

*Twelve stories of love include twosomes, family, love lost, love found. Love unseen and immortal through space and time.*

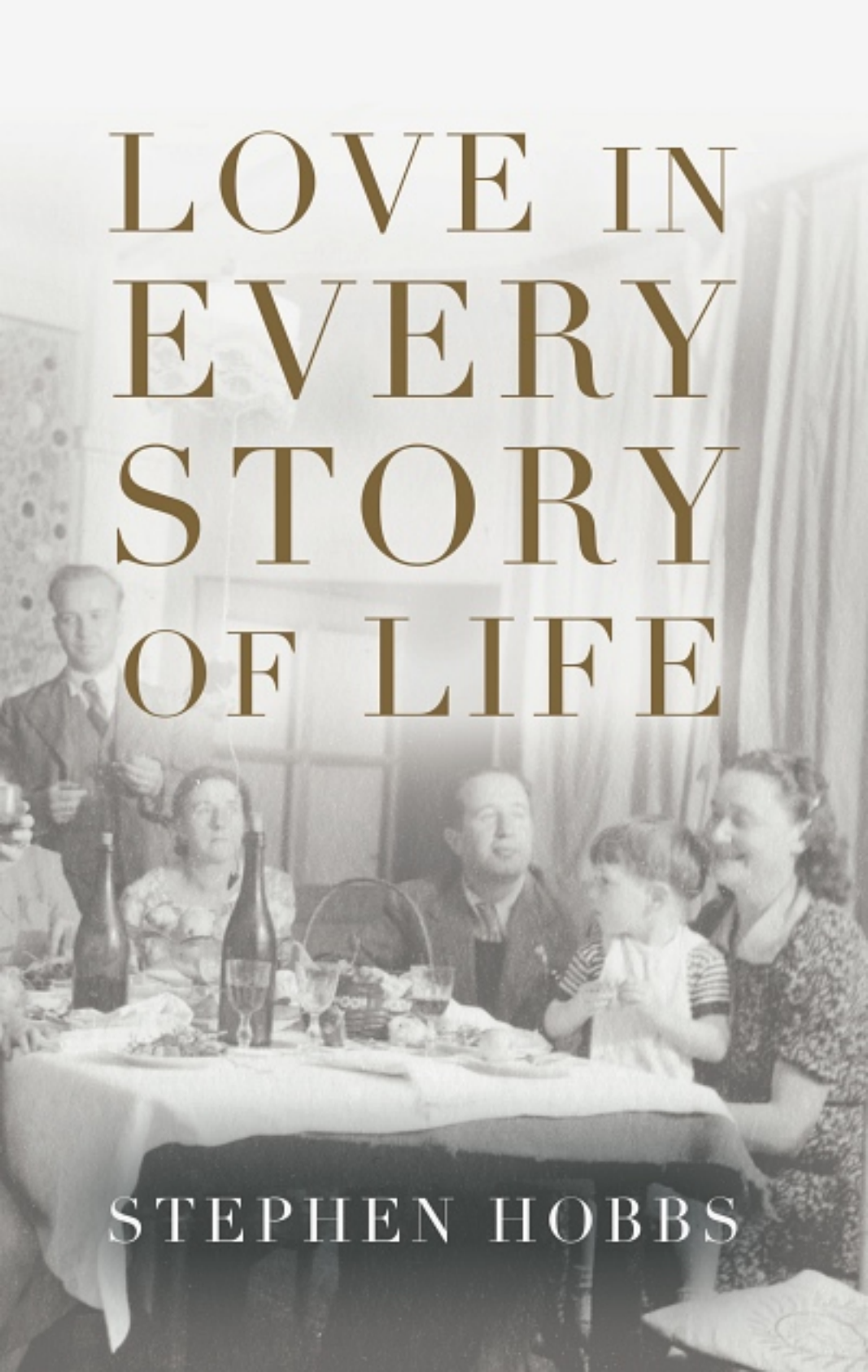
## **LOVE IN EVERY STORY OF LIFE**

By Stephen Hobbs

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STEPHEN HOBBS

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ISBN: 978-1-64719-688-2

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Published by Booklocker.com, Inc

