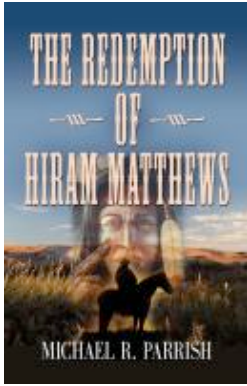


THE REDEMPTION OF HIRAM MATTHEWS



MICHAEL R. PARRISH



Hiram Matthews is convinced that his abducted son is still a captive and living among the Comanche. Seven years after the boy's disappearance, he abandons everything to search for the boy. With little to guide him, he sets out on a journey that will lead him into encounters with hostiles, gun runners, and buffalo hunters. Along the way, he will form new friendships and come to grips with the disappearance of his son.

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

Order the complete book from

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

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6657.html?s=pdf>

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

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

**The Redemption of
Hiram Matthews**
A Novel

Michael R. Parrish

Copyright © 2013 Michael R. Parrish

ISBN 978-1-62141-985-3

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.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2013

First Edition

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my wife, Suzanne, my best friend and love for forty seven years. Thanks for your encouragement and belief in me.

For Kimberly, my daughter, our first college graduate, wonderful mother, and successful business woman. Thanks for your example of success and hard work.

For Robert, my son, who has pursued and captured his own dream of becoming a pilot.

For Isabella, Gracie, Sammie and Bobby for believing that Grandpa can do anything.

Chapter One

Hiram Matthews knew what he had to do. He had thought about it all night. The decision had been in the making for some time, ever since the death of his beloved wife Sarah. Will Hardison's generous offer had made things much easier. As he lay staring at the ceiling of his small ranch house bedroom his resolve had strengthened. It didn't make any sense and he knew it, but he was finally at peace with the decision. He would speak to Aaron in the morning. He needed to know what was coming. He had been Hiram's foreman for almost eight years and during that time Aaron had come to be a true friend.

“Friends are hard to come by”, he thought. “Good friends are even more rare. A man is lucky if he has two or three friends like Aaron during an entire lifetime. I hate to have to tell him.”

The sun was beginning to peak in the east and Hiram had already lain in the bed later than he was accustomed. No sense in putting it off. Maybe he could catch Aaron before he and the hands rode out. He rolled out of the old four- poster that Sarah had loved.

“It's cold this morning,” he thought. Cold seemed to bother him more and more with passing years. Too many falls, too many wild range steers, and too many nights spent sleeping on the ground. Building a ranch was tough work. It had been his passion before Ethan had disappeared. And then Sarah had died. That was the final blow. His passion was gone.

He slipped his trousers off the hook on the wall and slid into his well-worn boots. He walked to the porch and looked toward the bunk house. He saw the flicker of a lantern. He glanced toward the barn and Aaron was leading his saddled mount.

Michael R. Parrish

“Aaron, come on up to the house, I need to talk to you,” he yelled.

“Be right there Hiram,” Aaron replied. “Just let me make sure the boys are lined out.”

“That's fine; I'll get some coffee on.”

Hiram walked back into the kitchen and picked up the poker from the stand next to the stove and stirred the coals and ashes. He opened the door and threw in some kindling. A few strokes from the small bellows and the kindling took. “Damn” he thought to himself. It was hardest this time of day. Sarah was always the one to get the stove going and to put the coffee on. He missed her more than he could say. He had taken her death hard and he blamed himself. She had become deeply depressed when little Ethan had disappeared. Ethan loved playing in the small creek not more than two hundred yards from the house. He had wandered off while Sarah had been busy with chores. He was never seen again. It was clear that he had been abducted. Sarah blamed herself for his disappearance. “Why would they take our boy and not me?” she had asked a thousand times. Hiram was never able to reconcile that fact. Why? There was no answer.

