

DR. PAUL CHILES



A
SAN JUAN ISLAND
HISTORICAL
FANTASY

Granny's COVE





Granny's Cove is a lighthearted fantasy adventure that takes place in northern Puget Sound during the little known Pig War between the United States and England. An unexpected wave surprises six modern children and sweeps them into different parts of the story where they attempt to live honorably while searching for each other and the way back to their own time. It is intended for young readers, but is a delight for all ages.

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A San Juan Island Historical Fantasy

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Second Edition

Chapter VI

A strange soldier appears



Charity and Kristine leapt to their feet. They had been drenched by the wave that had washed over them. As they looked around, they saw that the beach had been washed clean!

“Wow, what a wave! Look where the fire was. There isn’t even a stick left. There isn’t a bit of driftwood left on the whole beach. Even the picnic table is gone!” Kristine exclaimed.

“Worse than that, Kristine. I don’t see Nathaniel or Lauren or Adlai or Katherine anywhere. With the driftwood gone, there’s no place for them to hide, either. They are really gone! What are we going to do? Oh, look, there are some clams on the beach. Should we pick them up?”

“Come on,” Kristine yelled. “Forget the clams! We have to go tell Granny right away.” As she ran toward the path at the base of the cliff she called back over her shoulder, “Hurry up, Charity. Run!”

Charity did just that, and as they ran up the path, everything looked just like it had when they had come down it earlier. That changed when they reached the top. A small grove of windswept, stunted oak trees now stood where

Granny's house should have been. They charged desperately into the grove and then ran around it. They couldn't find the house, but as they cleared the trees, they saw a fence and the roofs of several bedraggled buildings a short distance away. Several large tubes were sticking up from behind mounds of dirt on the hill in the distance. None of these things had been there before.

Dropping down onto the grassy ground, Kristine said, "This just isn't right. It can't be happening. I'm just dreaming."

"Then I'm having the same dream, but shouldn't we still tell somebody in our dream about our missing family? What if they are drowning?"

"Halt. Who goes there?" a voice from behind them boomed, startling the girls to their feet. They spun around to see a tall dark figure rise up from the shade of the nearest tree.

"Halt. Who goes there?" the voice thundered again, even louder this time.

"I think we are pretty much halted already, sir. My name is Kristine and this is Charity. We really need to get some help right away. Can you help us, please?"

"An interesting question, I am sure, but completely out of order at this point in our meeting. We can put it on the agenda for later, however." The speaker stepped out of the shade into the bright sunlight where he could be seen more clearly. He was a thin young man with long blond hair and wire rimmed glasses. He had a short, wispy beard and a nice smile. He was dressed in an old-fashioned blue military uniform with a double row of brass buttons down the front. He carried a wooden chair in one hand and a loose stack of papers in the other. He put the chair on the ground beside him and then wrote something on one of the papers. He continued, "The meeting will now come to order." Pointing

at the girls he said, "Please be seated." Intimidated by this strange behavior, they sat down on the grass.

"We will begin with the introduction of the participants. My name is Robert, Henry Robert. This is, of course, my chair." He pointed at the chair beside him. "We have two guests, one Kristine, and one Charity, who already appear to know each other. They are both heavily armed, but do not appear to be a threat to the order of this meeting."

He turned to face the chair and said, "We will now proceed with the reading of the minutes from the last meeting." He shuffled his papers and read, "Lieutenant Robert was the only one present. He sat on the chair and watched the wind blow and the grass grow for two long, lonely hours. The meeting was adjourned." He looked up and continued, "Since I have no additions or corrections to the minutes and since I was the only one in attendance, I move that the minutes be accepted as read. I second my motion. I am all in favor, so the motion carries."

"The next item of business will now be moved forward since it is said to be of an urgent nature. It was added to the agenda at the last moment by the young cowgirl, Kristine. In her request, she implied that rapid action was called for. Kristine, you may have the floor for five minutes. Begin, now."

Kristine stood and faced Lieutenant Robert. "Please sir", she began, but she was suddenly interrupted.

"You must address the chair, not me."

"What? Why?"

Robert replied, "I don't know, it's one of the rules. Just face the chair the way I did, and get on with it. We don't have all day. This is an urgent matter."

Kristine gave him her best scowl and turned slightly to face the empty chair. Charity continued sitting on the grass and rolled her eyes.

Kristine began again, this time facing the chair. "I thought that I needed help, but I have decided that strange man next to you is the one who really needs help. He is a real weirdo! My sister and I are getting out of here."

Lieutenant Robert again interrupted and, facing the chair, said, "I move that those last remarks be stricken from the record and that this meeting be temporarily adjourned, to be resumed later, at a time of our choosing. Motion accepted. Meeting adjourned. An informal social hour with complimentary refreshments will be held in the mess hall. All are invited."

He turned to the girls and said, "You probably think this is strange, but I'm not crazy! I'm just a lonely engineer and I'm doing some very important research. Now, how can I help you?"

Charity squealed, "My bother and sister and cousins are drowning and you are standing on grass that you call a floor, jabbering at a chair! This is just stupid. Is there a real adult around here somewhere?"