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2021

First Edition

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## Chapter 4

Two days after James Nivens had left the town, Edgar was looking once again at a wanted poster of one “*Abraham Lee Casteel*” with an entirely different view. That view was made possible through his new spectacles. The likeness jumped from the yellowed paper, and the eyes were the giveaway above the bearded face. The square face could be no other than Abe. He knew the man wanted in four states for crimes against humanity now lived in a room over at Bessie’s place. Probably not earned were the two double eagles, but probably taken from some bank under duress. The robbery was the primary justification for the poster; murder was not. The reward was substantial and would be a small fortune if someone wanted to catch for the bounty.

Dead or alive was in block letters and brought a chill to Edgar. Not so much the thought of arresting Abraham, but that now Abraham was in the public’s eye and not hidden away in some remote location. Here he would be vulnerable to someone knowing or a bounty hunter looking for a quick dollar.

True, the image on the paper was more youthful than now. Nonetheless, all it would take would be one person. Edgar put the sheet on his desk and walked to the door in contemplation of his next move.

The town seemed quieter now, as a fuse lit at the mines that once thrived in the northern mountains

would calm the village at one time. Waiting for the current boom, Edgar walked to Bessie's place. He brushed his hair back and straightened his clothes, knowing Bessie probably had her spectacles on. He loved Bessie, this he knew, but the memories were still there in abundance for both. Maybe it was time to sit memories aside and continue with life. After all, both were in their mid-twenties.

Edgar entered to find Abe stooped over the dishpan washing some plates. Bessie was paring some potatoes taken from a truck patch some distance from her diner's back door. Edgar sat down, unfolded his pocketknife, picked up a potato, and immediately dropped it.

Abe had sat down across from Bessie and Edgar, and Bessie laughed at the look on Edgar's face. Edgar was looking at someone he knew, but not as he was. Abe was clean-shaven, and his hair was cut short and styled to his head. Edgar's first thought was that this man sitting across from him looked nothing like the Abraham Lee Casteel on a wanted poster. Edgar had hesitated before speaking of the difference. Edgar knew now he would have no worries, as his decision to forget the wanted poster and the man on it brought a sigh of relief.

Edgar no longer lived at his office, nor did he bed down in an empty cell. Instead, he boarded at Bessie's place. Memories are memories, and love

tends to fade those from the past. He now lived with Bessie behind her café in a small bungalow. Abe had not returned to where he came from a year ago. Edgar knew it had to be close to the fork at Willow Creek, though that was a rough country beyond where a man could become lost. Abe never spoke of the place, as if that time were gone and not retrievable. The only thing that bothered Edgar was the two double eagles that Abe would give Bessie as payment for room and board each month.

It was June when Silas from the triple diamond ranch stopped for lunch and spoke of a search amongst the bluffs along Willow Creek for a bandit of years ago. Edgar noticed Abe flinched just for a moment and continued with his chores. Silas spoke of the search as the search was in vain. The old bandit, in all probability, was long dead. Nonetheless, he wanted Edgar to know. Edgar thanked the ranch owner and asked Silas to keep him informed. Silas said he would, but he doubted the rumors after all these years.

Edgar walked back inside after seeing Silas to his horse, sat down at the table, and wondered again about the problem. Abe swept the floor and slowly worked his way to Edgar. He stood leaning on a broom, and Edgar looked up, knowing Abraham Lee Casteel knew that Edgar knew who he was.

Abe spoke first and said, “Edgar, when did you know?”

Edgar's smile caused Abe to relax as he said, "Before you came to town to live, Abraham. I have a wanted poster showing a representation of you and some of your past criminal activities in my office."

Abe nodded and sat across the table from Edgar, resigned to what was to come.

Edgar continued, "Abraham, you have nothing to fear from me, and I will protect you until the bitter end. Your years are many, and there is no need for you to live in fear of incarceration or in fear itself. Your appearance now is nothing of years ago. For that reason, let them who search find a phantom."

