



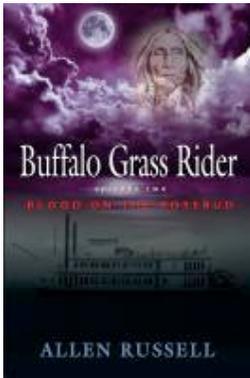
Buffalo Grass Rider

episode two

BLOOD ON THE ROSEBUD



ALLEN RUSSELL



Blood on the Rosebud is episode two of the **Buffalo Grass Rider** series. It chronicles the life of Bolt Ashton, a man known as *Buffalo Grass Rider* among the Indians. Bolt and the Sioux warrior Lone Elk are once again united as Bolt is drawn into a bloody confrontation with a well-financed and powerful group of land grabbers and their army of hired gunmen intent on taking over the vast Lonesome Wind Ranch.

Buffalo Grass Rider

Blood on the Rosebud

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Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

Sliding to a stop in the bottom of the coulee, Bolt bailed off his horse and pulled his wounded partner out of the saddle. With Eb safely under cover, Bolt took off his neckerchief and tightened it around the bloody hole in Eb's leg. Rusty landed in the grass beside them and began firing his rifle at their rapidly approaching pursuers. With a swarm of bullets whistling over his head, Bolt finally shouldered his rifle and got in the fight.

The lead rider went down with Bolt's first shot. As he levered in another round, Bolt became aware of gunfire coming from over his shoulder. Spinning around, he spotted Coop and the Bunch from the Lonesome Wind riding hard to the sound of battle.

Without hesitation, Coop and the boys came thundering down into the coulee and up the other side, the pounding hooves of their horses scattering dirt over Bolt and Eb as the Bunch charged over the rim and straight into the startled Rosebud riders.

Two more Rosebud riders were shot off their horses before they could turn around and run. The remainder abandoned their fallen companions and lit out toward the north. Now in full retreat, Buck Brannon shouted over his shoulder.

"This ain't over, Cooper!"

"You're damn right it ain't!" Coop yelled, "You stay the hell off my land!"

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Chapter One: 1877, Difficult, Tennessee

A waning afternoon thunderstorm was still rumbling in the distance when the crack of a rifle echoed across the misty hills of Smith County, Tennessee. Fired from a log house on the knoll above, the shot was meant as a warning to the wagon driver and the two men on horseback making their way up from the road. The big man driving the mule-drawn wagon was county sheriff, Sam Boston. The men on horseback were well dressed investors from the north, better known to southerners as carpetbaggers.

The second bullet from the hidden rifleman splattered mud when it hit in the lane directly under the belly of the lead horse. Unable to control his suddenly bucking mount, the smaller carpetbagger was dumped onto the muddy ground. His companion quickly vacated his saddle and took cover behind the wagon. Sam Boston calmly got down from the wagon seat and took hold of the nervous mule's bridle. In addition to being the county sheriff, Sam was a first cousin to the hidden rifleman.

The men cowering behind the wagon were Landon Lockhart and his brother Jacob, land speculators who liked to show off in front of the not so well-off southerners. That afternoon was no exception. They were both wearing impeccably tailored suits and wide-brimmed hats.

"That hillbilly tried to kill us!" Landon yelled from behind the wagon.

Sam stood quietly still holding the mule. "If he'd been trying to kill you, you'd be dead right now."

Angered by the fall and his muddy clothes, Jacob wanted action. "What are you going do about this, Sheriff?"

Instead of answering, Sam shouted at the house. "Trace Ashton, come out of there with your hands empty! It's too late to save this farm!"

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The rifleman remained hidden behind a partially opened shutter. “Turn that wagon around and get out of here, Sam! I’m not letting those Damn Yankees take this farm.”

The Ashton farm was three hundred acres of rolling hills near the small settlement of Difficult, Tennessee. Built out of poplar logs by Trace Ashton’s grandfather, the house sat on a hill above Defeated Creek, about a mile from where it empties into the Cumberland River.

Aside from Sam, the only family Trace had left was his older brother, Bolt, who left Smith County when the Civil War broke out. Bolt served in the Union Army and moved west when the war was over. Trace had been too young to fight. He had been farming the land all alone since his parents had passed on.