He had tried everything that he could. He had turned more and more of managing the ranch over to Aaron so he could spend more time with Sarah. She had held on for seven years after Ethan's disappearance, but the last year had come crashing down on her. Her health had deteriorated over the years. The depression and the grief had taken their toll. And then the sickness had come. She had become too frail almost overnight to be able to move her to a city back east where she could receive any sort of medical help. There were no doctor's close by. There were home remedies and herbal concoctions. Nothing had helped. There was no way to know what was wrong with her for sure. He just knew that she was wasting away and dying. Then in

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

June she has died. The end was rough and painful. It seemed as though all of her grief and sorrow had been transferred to him.

“How did I allow this to happen?” He had asked himself. “I should have sold this place years ago and taken her to St. Louis to be close to her family.”

The ranch had killed her. Not so much the ranch itself. It was the constant reminder that her only child had been taken from her there. “If we had just gotten any idea of whether he was alive or dead, maybe she could have gotten some closure,” he thought. It was the never knowing that had gnawed at the both of them for nearly seven years and now she was gone.

The knock on the door brought him back from his thoughts.

“Hiram, you wanted to talk to me?” Aaron called.

“Come on in Aaron.”

Aaron Russell was tall and sinewy. His looks didn't tell his age. He had turned forty-five on his last birthday. Years of chasing cows had hardened and tanned his face to a well burnished bronze. He had wrangled cows since he was fourteen. It was pretty much all he knew. He could read and write a little, but the range had been his school and his life. The wrinkles around his eyes were from years of squinting at the Texas sun. A twinge of gray appeared on his temples. When his hat was off - which was bedtime, or meal time, or indoors - you could see that his hair was also beginning to thin. He wasn't an overly handsome man, but he certainly wasn't ugly either. His slightly bowed legs revealed that he had spent most of his life on horseback. He was a good wrangler and a better foreman. He always seemed to know what needed to be done and how it needed to be done. He was good with the hands. The men respected him and trusted him. He was the most honest man that Hiram had ever known.

“What's up Hiram?”

Michael R. Parrish

“Got something I need to tell you Aaron and it's not gonna be easy.”

Aaron knew Hiram was straight spoken and would not dance around the matter whatever it was. He could tell it was something serious by the look on Hiram's face. “I hope I haven't done something,” he thought. He took a seat at the kitchen table and waited.

“I've made a tough decision, Aaron. It hasn't come easy and it affects you and the boys. Best I say it straight out. Truth is I'm selling the ranch. Will Hardison is buying the place - lock, stock and barrel. He's a good man and honest. He'll keep you and the hands on.”

Aaron sat for several moments as the news sunk in. “That's a cold wind out of the north. Why in the world would you want to do such a thing? I've known you - what - eight years, and I know how much of yourself you've put into building this place. I helped you bury Sarah right out there under the big oak. Why in the world would you want to give it all up? What are you planning on doin?”

Hiram set two cups on the table and poured coffee. “There's something I have to do Aaron and I can't have the worry of the ranch. I'm hell bent on finding my son.”

Hiram and Aaron had talked about Ethan's disappearance. “My god, Hiram. I don't mean to be callus about it, but you have to know your boy is probably dead. We've talked about this. Indians don't normally keep male children. Hell, you don't even know for sure that's what happened to him. I know how much Sarah suffered with all this and now you want to go off looking for Ethan. Where? What direction? Where would you begin?”

“I know it don't make any sense Aaron. I just feel like I can somehow bring some peace to Sarah, even though she's gone. And this has been eating a hole in my gut too. I just don't believe

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

the boy's dead. I never did. I know it in my bones that he's out there somewhere.”