Abe was still holding the broom when Bessie walked in, and he started sweeping from the chair, and then he stopped. Bessie did not know of his past except the time they spent in youth as brother and sister. Abe knew she did not remember, as she was younger than he was by eleven years. Abe was just Abe to her and nothing more than a man, who unbeknownst to Bessie, came into the town regularly to see his sister Bessie and buy supplies.

Their childhood was ripped apart by war, and the chaos that followed led them miles apart. Miles, he slowly erased over the years. He sought his sister and found her here in this town.

Finding the rustic cabin hid in a ravine that Abe called home while hiding from the last bank heist—hidden from them seeking his whereabouts. That was



years ago and his decision to be closer to the only one he knew caused his move to town and the inevitable fact that his life was shorter now than long. Abe wants to share it with his sister, whether she was aware of who he was or not.

Abe looked at Edgar, and Edgar wondered about the tears that glisten on this man's cheeks. Why would he cry because of his statement? But then he knew there was more, much more to the life of Abraham Lee Casteel.



### Chapter 3

**F**or two years, the town accepted the explanation of a family that lived during the night to avoid the sun's rays. Life continued without conflict between the family in the house by the church and others that made up the community.

Matilda was a changed person but still unpredictable. It seemed she was waiting for something, but for the last two years, she was docile.

As for Billy, he fell in love with a young woman he had first seen behind the curtain as he made rounds on that miserable night. When all things changed the moment, a woman clad in white stepped from her home. Sad, though, was that the young lady at the window did not share Billy's love.

Billy tried courting by asking permission to no avail. He tried in so many ways that he ran out of ways to make his affections known, and then came a week of the full moon.

Another full moon had risen over Cottonwood Pass. Billy stopped in awe at the moonrise. It was midnight, and as he turned to continue his rounds, Billy heard wagons. Billy hesitated, and on the horizon, Billy could see a portion of a wagon train as it cleared Cottonwood Pass. He wondered about its movement in the dead of night, and then the sound ceased, and the silhouettes of the carts remained.

Less than a mile worried Billy as to the safety of the populace of Coleville. He saw no movement around the wagons, nor did he observe a campfire or campfires. They were sitting there on the crest of Cottonwood Pass as if waiting to take flight. His intuition told him to walk the distance and inquire of the wagon master about his intentions. However, seeing no movement, so would Billy's walk be in vain?

Billy stood for an hour and saw nothing but the wagons. Giving up, he finished his rounds knowing morning he must travel to Cottonwood Pass and inquire as to their intentions.

The morning light brought Billy from his bed and a trip to the outhouse. As he was returning, Billy looked toward Cottonwood Pass to count the train. It was unnecessary as no wagons were along the ridge of neither the pass nor anywhere else from here to that distant. Billy stood amazed, knowing what he saw in the witching hour was not a figment of his imagination. Still, nothing is there. Billy hurried home, dressed, and from there to the stables to saddle his horse for an early morning ride to the pass.

There was an indication of wagons in the morning's dew, so it had not been long and this morning. Billy could not tell what hour. One thing for sure, he was alone at the pass. From here, Billy could see Coleville and a large part of the country surrounding the town, and there is no wagon train or, for that matter, any wagon that he could see. Here

at the pass, someone dug pits for fires, and they looked fresh and, oddly, unused.

The indentations in the earth appeared strange as though each measured to be precise in roundness. There was an even amount, odd, but even weirder. The rows of holes were in perfect parallel alignment from the first to the last. There were ten on the left and ten on the right and between two more minor indentations a few feet apart but aligned with one another.

Billy made a mental note of his find as he returned to Coleville for some breakfast. At the diner, Billy asked no one of the wagons. However, he had been informed of another family member who arrived at the house beside the church. He felt a cold chill slowly creep up his back.

Not to be obvious, Billy sat across from the church and watched the people of Coleville come and go. He glanced at the house beside the church on several occasions, but Billy saw nothing out of the ordinary.

