

RANGE WAR LEGACY

A man in a cowboy hat and jacket is aiming a rifle. The background is a bright, hazy sky. The title 'RANGE WAR LEGACY' is written in a large, stylized, distressed font at the top. The author's name 'Patricia Stinson' is written in a cursive font at the bottom.

Patricia Stinson



A ten-year-old girl witnesses the killing of three sheep herders and thousands of sheep. She knows who the killers are but she fears for the life of her family if she tells. Molly grows up and marries. More people die at the hands of the killers. She is haunted by the secret she carries in her heart. Will the truth ever come out? Will the killings ever stop?

Range War Legacy

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/7829.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

Range War Legacy

Patricia Stinson

Copyright © 2015 Patricia Stinson

ISBN 978-1-63490-125-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

This book is creative fiction based on some historical facts. The characters and situations in this work are fictional; they do not portray and are not intended to portray any actual person.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2015

First Edition

Chapter One

Oregon 1905

Grasping his whiskey bottle, the scruffy man yanked on the reins and slid off his horse. He stumbled to a poplar by the trail and leaned his back against the trunk. He then slid down to the ground and pulled the cork from the bottle, taking a swig. Hearing hoof beats, he turned to see a rider approach. He grinned and waved the man over to the tree. "How come you're out this way?" he asked.

"I heard what you said in the bar in town, Creed, and I wanted to hear more."

"I didn't see you."

"You had a pack of men hanging on every word you said about the gunnysackers. I was in the back."

"Yep, I had everyone's attention. And why not? I spoke the truth."

The man dismounted from his large bay and crouched next to Creed. "Yeah, but you've been known to stretch a good yarn. You said you knew who the gunnysackers are, so prove it and tell me their names."

"Oh, I do, all right, but I ain't telling. They're good fellas, and I ain't going to get them into any trouble. No siree. My secret."

"How did you find out who they are, if you aren't one of them?"

"I was in the barn over in Hay Creek, working in a back stall, when ten or eleven men came in and talked about where they were going that night and where they would meet up. They didn't know I was there, and I kept real quiet. Didn't take no chances I might spook them, if you catch my meaning." Creed laughed and shoved his bottle toward his companion. "Have a drink."

The man took the bottle and sipped the booze before handing it back. “I didn’t take much, as money is tight, and a whole bottle is dear.”

“Don’t worry. There’s more where this came from.” Creed guzzled several gulps.

“Really?”

“Yep. Those gunnysackers are good guys. I think they’ll do the right thing by me and help me out when I need money. I just have to get one guy off by himself and let him know I ain’t telling anyone what I saw. He’ll pass the word around, and they’ll all be grateful to Creed.” He smiled. His throat uttered a guttural “yeah,” he waved the bottle toward his friend. “Here, drink as much as you want.”

“Looks like enough for one good drink. I think you should be the one to finish this.”

“All right, if you insist.” Creed raised the bottle to his lips and gulped down the last swallow. Smiling and sliding sideways farther to the ground, he sputtered, “I think I’m drunk. Yes, siree, I’m drunk.”

“I think so, too. Better let me take your gun from your holster, so you don’t lie on it.”

Creed pulled himself upright against the tree. “You’re a good guy, like the gunnysackers. A good guy.” Creed closed his eyes and exhaled a foul breath. His head slumped forward.

“I’m a good guy, all right.” He pulled Creed’s gun from the holster, pointed it at Creed’s heart, and squeezed the trigger twice. The roar disappeared into the air as quickly as it had shattered it.

The man took Creed’s hands and laid them in his lap. He positioned the gun between them and pointed it toward Creed’s chest.

Range War Legacy

“You’re a good guy, too, and I know you’ll be keeping your secret.” He mounted his horse and headed off down the dirt trail.

Chapter Two

Buffalo, New York

“Mr. President, we are honored you accepted our invitation to attend the Pan-American Exposition.”

“Thank you for the opportunity to greet the citizens in Buffalo, New York,” said President McKinley as he shook hands with each man in the small welcoming committee. “Shall we begin?”

“Yes, sir. Come this way.” The men led the President to the Temple of Music auditorium. “If you will stand here, sir, you can shake hands with the people as they go through the door into the hall. We estimate fifty thousand people have been lining up for the past two hours to meet you.”

President McKinley smiled and shook hands as men in suits and ladies in elegant afternoon dresses swirled by. Seeing a young, handsome, dark-haired man with his right hand in a bandage and using his left hand to shake, the President leaned forward with a smile.