Aaron shook his head. “If you want my opinion, and I know before you say it, you didn't ask my opinion, but I believe what you're wanting to do is a damn fool thing. You've got the ranch, and the boys are a good bunch. We can keep this thing together for you if you need to be gone a while. If you sell the ranch there will be nothing to come back to. ”

Hiram looked at Aaron with an “I know that you're right” look in his eye. “Aaron, you're more than just a ranch foreman to me. You're as good a friend as I've ever had. We think a lot alike, you and me. And in my heart I know you're probably right, but my mind's made up. My heart's not in the ranch anymore. You've been running the place since Sarah took sick. Besides, with what Will is paying me for the ranch and with what we got last summer when we sold most of the herd I'll never have to worry about money. It's just something I've got to do. If I don't do this, I might as well put a gun to my head.”

Aaron looked at the floor for a long time. Neither man spoke. Neither needed to. Aaron stood and extended his hand. Hiram grasped his friend's weathered hand. The two men looked into one another's eyes and both simply nodded. Aaron looked at the floor again and then back into Hiram's eyes. “You want to tell the men or you want me to do it?”

“Best if I tell them personally. I owe them that much. I've got to go to Waco and I'll tell them when I get back. I'll leave at first light tomorrow. Probably be gone seven or eight days at least. If you can keep things going for a few days I'd appreciate it. “

“All right then,” Aaron replied softly as he turned to leave.

Chapter Seven

Hiram set his direction for the ranch. He was hoping to make a few miles before sundown. But he had been thinking about what Zeb had said. "It would be good to have someone who had better tracking skills. Better still to have someone who can communicate with Indians," he had thought. "No harm in talking," he said to his mare as he patted her neck. He reined his mare toward the confluence of the Brazos and Bosque Rivers.

Two Colors was of mixed race. His mother was a Huaco Indian. His father was a white buffalo hunter. He had met Two Colors' mother in the Huaco settlement near Waco. Huaco women were often some of the prettiest among the various Indian cultures and were sought after as wives. His father had traded for Two Color's mother and had taken her as a wife according to Huaco tradition. He had taken her with him on his hunts. After a couple of years, following the birth of Two Colors, he had grown tired of her and abandoned her. She was left on the plains with a baby, a dog, and only a few days food and water.

His father had simply ridden away and was never heard from again. She had somehow survived and had walked back to Waco and the few Huacos that had remained there. Two Colors and his mother had remained with kin in the Huaco settlement and she had raised him there on the banks of the Brazos. When the Huacos were herded onto reservations, Two Colors had managed to find a place in the army as a scout. After a time he had come back to his current place near Waco. The citizens of Waco saw him as no threat and he was tolerated by the community. He now lived in a grass hut about a half mile north of where the two rivers joined.

It took Hiram some hunting to find the hut. He had thought about what he might say to the man. "Hello, my name is

Matthews, and I've come to see if you want to wander around with me and probably get yourself killed? Or maybe "My name is Matthews and I was just wondering if you could help me find someone that I don't even know is still alive," he said sarcastically to himself. "Maybe I am crazy," he thought.

He spied the hut about where Zeb had said he would find it. It looked like the bottom half of a giant hour glass. He felt he should approach with caution. He didn't want to get himself shot before he could even get well out of Waco. He reigned in his mare about one hundred feet from the hut. He sat and watched to see if anyone were stirring. Smoke drifted slowly from the center of the hut. No movement.

He rode closer. "Hello," he yelled and waited. Still no movement. "Hello," he called again. Then off to his left he heard the "click, clack" of the bolt being thrown on a rifle.

"Who are you and what do you want?" The voice came from the same direction.

"I'm looking for a man called Two Colors."

"You the law?" came the reply.

"My name is Hiram Matthews and I need to speak with Mr. Colors." He winced.

"Mr. Colors? You some kind of smart ass, white man?"

"I need to talk with the man, that's all."

"Climb down from that mare and walk to the opening by the hut. And keep your hands where I can see them," came the reply.

A man appeared from the brush to Hiram's left. He was holding a rifle and it was aimed squarely at Hiram.

"Are you Two Colors?" Hiram asked as the man continued to approach.

"I've been called by that name some. I go by another name now. If you're not the law, why you out here?"

Hiram thought a second before he replied. "I have need of someone who can track and speak Indian."