Kristine stopped her with a hand on the shoulder. "No, Charity. I think it's all right. I just figured out what's happening. I'll bet the other kids are still on the beach wondering where we have gone. I think that we have been captured in a time warp. I read about them in a book once. I thought that they were just pretend, but now I'm not so sure. It's like everything is actually happening all at once and there is no real time, and in the story somebody crossed between two times instead of two places. And I think that wave knocked us into a different time instead of into a different place. I'll bet that we are still near Granny's house, but a long time ago, when there were soldiers living here. Let's just go with it and see what happens. I don't think the others are in trouble, and there isn't much we can do about it even if they are, unless you want to go back down to the beach and wait for another wave to hit us."

Charity yelled, "What! You're as crazy as this soldier. You're always telling me tall tales, but this is the worst one yet!"

Robert interjected, "Listen just a minute little Indian maiden. I am really not crazy. I am very smart. Just two years ago I graduated in first place in my class at West Point, which is a very difficult college. I expected to be assigned to some exciting duty with the Army, but instead, they sent me out to this bare, boring, windswept place on the edge of nowhere to build some defensive fortifications to keep the British away. Well, that only took about two days, and since then, I've had absolutely nothing to do. To relieve the boredom, I decided to write a book about the proper way to run meetings, so I've been testing different methods. For some reason none of the other soldiers have been very cooperative, so I was very happy when I saw that two strangers had gone down to the beach. I deduced that only two people had gone down because there are only two horses tied to the hitching post over there by the mess hall. It is your sister that is acting crazy, if she is your sister. I don't really think that a cowgirl and an Indian can be sisters. I wouldn't worry about any theoretical brothers or sisters or cousins. Two people went down to the beach. Two people came back up. That would be you two. Nobody is drowning. I want to thank you for participating in my little meeting, and I hope that we can do it again, if you are going to stay around for a while. It's pretty obvious from the way you are dressed that you are scouts, so you are probably busy tracking somebody, but if you can stay, I could sure use your company. Most of the other soldiers don't talk to me much any more. Why don't we go over to the mess hall and eat some lunch while we talk about it? Please?"

Charity crossed her arms and looked at her big sister solemnly, waiting for her reply. Kristine spoke. "Well, I guess

that it wouldn't hurt anything. We are pretty hungry and would like some lunch. Lead on."

Lieutenant Robert smiled broadly and did just that. He led them up the hill to the fence, opened the gate, and brought them to the back of a grey, weathered building that stood with several others in a straight row. Smoke rose from stone chimneys at both ends of the building. The hitching post Robert had mentioned earlier was just a board rail behind the building. In fact, it looked just like the old hitching rail at Granny's house, except that instead of having a barn behind it, there was only this large, grey, clapboard building. As Robert had said, only two horses were tied to the rail. As they came closer, Kristine noticed that the larger of the two looked exactly like her horse, Champ. As she walked up to it, the horse nickered and rubbed her arm with her nose. It was Champ. There was no doubt. She even wore her old brown saddle with Kristine's initials carved beside the horn! A small brown and white paint without a saddle stood next to Champ. It nuzzled Charity knowingly as she came up to it.

Charity grinned and stroked the horse's neck as she said softly, "I think I might like your time warp after all, Kristine. I didn't have a horse before, but this one seems to know me! I'll play this game for awhile. I'm going to call her Blaze. Maybe we can dream for a little while longer."

Chapter VII

The boys find shelter – and more



Nathaniel and Lauren had climbed up from the spring and were now at the edge of a cliff, looking at the shoreline below them. As they walked along the ridge, they could see the spring, backed by another row of hills across the draw. They also saw the path they had taken from their fire to the spring. Another faint trail led from the fire, across a small isthmus to the head of the inlet below them. Nathaniel saw what looked like a piece of white cloth, fluttering in the breeze on the beach at the mouth of the inlet. They saw a brief flash of light as the sun reflected off a bit of glass near the cloth. They decided to investigate, but the hill was too steep for them to climb directly down to the spot. If there were cloth and glass, someone might have been there recently. Lauren decided to follow the path back the way they had come so that they could stop at the spring for a drink. Then they would return to the fire, put more fuel on it, and cut across the isthmus to explore the end of the bay. Even if they found no suitable shelter near the cloth, they would still have time to return to their fire before the sun went down.

As they retraced their steps down the ridge, they could still see the smoke from their damped fire. The hill was mostly shale, broken by an occasional tuft of grass. The game trail wasn't much, but it was the easiest way down. Lauren decided that in the morning they should rebuild their fire on the hilltop so it could be seen from farther away. Halfway down, they came to an intersection in the faint trail. A left turn would take them back to the spring, but continuing straight ahead would lead more directly toward the inlet with the white cloth. They paused for a moment to rest, and as they did so, the smoke from their signal fire quite suddenly stopped. The rolling terrain just ahead of them was blocking the view, so they could not see exactly what had happened, but the smoke was definitely gone.

Lauren said, "Curses. After our bad experience with the waves today, I should have known better. The tide's coming in, and it just put out our fire. It's not a big deal, but I'm trying to save our matches for an emergency and now I'll have to use another one to keep us warm tonight."

