time when Ridley receives a letter from an Uncle Neal Winants asking Ridley to send him a worker from Mexico.

In part of the letter, Neal writes, “Since I’ve been home from the war I can’t get well. As you know, I got malaria when I captained on the boat on the Mississippi. I moved from Buffalo Bayou to Kinney County in search of a drier climate, but it hasn’t helped.

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“I desperately need a ranch and farm hand, and have not been able to find one here. Can you send a good worker? I’ll furnish room and board and pay top pay to start. If he stays and makes good, I’ll help him with papers and write in my will to leave him some land. I’ll let him have enough Angora breeding stock to start his own herd. Have him come before winter. Let me know soon.”

A hand-drawn map accompanies the letter, and shows the best trails to follow to reach Kinney County and Neal Winants’ ranch.

Ridley writes back saying, “I’m sorry you are not over your malaria. Elizabeth is not improving either. Please pray for her as I do for you and aunt Tennie.

“Bearing this letter will be Ignacio Salazar. He’s my best hand. Does more work in a day than any, but I warn you he looks the slowest.

“Always I will be grateful to you for finding me work at the saw-mill in Buffalo Bayou, and for being compassionate with my loyalist beliefs.

“P. S. Ignacio Salazar has a black birthmark on the outside of his left shoulder. It is a little larger than a penny and is about as irregular as the Indian’s head on it. He is no bigger than Tennie and looks more Indian than Spanish.”

SCENE FIVE

JAVELINA DRAW

Ridley briefs Ignacio Salazar on what to expect on his way to Texas and gives him one last warning, saying, “Watch out for bandidos in the area south of Javelina Draw.”

Ignacio departs from the Shake Rag Ranch at daybreak. In due time, he crosses the Rio Bravo to the Rio Grande side and travels on foot into the area Ridley’s map depicts as bandido country. At sunset he approaches the lone water hole in a dry brush-infested wash called Javelina Draw, and plans to camp for the night.

Approaching through tall grass, mesquite brush, cacti, and bramble, he discovers two men camping by the edge of the water. He hides in the brush and watches. The older man appears to be in charge. He packs a portable pew and a Bible. The other man has a full saddle pack, unpacked. They have one large gauge shotgun with a single long barrel. Each carries a Colt pistol. Ridley advised him to expect most Texans to carry a Colt 45. Ignacio believes they appear to be harmless enough.

He cautiously approaches, saying, “I am Ignacio Salazar. I am a ranch hand.”

The man in charge answers pompously, “Pleased to meet you. I am Reverend Beaver, and this is my associate, Brother Bosley Archer. We are traveling from Arkansas to the border on a trip of mercy for the Lord.”

Clyde Morgan

Ignacio, turning to Archer, asks, "Are those clothes for the poor there in your saddle pack? I know of an orphanage that could use them."

Archer answers, "If they need clothes, the answer is no. It's full of hymnals. I'm the Reverend's song leader."

Looking around with shifting eyes, Beaver, in a gesture of insolence, adds, "I see you don't have a horse. How can you be a ranch hand with no horse?"

"I am Tarahumara. I am a runner. I do not need a horse." Mother Mendoza had warned him, "Most anyone on first impression will underestimate your strength and endurance as well as your extremely quick calculating mind. You have lived a life of impoverishment, hardship, and misfortune that nourishes a determination and demeanor they will not appreciate at first either."

Their conversation continues at irregular intervals, and eventually Archer says to Ignacio, "You sound like you have an education. Where'd you get your English accent?"

"I had a tutor."

"First you're a ranch hand too poor to have a horse. Next you're Tarahumara. Now you have a tutor. Don't you know only rich kids have tutors? You're dirt poor or my name is President Grant."

Bosley Archer stares straight into Ignacio's eyes and in sarcasm says, "If you ask me, you're full of bull. Your square chin looks German. And those arched eyebrows, they're

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Spanish. You're some kind of a half-breed Indian nobody wants, and had to be taken in by an English orphan's home. Is that the one so poor it needs the clothes you ask for? "

Not waiting for an answer, he turns to Beaver and they sing a song. Ignacio notices Bosley is singing off key. Bosley asks Ignacio, "You know a song?"

Ignacio looks toward the last rays of sunlight shining against the top edge of a white limestone cliff that walls the east side of Javelina Draw. His eyes focus on a narrow cleft in the erect face of rock, a crevice shown on Neal Winants' map for him to pass through. From below it, Winants marked an area where water seeps. Instinctively he begins to sing Rock of Ages Cleft for Me.

Archer and Beaver hum along, not singing the words. Ignacio suspects they are impostors of some sort. Beaver displays a chameleonic inner self, a twisted splintered mannerism that reminds Ignacio of the faded torsades in the living room of Foster's house.

His distrust in the two men grows. As for Beaver's Bible, its cover shows no wear. Neither man acts like Bible people he knows. Ignacio wonders why they are not on the main road. Ridley Foster's last words linger in his mind, "If you do run into bandidos, keep calm."

During the night, Archer and Beaver take turns sleeping. Ignacio, watchful and uneasy, does not fall asleep until late. He awakens to a faint morning breeze. Beaver and Archer are gone, apparently slipping away silently and without breakfast. Ignacio wonders what these two men are up to. If they are on a religious

mission, why is it so urgent? It seems to Ignacio they may be on the run from the law.

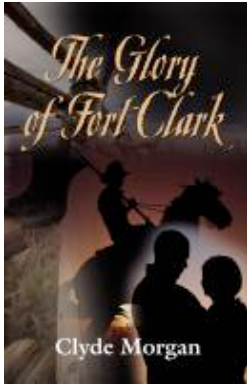
He looks and finds the tracks of their horses going toward the area where Ridley advised him to watch for banditos. Ignacio repeats Ridley's advice in a near whisper, "Remain calm." He tries to rid their strange behavior from his thoughts, but instead he continues to feel uneasy, thinking they may be trouble, as is a big mesquite thorn deep in the flesh, not going away until it festers and bursts out.

Some traveler stuck an old bucket in the hollow of a tree, a bucket used for boiling coffee. In it he boils some corn meal sweetened with mesquite tree wax, making hot mush. Anxious to further separate himself from Beaver and Archer, he pours water on the fire and covers it with fresh dirt and fallen leaves. Then he returns the bucket to the tree hollow, and moves out quickly and quietly.

By now Lieutenant Garrett's scouting party is anxiously hoping to pick up some Indians tracks at the water hole in Javelina Draw, and loops through a pass in the ridge of hills to the southeast of the water hole to get there.

At the pass, they meet Beaver and Archer. After formalities, Lieutenant Garrett warns them, saying, "Hostile Indians are in the area."

Beaver says "Yeah, we ran into an Indian back at the water hole. He travels on foot by himself and seems afraid. I kept my hand on my shotgun just in case. We got out of there before daybreak. We didn't want to take chances. He claims to be fleet of foot. I think he is an Indian scout."



The young lives of Yolanda, nurse at Fort Clark, and Ignacio of Mexico intertwine with Cavalrymen of Fort Clark and area citizens at the close of the Civil War. Action, adventure, and love between Ignacio and Yolanda abound in the presence of violent adversaries, extreme hardships, and almost impossible odds. Truth and virtue triumph in the midst of a wild country where evil reigns.

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