Two shots erupted from the bandaged hand. The President staggered backward. The closest men helped him to a chair. He lifted his eyes and saw the crowd become a mob. They grabbed the shooter and began pummeling him. The guards joined the fray. Cursing and swearing added to the din and the confusion.

President McKinley whispered, “Be careful how you tell my wife. She’s so frail.”

The assassin yelled, “I killed President McKinley because it was my duty. I killed him because he was an enemy of the good people, the working people. I’m proud to be an anarchist!”

* * *

“Sir, sir, please stop. Wait!” Wheezing and huffing to catch his breath, the messenger struggled to speak.

A man with a cleft chin, drooping mustache, and thickset body turned from the rocky climb up Mount Tahawus, in the Adirondack Mountains. His muscles in his jaw clenched as he pinched the bridge of his nose, removed his pince-nez glasses and stared with his good eye at the intruder. "Well, what is it? I'm hoping to get to the top within the hour. That's a challenge I've set for myself."

"Mr. Vice-President Roosevelt," the messenger took a deep breath and exhaled. "I have the grave duty of informing you President McKinley is dying. You are needed in Buffalo, sir." He bent over and placed his hands on his knees, gasping for air.

"I was told the President was recovering from his wounds." Teddy stared at the panting messenger.

"Yes sir, but he has taken a turn for the worse. The doctors are certain he will not live long. A special train is at the depot to take you straight to Buffalo."

"It's a ten-mile walk to the nearest road and then a forty-mile buggy ride. The roads are treacherous after last week's rain. We're in for a wild ride tonight, but we will arrive at the train station by dawn. You have my word on it." Vice-President Roosevelt led the charge down the rugged terrain.

The messenger's eyes widened in surprise and disbelief. Teddy Roosevelt rushed past him at a run, with rocks and pebbles spinning down the path as his feet dislodged them. Taking deep breaths, the messenger stumbled down the steep mountainside, grasping at bush and tree branches as he lurched forward.

Chapter Three

Pigtails flying, the young girl charged through the screen door; it screeched and banged against the wood siding. Before it slammed back into its doorframe, her booted right foot hit the porch floor, and her left boot hit the dirt beyond.

“Molly, don’t bang the door! Slow down!” shouted a woman’s voice from the kitchen.

“Okay, Ma.” The girl raced across the yard to the corral where a man was dismounting his horse.

“Uncle Tim! Uncle Tim!” Molly leapt into her uncle’s arms, and he swung her around. “Why’d you come today? I thought you were coming on Saturday to help Pa with the well pump.”

“Well, miss, aren’t you glad to see me today?” Uncle Tim put Molly down.

“Of course I am, but Aunt Ruth and the boys were to come with you on Saturday.”

“They’re still coming. I’ll help your pa with the pump, and your aunt Ruth is fixing to bring her good biscuits. Your ma will make us her delicious Sunday chicken dinner.”

“Yeah, chicken dinner.” Molly stared at the ground as she dug her boot heel into the dirt.

“Don’t you like your ma’s chicken?”

“I love it, but she has to kill the hen. I laugh when I see the chicken running around without its head, but at the same time, I hate it. The bloody neck is wobbling back and forth as its legs keep running until it flops dead in the dirt. It looks funny, and it’s not.”

“Killing chickens is part of ranch life, child. When the hen no longer lays eggs, it feeds us. I bet you don’t like to pluck the feathers. Tell the truth.”

Molly saw Uncle Tim’s mischievous smile belie his stern face. “No, I like to pluck feathers. Ma douses the dead chickens

up and down in hot water, and the feathers come off real easy, except for those darn pinfeathers.”

“Molly, your pa and ma don’t like the word darn.”

“I’m sorry, but those tiny feathers don’t want to be plucked.”

Uncle Tim laughed. “Pluck them good, Molly. I don’t want to bite into your ma’s chicken dinner and come up with a mouthful of feathers.”

“That would be funny, Uncle Tim,” said Molly as they both laughed.

“Maybe for you, but not for me.” Uncle Tim handed the reins to Molly. “Water Jumper for me. I’m going to talk to your pa.”

“Sure, Uncle Tim.” Molly took the reins and guided Jumper to the water trough near the barn. Her fingers tapped against his neck in slow rhythm with their walk. She held her face by his muzzle, and they exchanged breaths. Molly’s joyful exuberance, which usually came bursting out, had stilled.

Jumper slurped the water as Molly watched her uncle walk to the ranch house. Pa came out on the porch, but Ma stayed in the kitchen, peering out the screen. Uncle Tim stopped before he got to the porch.

“Hi, Tim. How are Ruth and the boys?” said Ma from indoors.