They continued straight ahead, following the trail as it angled down the steep hill toward the inlet. They passed through a grove of trees, coming out on a pebble beach. Turning left, they followed the shoreline, looking for the white cloth. Nathaniel saw it again, fluttering slightly in the breeze about fifty yards away, in the grass at the end of the inlet. He ran ahead to see what it was.

When he got there, he stopped abruptly and turned excitedly toward Lauren, who was slowly walking along the beach, thinking about food and shelter. Nathaniel cried out, "Wow! This is really cool! Hurry, Lauren. You really have to see this. It's awesome! Hurry. Run."

Lauren called back, "Keep your shirt on. I'm almost there. I'm still checking for things we can eat. There are a lot of clams in these rocks. We can pick some up for our dinner."

Lauren caught up with his cousin, who was standing very still, staring at the white cloth on the ground in front of him. As he followed the younger boy's gaze, he saw that the cloth was a shirt, alive with motion in the breeze. It wasn't blowing away because it was pinned solidly to the ground by a long knife stuck through the center of the back. The shirt tail and the left sleeve kept moving around, as though they were trying to free the shirt from the dagger. When the shirt flapped up and down, rib bones could be seen, partially buried in the sandy soil. There was a human skull, face down, at the top of the shirt. An entire skeleton was perfectly laid out on the beach. The lower part was still enclosed in what was left of a worn out pair of pants made of a coarse, dark-brown fabric. One of the pant legs held a wooden stump instead of leg bones. There were tiny trails through the grass every few feet, leading away from the skeleton. Ants had finished their cleanup work long ago, but the paths they had made still remained. The right sleeve on the shirt wasn't moving much, because the arm bones were still in it, holding it down. The bones of the hand were sticking out the frayed cuff. There, on a finger of the right hand, was a gold ring with a very large, ruby-red stone set in it. It was ruby-red, because it was a real ruby! The boys bent down until their noses were only a few inches from it, staring intently.

Lauren said, "I told you to keep your shirt on. This guy has kept his on for a long time. I wonder who he is and what happened to him."

"I think that somebody stabbed him in the back."

"You're right about that, Nathaniel. But, why? Whoever did it, didn't take the fancy ring, so it wasn't a robber. It must have happened a while ago, because the bones are all that's left, but not too long ago, because the clothes are still there. And, remember that footprint we saw by the spring. I wonder if this guy made it, or maybe we are sharing this

island with a killer. We need to be very careful and watch all around us all the time, OK?"

"OK, Lauren. Don't forget that we have these swords, though. We can fight."

"Yes, Nathaniel, we have the swords, but we don't know anything about sword fighting, do we? We'll have to be very careful." Lauren slowly and carefully reached down to the skeleton's right hand. He put his hand around the beautiful ring and started to slide it off the finger. The whole finger came off instead. "Oh, creepy," Lauren exclaimed, but it didn't stop him. He stood up and pulled the ring from the finger bone and looked at it more closely. He could see some tiny letters engraved around the inside. He read them aloud, "Property of Pinkstash. Reward if Returned."

Nathaniel said, "What does that mean?"

"Beats me. But I think that we'll get a reward if we return this ring to Pinkstash, whoever that is. Unless Pinkstash is the name of this skeleton, in which case he won't care if we take the ring along with us." He let the bone drop back onto the grass and slipped the ring onto the middle finger of his own right hand. It fit perfectly.

The boys looked all around the area. Finding nothing more of value, and no other clues as to what had happened, they walked over the low rise that separated them from the path that ran between the fire and the spring. They were thirsty, so when they got to the path, they turned left, toward the spring. At the spring they took a long drink and re-checked their surroundings. They were a bit nervous after finding the skeleton.

"Where's that footprint that we saw before, Nathaniel? I don't see it anywhere." Their boot prints were all around the spring, but the solo, bare footprint was no longer there.

"It was right there, in the mud by this clump of brush where the spring overflows. It's gone now. I wonder what happened to it, Lauren."

"I don't have a clue. I guess it really doesn't matter. But, let's check out that big tree over there." A massive, old cedar tree, with boughs sweeping the ground, stood at the base of the hill across the draw from the spring. "I don't think that Granny and her friends are going to find us tonight. Our smoke signal has gone out, so the people looking for us won't even know to come this way. Let's look under that tree. I'll bet it would make a good campsite. It's close to the drinking water, and just a short walk to the beach, where we can get more oysters and other things to eat. Let's go look."

They walked to the cedar tree and, parting the boughs, found that it was just as Lauren had thought. It was darker inside, but enough light filtered in that they could see clearly. They were in an open space at least twenty feet across. The floor was covered with soft, brown needles and was completely dry. The roof was at least ten feet high at the trunk of the tree, tapering to the ground at the edge of the clear space. Since the tree trunk was very near the bottom of a steep hill, the open space roughly formed a half circle. It was almost like being in a big tent. It was small enough that the warmth of a fire would be held in, but open enough that the smoke would rise up through the branches, rather than collecting around them. It would make a perfect shelter. They would only need to make a circle of stones for their fire and remove a few small cones to make a smooth sleeping area.