He was attempting to keep his mind clear of any thoughts of the family. In the last six months, Billy had found they tend to come to the front window if a conversation turned verbal or just an idea of them being a little strange. Billy thought of the young woman from his first encounter at the window. As if on cue, she appeared, framed by the window with curtains draped to one side as if she was on a stage. Billy cannot and wanted not to ignore her, and he

waved and smiled, and she smiled back, and Billy fell deeper in love with someone or thing he cannot have.

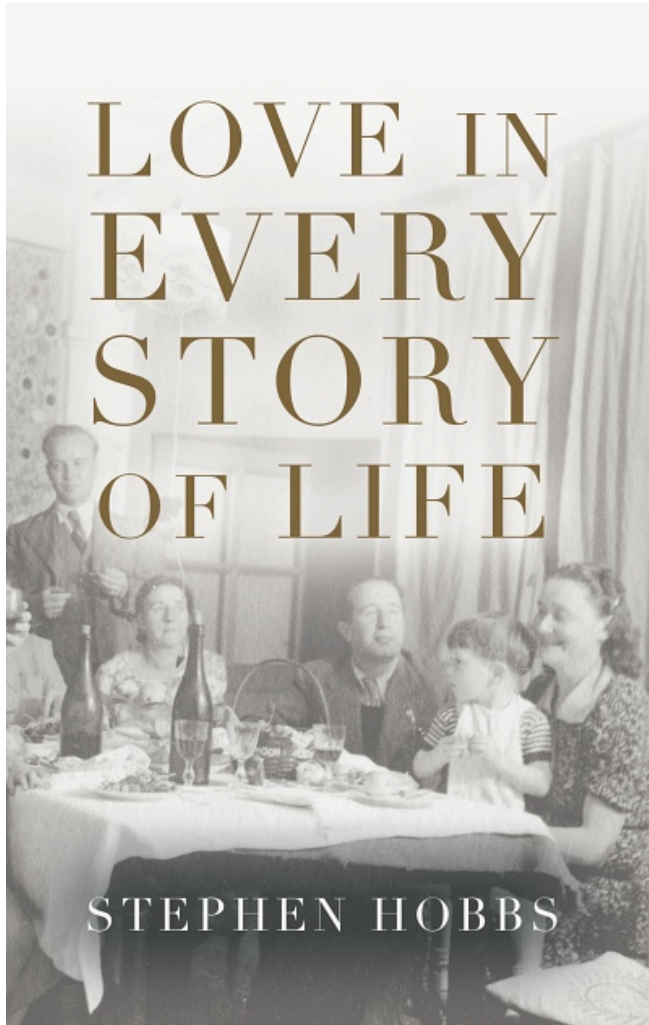
Little did Billy know this twilight evening was the beginning of a friendship that would grow into a lifetime commitment that would not last? As darkness fell, this young lady stepped onto the porch with whatever one would assume could be her father. She beckoned, not her father, for Billy to join them. Hesitantly, he crossed the street, wondering why it had taken two months for his intentions to be recognized.

It seemed the walk of a man going to the gallows as it took minutes for Billy to cross the street. He realized that the young woman was not the one he had seen and fallen in love with but rather an apparent twin. Billy was at a loss for words, but the opportunity to love a likeness seemed appropriate unless one thought about it. The difference was subtle, but the difference was there. Billy tried not to think of his disappointment knowing this strange family and their abilities.

Introduced and Billy accepted the opportunity to be a suitor to the young woman. From that day forward, he never saw the first young woman in the window again, and Billy often wondered when he was alone as to her absence. Billy never asked about the family, nor was there much contact with the family for a week following a young woman's gift. It was as if she was a throwaway of her society and family.

Billy accepted her as a gift, and the oddity of her being able to live in his world of light was refreshing. Unlike her family, who could be seen during a portion of the night going about their lives. During the day, as Billy mentioned earlier, sunlight was an apparent hazard to their very existence.

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