“Jumper, what’s wrong with them?” whispered Molly as she stroked Jumper’s neck. “Pa always goes right up to Uncle Tim and stands shoulder-to-shoulder, and Ma, she didn’t open the screen door and come out on the porch. She usually comes out to greet folks, especially family.” Molly recalled the family stories of Pa and Uncle Tim growing up. They were eleven months apart in age, but they were one in spirit. Each knew the other’s thoughts and plans. When one didn’t think up an impish

trick, the other did. Whatever they planned, they did together. They shared the blame, or they shared the praise.

Molly thought grown-up talk was boring, but today she strained to hear her uncle and father.

Uncle Tim adjusted his Stetson to shield his eyes from the sun. "Fine, thank you, Anna. I thought I'd stop by to see what you decided, Paul."

"I can't do what you want, Tim. I understand your thinking, but your way isn't for me. I won't oppose you none, but don't count me in."

"I won't fault you for your decision, but the others and I feel we have to do something. We can't ignore the situation any longer."

"I agree we can't ignore it, but I can't go along with you on your solution." Paul gazed past the corral at the horizon. He shook his head. "I think it'll make things worse. No good can come from it, I figure."

"Okay, Paul. I won't bring it up again." Tim lowered his head and stared at the ground. Then he straightened up and glanced at his brother. "Long as I'm here, do you want to show me the well pump we're going to fix on Saturday?"

"Sure." Relief sounded in Paul Langster's voice as he put his newspaper down on the porch rocker and walked with his brother to the tool shed.

Molly watched them, noting the space between them. In Molly's ten-year memory, this was the first time her father and uncle were not going to do something together. Molly licked her lips and shivered.

She pressed her nose against Jumper's neck and inhaled his scent. She glanced down at his legs. "Why, Jumper, whatever have you gotten yourself into? Uncle Tim wouldn't like this. He takes good care of you. How did you get dirt on your white stocking?" Molly bent and took a bandana from her pocket as

she rubbed Jumper's one white stocking. The black, gooey smudge wouldn't budge. She tied Jumper's reins to the pump handle and fetched a bottle of horse liniment from the barn. She washed off the black smear. "We won't say a word to Uncle Tim, as he works hard to keep you handsome."

"What weren't you going to say to me?"

Molly stood as her uncle approached her. "A secret between Jumper and me." She smiled. "Say, Uncle Tim, do you remember Cassie? Her folks are Jennifer and Hayden Miller. They're friends of Ma and Pa's."

"Yes, I know them. They lived near Prineville before they married and moved across the Cascades. We were all friends."

"Cassie came for a visit last year. She'll be here again for a whole month. She's coming up with her pa's flock when they summer graze. She should arrive this week." Molly saw a hard glint flash in her uncle's eyes and stumbled on. "Some nights, we'll sleep out with the flock. We'll count the stars, tell stories, and have barrels of fun."

Her uncle grabbed her by both shoulders. "You listen to me, Molly. You aren't to sleep out in the pasture. Not once all summer, you hear? You and Cassie sleep right here in your house. Promise me!"

Molly heard the harsh tone in his voice as she peered into her uncle's eyes. Fear stared back at her. She swallowed hard and stepped back. His hands continued to grasp her shoulders.

"But it's safe, Uncle Tim. The shepherder Voyager, and his sheepdog, Rolf, will be with us. They're good protectors. They won't let the wolves or bears harm us. We did it last year, and we were fine."

"It's not the wolves or bears. Molly, give me your word you won't sleep out in the pasture this year. Not once. Promise!" Tim Langster roughly shook her before he let her go.

“I promise, Uncle Tim.” *Why is he angry with me? What did I do wrong?*

She watched Uncle Tim mount Jumper and turn down the road to his ranch. She noted his straight back and the easy way he sat in the saddle, then kicked a stone with her boot. She ran to the corral and called, “Judy!” A pinto trotted up to the fence and stretched out her muzzle. “I wish you could talk and tell me what is going on with my family. We hardly visit back and forth like we used to. We seldom go to town. The mountains, the pastures, and the ranch are the same as they used to be, but the people are different.” Molly climbed on the top rail and stroked Judy’s neck. “Pa and Uncle Tim have changed. It makes me feel shaky inside. Please, Judy, don’t you ever change.”



A ten-year-old girl witnesses the killing of three sheep herders and thousands of sheep. She knows who the killers are but she fears for the life of her family if she tells. Molly grows up and marries. More people die at the hands of the killers. She is haunted by the secret she carries in her heart. Will the truth ever come out? Will the killings ever stop?

Range War Legacy

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/7829.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**