A few dry, dead boughs hung in the interior, making it a bit difficult to walk around. Lauren used his sword to cut most of them down so that they would not be a fire hazard. The sword always struck the branch exactly where he aimed and always severed it with a single blow. Maybe he was a better swordsman than he had thought. Nathaniel collected some rocks from the base of the hill to build a fire pit near the trunk of the tree.

Lauren said, "Hey, partner. It will be dark soon, so we need to hurry a bit. Why don't you let me build the fire while

you run back to the bay to find us some dinner? There are still a lot of oysters, and I saw some clams there, too. I'll finish the pit and get the fire going.

"Sounds good to me, Lauren. I'll go get the groceries and be right back." Nathaniel pushed the branches aside and went out into the late afternoon sunshine."

It only took about ten minutes for Nathaniel to trot back down to the bay. When he got there, he looked for some clams to go with the oysters. Looking at the shallow water, he noticed a slow movement under some of the drifting seaweed. He stood completely still and stared at the spot. Then a gigantic claw appeared from under the seaweed mat. It was at least six inches across. Nathaniel sat down and pulled his boots, and then his jeans, off. He stood up. The claw was still there. He pulled the sword from his belt and very slowly entered the water. He was worried about the safety of his toes, but he inched toward the claw anyway. At last, when it was only an arm's length away, Nathaniel raised his sword and brought it down hard, through the seaweed, just to the side of the exposed claw. It was a good hit. Two halves of the large crab floated to the surface.

Immediately, the water all around boiled with thrashing crabs. They were cannibals and they headed for his kill. Now Nathaniel really worried about his toes. He grabbed the two crab halves floating in front of him and tossed them to the shore. Then as fast as a Spanish swordsman he struck the water twice more. Two more cloven crabs floated to the surface. The others fled.

Nathaniel wore a big grin as he left the water with his catch in his arms. He pulled on his jeans and boots, and then dried the sword on his pant leg. With his arms filled with a grand shellfish dinner, he proudly headed back up the path toward the spring.

Back at the campsite under the tree, Lauren realized how fortunate they were that the weather had improved. There

was no sign of clouds, rain, or fog. But, he also knew that, because the sky was clear, the night would be cold. Here he was, lost on some little island with his young cousin. They had food and water and shelter, but Lauren knew that somebody had been murdered here, and that he needed to report it to the police. He would give them the ruby ring to help them solve the crime. He would try another smoky signal fire in the morning. But, after that, he didn't know what more he could do to get rescued. He walked to the rock face at the back of the tree shelter where he knelt and prayed for guidance. When he rose, he was sure that things would get better soon.

There was a heavy branch lying across the face of the rock and it didn't look quite right. When he pushed it aside, Lauren found that it covered the mouth of a small cave. The opening was tall enough for him to walk through standing up, but it was totally dark inside, so he didn't know how deep the cave might be. He was unzipping the pocket under his right arm, where he kept a small flashlight, when he felt a sharp poke in the middle of his back.

A soft voice behind him whispered, "Keep your hands exactly where they are. If you move one muscle, or say one word, this knife will go into your back and come out through your heart. You may nod once if you understand me."

Lauren froze where he stood, one hand holding the branch and the other on the zipper under his arm. He thought about the body on the beach with the knife protruding from it. His head nodded one time, very slowly.

Chapter VIII

The older girls meet a pirate



Polly gently pushed the girls into the dark tavern and sat them in chairs at the nearest table. The only light in the room came from several windows facing the street and a few others in a side wall. The north and east walls had no windows. A long counter extended about half the length of the far wall. Two sets of open shelves behind the counter held a variety of brown mugs and plates. Behind the center of the counter, between the sets of shelves, a little light came through a doorway that led to the kitchen. Another door, just to the left of the counter, was closed. Neither the walls nor the rough hewn furniture had ever been painted and the only decoration in the room was a painting hanging on the side wall, over the mantle of a stone fireplace. The painting was about six feet wide and four feet tall. It depicted a frowning man riding a white horse in front of a troop of fully armed soldiers, wearing red coats, standing at attention.

About a half dozen other people were in the room, talking quietly at tables in the darker corners. Polly called out to a young man standing behind the counter, “Geoff, earn your keep! Bring us some food, and a pitcher of milk.” She turned and sat between the girls. “He’s a wee bit slow on the uptake,

but quick on his feet. Lunch'll be but a moment. While we're waiting, I'm going to give you my best motherly advice. There are several types of men in this town that you should be watchin' out for. See those two at the table in the corner? Well, maybe you can't see them back there in the dark, but I'm sure you can smell them. They're trappers. Stay away from them. See those three by the fireplace? They're lumberjacks. Stay away from them. Those two standing at the bar? Gold prospectors. Stay away from them. And, this silly boy, bringin' the food to the table, stay away from him, too."