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

“Well, I can track, but I can't speak Indian. I don't know what that is. I speak English, Comanche, and Wichita. I can cuss in Spanish,” he replied.

“I'm in need of a good man and can pay forty dollars a month, Mr.....?”

“Name's Joshua. Don't ever call me Two Colors. And I ain't looking for a job,” he said flatly.

“You haven't heard me out. Can you put the gun down and let me explain?”

“I don't trust no white man that ain't ranger or army. You ain't either.”

Hiram was beginning to wonder why he was wasting his time. “You're right. I'm neither. I'm a father who wants to find his son and I need help with that. It's that simple, but if you aren't interested, you aren't interested. I'll be on my way.”

“What happened to your son? He lost?”

“No, my son is not lost. He was taken by raiders, probably Comanche.”

“And you want me to track the bunch that took him?” Joshua asked. “I don't like Comanches,” he added.

“I suppose you could say that.”

“You drink coffee, white man?”

Hiram nodded. Joshua lowered the gun and motioned toward the large hut. “Come on in and let's talk.”

The inside of the hut was lined with skins and there was a sturdy cot. There was a fire ring in the middle of the hut and a small fire was burning. There were skins scattered around the fire ring. The cot, a small table, and a large wooden box were the only furniture. Joshua went to the box and pulled out a small sack of coffee and two tin cups. The pot sat next to the fire ring. Once the coffee was hanging over the fire he turned his attention to Hiram, who had sat on a skin by the fire.

“You said you thought Comanche took your son.”

Michael R. Parrish

"I can't be absolutely certain, but nothing else seems to make much sense," Hiram replied.

"If it's true, I would think you ain't too fond of Indians. And you want me, an Indian, to help you find him?" Joshua offered.

"I bear the Comanche nor any other man malice. I just want to find my son."

Joshua thought about Hiram's words for a moment.

"Your boy. How old?" he asked abruptly.

"He would be about twelve now."

"How many days since he was taken?"

"Well," said Hiram "It's been a number of days."

"So, how many is a number? Two, three?"

"The boy was taken about seven years ago." Hiram said flatly.

Joshua laughed and stared intently at Hiram. "I'm a good tracker, mister, but I don't do miracles."

"I don't need you for tracking as much as I need you to translate and scout." Hiram explained. "I'm headed back to my place, and then I'm going north to Ft. Graham. I hope to get an idea of where to look from a ranger up there and I could use your help."

"You got a name white man?"

"I'm Hiram Matthews," he said as he extended his hand.

"You're crazy Matthews? Your boy's probably dead," Joshua exclaimed.

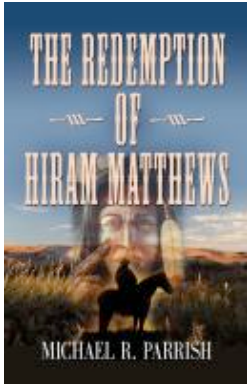
"Next man tells me that, I'm gonna shoot." Hiram said grimly.

Joshua raised a hand with his index finger pointing at the sky. "But - I got a soft spot for crazy fathers lookin' for their lost sons. But doin' crazy will cost you fifty dollars a month."

"Done," Hiram replied. He liked the straightforward nature of the man. "Gather what you need for the trail. We can still make a few miles before nightfall."

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

“Too late in the day, Matthews. Get your bedroll, and you can sleep in here tonight. We can leave at first light. Besides, the coffees done,” he said as he pointed at the pot.



Hiram Matthews is convinced that his abducted son is still a captive and living among the Comanche. Seven years after the boy's disappearance, he abandons everything to search for the boy. With little to guide him, he sets out on a journey that will lead him into encounters with hostiles, gun runners, and buffalo hunters. Along the way, he will form new friendships and come to grips with the disappearance of his son.

The Redemption of Hiram Matthews

Order the complete book from

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

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6657.html?s=pdf>

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