Geoff put a wooden bowl of stew in front of each of them. He placed a round loaf of bread with a knife protruding from it in the center of the table. He gave them mugs with no handles, and placed a pitcher of milk next to the bread. As he filled the mugs for them he asked, "Aren't you going to introduce me to the lovely princesses who have come to dine with us today, Aunt Polly? Turning to the girls, he continued? "My name is Geoff and I am one of the owners of this fine establishment. If I can serve you in any way, any way at all, please don't hesitate to call on me. My time is yours. My heart is yours. My life is yours for the asking. I will gladly..."

Polly interrupted him quite rudely by whacking his arm sharply with the wooden spoon she had removed from her bowl of stew. It splattered stew across his shirt, and as he grabbed his assaulted arm with his other hand, he yelped, "Ouch! Why'd you do that, Auntie? You said that I should be nice to the customers."

"You've never been that nice before! Why have you decided to start now? No, don't answer. Get yourself back to what you call work, leaning on that counter, and don't come back this way unless you're called or you'll be spooned within an inch of your life, and that might break a perfectly good spoon."

Geoff hung his head and walked slowly away, mumbling something under his breath. Polly turned back to the girls and said merrily, "Now where was I? Eat up girls. It's good food. I made it myself. Oh, yes. Now you can see why you should stay away from Geoff. That slimy boy is always covered with stew. We also have sailors, when the ships come in, and soldiers from the fort. You should stay away from them, too.

"This policy has served me well. When the men around here try to get overly friendly with me, they often limp away with something broken. Those gold sticks that you are carrying around would make good defensive weapons. I'd advise you to keep them close at hand."

As Polly ate her stew and bread and continued to expound on the evils of men, Katherine and Adlai ate and listened quietly. However, their eyes strayed toward Geoff, who noticed and winked at them. They quickly concentrated on the stew again. Geoff was a very tall and thin boy, about thirteen years old. His blond curly hair was smoothly brushed and hung down around his shoulders. His eyes were deep blue and he had no facial hair, either because he shaved regularly, or because none was growing yet. He was nicely dressed in dark trousers and a white, open-necked shirt, which now had chunks of meat, gravy, and vegetables soiling the front. When they next looked up from their bowls, he was sucking gravy off the shirtsleeve, but he was still watching, and he winked again when he saw them peeking.

Polly was still speaking. "Geoff does not own part of this inn. However, his mother, who is my sister, is my partner in the business. She lives in London and she sent Geoff out to the colony to see if I could teach him how to work. As you can see, it's an impossible task. He just stands behind the bar, winking at any girls who happen to walk through the door. There aren't very many. Stop encouraging him. Finish your lunch so I can teach you how to work, too!"

The girls looked at the spoon resting in Polly's bowl and wondered how painful the work lesson might be. They concentrated on their food again. The milk was warm and frothy, but tasted fine after a few tentative sips. It was certainly fresh. The bread was coarse and dark and slightly sweet. It was delicious. The stew had cooked for a long time so the meat and carrots and onions were all soft. It was quite tasty, despite the saltiness and the light layer of grease floating on the top.

Katherine fished a bit of meat out with her wooden spoon and asked, "What kind of stew is this? It's really good."

"That's a bit of mutton in your spoon, Katherine. The Hudson's Bay Company owns most of the land on these islands, and they have a big sheep farm on an island a few miles from here. They always have an old animal or two that is about to die, or has already died. They sell them to me for next to nothing whenever I need meat. We butchered this one three days ago and the meat just gets more and more tender as it ages. I serve the roasts and chops the first few days, and when it starts to ripen a bit I make a big stew with whatever is left. This is it. Flavored with a bit of bacon, it is. We'll keep it on the stove and it should be even better tomorrow, if it doesn't go off. I make fresh bread every morning, too. And, we have a couple of cows out back for milk. I told you this was the best tavern in the province."

Adlai said, "I do believe you. This is no doubt the best place for miles and miles and miles. But, I suddenly feel really full. I can't eat another bite. No more for me, please. Well, maybe I've got room for another piece of bread and butter, but nothing else. Thank you, ma'am."

Each girl left the bit of stew still remaining in her bowl, but they ate the whole loaf of bread and drank a few more mugs of milk. They really were full and slowing down when Polly went into action.

“All right now, lasses. Up you get and come with me. We can’t have you parading around all day in your party dresses.” She pushed her chair back and stood up. The girls followed her across the room to the door at the end of the counter. As they walked, they felt every eye in the room following them. Their faces were quite red by the time they caught up with Polly as she went through the doorway. They followed Polly up a dark flight of steps to the next floor, and then down a long hallway that was lighted at each end by small windows. A series of closed wooden doors with white porcelain knobs lined the gloomy hallway on both sides. Each door was neatly numbered, one through ten, in white paint. Aside from the white doorknobs and white numbers, everything else – the walls, the floor, the doors, and the ceiling – was simply dull, unpainted wood. At the far end of the hallway they came to a small alcove on the left. They followed closely behind Polly as she turned into the alcove, taking one step up. They turned left again and climbed a steep set of steps, which was more like a ladder than a staircase, to a small landing with a single door at the end. Polly unlocked it with a brass skeleton key that she fished from her bodice. Hinges screeched as she pushed the door open, but then bright light flooded out of the room onto the dark landing.

“Here we are my darlings,” said the mistress of the tavern. “This is the room I shared with my sister when I was your age. When Mum died, Daddy brought us out here to the colony and built this place. Then, when I was but seventeen years old, he up and died himself. Sis went back to Scotland, married, and moved to London, but I stayed on and built this place into the fine establishment it is today. It must be fourteen years ago now, and business just keeps getting better all the time. I might have mentioned before that this is the best tavern in the colony, and I expect it to remain so. That is, unless somebody decides to build another one, this being

not only the best, but also the only tavern here!" She gave a powerful laugh, and had a hard time stopping.

Wiping a tear from her puffy face, Polly continued, "There's a bed for each of you and you'll find my old work clothes in that cupboard. They should be fittin' you just fine. There was a time when I was so skinny I could hide just by standing sideways." She put the key on a wooden box beside one of the beds. "Here's your key. Keep the door locked. Some of those filthy old men we saw will be sleeping in the hotel rooms we just passed. Get your clothes changed, then hurry on down to the kitchen so I can show you how to work off that lunch you ate." She turned and went back down the steps.

Katherine and Adlai could hear her footsteps as she walked down the hall, directly beneath the room. They were in an attic loft with sloping roof timbers forming the walls on either side. The end wall was almost entirely a large, many paned, window with light streaming through it. Like the rest of the building, nothing was painted, but everything was surprisingly clean. The furniture was simple. Two box-shaped cedar beds held feather mattresses. Instead of blankets, there was a pile of furry animal skins at the foot of each bed. Simple wooden boxes stood on end beside the beds. Each box had a candle on top and a porcelain pitcher in a porcelain bowl in the opening on the side. The girls found pots with lids under the beds. A wooden wardrobe stood at the end of the room opposite the window. Behind the wardrobe doors were four large drawers filled with neatly folded clothing.

They removed their princess costumes and dressed in puffy sleeved, ruffled frocks and aprons that fit them perfectly. There were even puffy bonnets for their heads and black, leather, lace up boots that were just a bit tight. When they had finished dressing, they looked at each other and burst out laughing. They looked very much like skinny versions of their new friend, Polly. When they were ready, they

went out, locking the door behind them. Adlai put the key in her apron pocket and they hurried down the steps, down the hallway, and then down the staircase and through the door into the tavern's common room.

Geoff, standing behind the bar, greeted them as they came through the door. "Hey, there! Polly's pretty princesses have been transformed. Now you look like good colonial workers. Welcome to the crew, my fellow slave laborers," he said with a bow and a grin that covered his face. "Aunt Polly wants to see you in the kitchen." He gestured to the open door behind him.

Katherine and Adlai stepped behind the long counter and then went through the door into the bright kitchen. Light poured through the windows that covered the upper third of the high walls. Fires smoldered in the two large, stone fireplaces that faced each other from opposite sides of the room. Huge iron pots were tucked in among the coals, and suspended from hooks in both fireplaces. High tables were scattered around the room. Most were empty, but one was stacked with cutlery and another had a huge mound of rising bread dough in its center. The smell of bacon and onions and mutton and smoke and fresh bread combined into a delightful and welcoming aroma. The girls had big smiles until they saw what awaited them on the far side of the room.

Two huge iron pots filled with soapy water sat next to the largest table, against the far wall. That table was piled high with wooden bowls, wooden spoons, and pottery mugs. Everything was covered with drying food scraps that were being worked over by a few flies. The girls looked warily at each other as they considered their fate.

Polly, the only other person in the kitchen, turned from the bread board where she had been shaping dough into round loaves for its final rising. She greeted them with a grand smile and wrapped her large arms around them once

again, causing small clouds of flour to rise over their shoulders where she had placed her hands

Polly said, "Don't look so worried, my skinny little friends. I'm so glad that my old clothes fit you so well. I can't believe that my sister and I were ever that size. Just look at you. As pretty as two puffballs. Now, don't fret. I've decided to start you out as serving girls. It's an easy job. On the menu tonight we have stew and bread and ale. Everybody pays the same price for supper and I'll be collecting the money. The men can have as much as they want to eat, and it's going to be your job to bring them the food. The stew took on a bit of extra flavor this afternoon so I don't think I can serve it for very many more days. We'll need to push it a wee bit. Try to serve mostly stew and hold back on the bread, if you get my drift.

"Geoff will take care of the ale. The customers have to pay extra for each mug so he'll be keepin' track of how much each one drinks. They're pretty good about paying up because if they try to cheat me, they lose their welcome in this establishment, and there isn't another place that is quite as nice as this one. Any questions?"

Of course, the girls had many questions. How did they get there? Were they going to get paid? How long would they be there? How could they get home again? But they didn't ask any of them. They just curtsied slightly and said, "No ma'am."

Polly took some freshly baked bread out of a brick oven in the wall of one of the fireplaces and put some new loaves in to bake. Then she started ladling stew into a few bowls. The sounds of talking and laughter came from the great room as men started coming in for their dinner.

Adlai and Katherine peeked through the door and saw Geoff serving mugs of ale to twenty or so men. About half of them were trappers, who sat together at tables under the big picture. Most of the rest were lumberjacks or prospec-

tors, and there were even a few fishermen. They sat in small groups, scattered around the room, talking quietly as they drank. Geoff was running between the tables, serving mugs and pitchers of ale. Two young soldiers in red uniforms came through the front door and sat at a small table near the bar.

"Now stop gawking and get yourselves to work," said Polly. "It really is nice to have some help in here. Now I won't have to do everything myself. It'll be dark soon, so take these candles to the tables and then start serving the stew. The sooner we get those wretched creatures filled up, the sooner we can get them and their stench out of here." She handed each girl a handful of short, used candles.

Katherine asked, "Do you have any matches, Miss Polly?"

Polly answered, "Of course I have matches, but you aren't going to squander them lighting candles. It's time for you to stop acting like princesses. Just take a straw from the broom by the fireplace and light the candles with it. Matches, indeed. What a waste. Now get to work afore I put my spoon to your backsides!"

The girls did as they were told, but it was very embarrassing. As soon as they went through the door into the dining hall, all of the conversation stopped and all of the men turned to look at them. It was completely silent in the room as they walked from table to table, putting a candle on each one. As they walked, every head turned to follow them. The same thing happened when they went to the fireplace, plucked some straws from the broom, and lit them.

Katherine whispered, "Just smile and try to be friendly."

Adlai answered, "I don't think so. It might be better to frown and not say anything to anyone."

Katherine nodded and took the suggestion. All eyes followed in silence as the girls went from table to table lighting the candles. Slouched in a chair at the last table, in the darkest corner of the room, one man sat alone. Adlai held the

candle while Katherine lit it with the smoldering straw. In the flickering candle-light they saw one boot and one heavy peg-leg extending from under the table. As they placed the candle on the table in front of him, they could see that he had a patch over his left eye. The other eye was closed. He had a bushy, black mustache. He didn't have a parrot on his shoulder, but there was a bulge under the front of his jacket and what looked like the tip of a green wing sticking out, lightly brushing his chin. As they bent a bit closer to see what it was, the man's eye suddenly popped open and stared right at them. They started, and jumped back as the man whispered, "Arrgh!"



The girls turned and hurried toward the kitchen door, but before they were through it, the room erupted with noise. There were loud cheers and yells and whistles and feet

stomping on the floor. A few of the men pushed their chairs back and stood up.

Nobody had a chance to move more than a foot before Polly appeared in the doorway. She stepped through and slammed her large wooden mixing spoon down on the top of the bar with a loud bang. It was suddenly silent. The men who had stood, froze in place, some half crouched beside the tables. Polly glared, and said, "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet my nieces. They will be visiting me for a short time. You will respect them, as you respect me! Are there any questions?"

One of the trappers who had started to stand pulled himself up straight, removed his coonskin cap, bowed his head, stared at the ground and said, "We're awful sorry, Miss Polly. It won't happen again. We don't see many pretty girls out here, and those two, all dressed up in those puffy dresses, look so much like you that we got a mite carried away I guess. You are all so beautiful. You look like three sisters. These guys are sorry too, ma'am." He slowly turned his head first one way, and then the other as he fixed each man in the room with his gaze.

Suddenly, every hat in the room was swept off to a chorus of, "Yes, ma'am. Won't happen again, ma'am. Begging your pardon, ma'am. We're just a bit hungry, ma'am. Only fooling, ma'am. Can we have some dinner now, ma'am?"

Polly blushed and allowed a little smile to cross her face. She put the spoon back through her apron tie, turned, and nodded for the girls to follow her.

The men resumed their quiet conversations while frequently glancing at the kitchen door. Geoff came in from the kitchen with an armload of wood, built up the fire and began refilling their mugs with ale. As Polly and the girls returned to the kitchen to fetch the food, Katherine said, "Miss Polly, I think that man over in the corner might be a pirate! He looks pretty scary!"

Polly glanced back through the doorway. "Oh, he's O.K. He's been coming in here for the past few days. He just sits by himself, eats his dinner, and pays with real gold. I heard that he's here looking about for some wool to ship around the Horn to the east coast clothing factories. He was in that same dark corner when we came in for lunch. Anyway, he couldn't be a pirate. Pirates always have messy parrots sitting on their shoulders, so I don't allow them to come in here. Doesn't seem sanitary. Don't worry about it. Now enough dilly-dallying. We'd better get the food out before we have a riot."

For the next two hours the three were very busy as they served the hot stew and fresh baked bread. All of the guests ate two helpings, and many of them had more. They remained quiet and civilized. When Adlai tried to serve the "pirate" a plate of stew, he winked at her, or maybe he blinked – it's hard to tell when there is a patch over one eye – and whispered, "Fish. Aargh!"

Adlai went back to the kitchen door, pointed back at the man, and told Polly that she thought he wanted fish instead of stew. Polly said that he always wanted fish, and paid double for it, so she kept some on hand for him. She gave Adlai a plate heaped with fried trout to bring to him. When she served it, he smiled and winked, or blinked, again, but said nothing more.

The man with the eye patch left the room sometime early in the evening. Men ate, picked their teeth with their knives, belched, pushed their chairs back and left as they had come, in groups of two or three. By the time the candles had burned out, they had all gone.

The work had been fast, but not hard, and the girls were still fresh by the time they returned to the kitchen with the last load of dirty dishes. They joined Polly at a table by the fire for some bread and jam and a jug of milk. Polly told them not to eat any of the stew because it was too old and might make them sick. The girls had already suspected as

much from the smell. Polly planned to feed the little bit that remained to her dogs.

After eating most of a loaf of bread by herself, Adlai leaned her chair back and said, "Thank you for letting us help you, Miss Polly. That was kind of fun, and we wanted to find a way to pay for our room and meals. You have been so kind to us, and we want you to know how thankful we are. If there's anything else we can do to help out around here, please let us know."

Polly picked a jam seed out of her teeth with her little fingernail, smiled from ear to ear, and said brightly, "Child, you are very welcome. Now that we have had our break, we can get back to work. I'll mop the floors and clean the tables out in the dining hall while you two wash the dishes. Geoff will bring in the firewood and bank the fires for the night. I'm going to get to bed earlier tonight than I have in years. I am so glad that the two of you ended up on my beach!"

Adlai leaned to the right as far as she could without her chair tipping over. Katherine leaned to the left. By doing so, they could see around Polly, who was sitting across the table from them. They stared at the scrub table where a mountain of dirty dishes awaited them. Geoff had refilled the tubs on the floor with water that he had heated over the fire. Now he was shaving slivers of grey soap into the tubs. When he saw them looking around Polly, he gave the girls another big smile and a wink.

The girls sat upright again, pushed their chairs back, stood up with a little sigh, and said "Thank you, Miss Polly. We will be glad to help you." And, even though they were tired, and did not like to wash dishes, they meant what they said. They were grateful for the meal and the bed and a friend.

The task was not as bad as it had at first appeared. Working by candlelight helped a lot, since they couldn't be expected to wash off the things they couldn't see! In about

an hour they had everything washed and stacked on tables to dry. Then they carried a new candle with them up the stairs, down the hallway, and up to their loft. The only movement they saw was their own long shadows dancing along behind them. The only thing they heard as they walked down the hall was the occasional snore or snort from behind the doors they passed. The lock on their door made a loud clank as Adlai turned the key to open it. They went inside, where Adlai locked the door and put the key on the box by her bed. The night was getting cold, so they quickly undressed and put on the puffy, white, flannel nightgowns that Polly had provided. Within a few short moments, they were in bed and the candle was out, but they were not asleep. The moonlight through the window cast a soft glow on the door across the room from where they lay. They wished each other good-night and closed their eyes. Then, there was a strange, far off noise!

Katherine spoke first. "Did you hear that, Adlai?"

"Yes. What do you think it is?"

"Shush. Listen. It sounds like it's coming closer."

They sat up in bed, remaining perfectly still. It was a slow, rhythmic thump, every few seconds, from somewhere far away below them. Thump Thump Thump.

Adlai said, "It sounds like it's coming from the hallway downstairs."

It did sound like it was coming from downstairs, and it also sounded as if it was getting closer and closer. Thump Thump Thump

At last it stopped. But, it stopped directly below them, at the foot of the steps that led to their loft!

Katherine whispered, "I know what it is. Remember the man with one eye at dinner? He only had one leg. The other leg was a wooden stump! The man who Polly said wasn't a pirate? What do you think it would sound like when he

walks down a wooden hallway? Maybe something like thump, thump, thump?”

Adlai answered, “Well, it does sound like it might be him. He’s probably just looking for his room. Polly said he wasn’t a pirate because he didn’t have a parrot. Go to sleep.”

Katherine whispered back, “Polly also said that he wasn’t staying in the hotel, so he shouldn’t be looking for his room. Anyway, our stairs are beyond the doors to any of the rooms. Why is he at the bottom of our stairs?”

But then things got worse. They got much worse. The thumps began to very slowly come up the steps. With each step there was a soft grunt.

Grunt ... Thump Grunt ... ThumpGrunt ... Thump Grunt ... Thump.

They sat up again and stared at the patch of moonlight shining on the door. Their candle was out. Then things got much, much worse. They heard another sound. It was the clank of their door lock. The hinges squeaked terribly as the door slowly opened. When it was half open, they still could see nothing beyond it because the passage was blocked by a large black box that looked like a coffin, standing on end, just outside the doorway.

Then things got much, much, much worse. The door flew the rest of the way open and the large box crashed to the floor, revealing a tall man standing behind it, holding a flickering candle. They couldn’t make out his face as the shadows cast by the candlelight and the moonlight danced across it, but that didn’t stop them from screaming at the top of their voices for as long as their breath would allow. They screamed loud and long, and then it was as silent as death. A frog croaked outside.



Granny's Cove is a lighthearted fantasy adventure that takes place in northern Puget Sound during the little known Pig War between the United States and England. An unexpected wave surprises six modern children and sweeps them into different parts of the story where they attempt to live honorably while searching for each other and the way back to their own time. It is intended for young readers, but is a delight for all ages.

Granny's Cove

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