“Talking isn’t going to work, Sheriff,” Jacob said, “I told you we should have brought more men.”

Landon was out of patience. “This farm was sold for back taxes and we paid good money for it. It’s all legal and we want him out of here.”

“If that white trash wants to die here that’s fine with me,” Jacob added, “If we were in Michigan this would...”

“We aren’t in Michigan,” Sam said turning back to the Lockharts.

The Lockhart family had amassed a fortune during the Civil War producing blankets and woolen uniforms for the Union Army. With their family’s encouragement, Landon and Jacob decided to move south and buy up all the cheap land they could get their hands on. Neither of them had served in the army. They were arrogant, self-centered men who looked down on all poor folks, especially southerners.

The Lockhart brothers knew the best way to get what they wanted was to enlist the help of the local officials. They had plenty of money and county judge Lester Gibbs was just the man they needed.

Every farmer in the county was behind on their taxes in 1877. Cash was almost nonexistent for most of the farmers in post-war

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Tennessee. Back taxes had never been an issue until the Lockharts showed up and got real cozy with the judge.

People living back in the hills didn't have a problem as yet, but the judge was forcing all the good bottomland farms to pay up or be auctioned. The bidding always went the Lockhart's way and Judge Gibbs seemed to be living real well lately.

Turning back to the house, Sam tried one more time to reason with his desperate cousin.

"Trace, you don't have a claim here anymore. The judge has already signed the deed over to these men. It isn't right, but it was all legal and you have to go!" After a few moments of silence and no response from Trace, Sam got red in the face. "We both know you ain't gonna shoot me! But if you force me to come up there, you're gonna wish you had!"

"What am I supposed to do?" Trace asked, "Where can I go?"

"Anywhere would be better than this," Sam replied, "The whole country's going to hell. Why don't you get out of here and go find your brother?"

Trace wasn't alone in the cabin. His life-long friend, Isaiah Little Wolf, was with him.

"You know I'll stand with you whatever comes," Isaiah said, "but this is pointless. Sam's right, you aren't going to hurt him over a piece of land. Sam's just doing his job. You know better than anyone he can't be run off."

Isaiah had been Trace's friend longer than either of them could remember. Isaiah's mother was full-blooded Cherokee. His father had been a Scottish immigrant that abandoned his family and left Tennessee right after Isaiah was born.

"Let's go west," Isaiah said. "We can follow the Cumberland to the Ohio River and then to the Mississippi. St. Louis is the jumping off place for many of the wagon trains heading for the frontier or we can

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get a job on a river boat and work our way up the Missouri River to Montana.”

“It is getting pretty tame around here,” Trace said, “but this is my family’s land.”

“It was your family’s land, but no more.”

Trace walked to the door and paused. Placing his hand on the latch, he took a deep breath and opened the door just a crack.

“Alright Sam, don’t start thinking I’m scared of you, but we’re coming out.” After laying down his gun, Trace walked out the door of his home for what was likely to be the last time.

The Lockharts got to their feet and stood behind the wagon when Trace and Isaiah emerged from the cabin. Trace was a young man about thirty-years-old. He stood just over six feet tall with a muscular build. He had long sandy brown hair almost to his collar. He was clean shaven and tan from working in the fields.

Isaiah was a couple of inches shorter, stocky with long black hair and dark skin. His features were very much native American. He was dressed in a leather shirt. His brown pinstriped trousers were tucked into knee high lace-up boots and he had a large knife on his belt.

Jacob raised his rifle and pointed it in the direction of Trace and Isaiah as they made their way down to the wagon.

“That boy’s unarmed and he’s family,” Sam said, “If you touch that trigger, you’re a dead man.” After a moment of hesitation, Jacob lowered his gun.

After Trace and Isaiah made it down to the lane, Sam ordered them to get in the wagon bed.

“Why are you arresting us?” Isaiah asked.

Before Sam could answer, Jacob started shaking his finger in Isaiah’s face. “You fired that shot at us, half-breed. That’s attempted murder!”

“That’s enough,” Sam said, stepping between them, “I’m still the law around here. I’ll take care of this.”

“See that you do,” Landon warned.

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While the Lockhart's gathered up their horses and walked away, Sam loaded the boys into the wagon and started down the lane toward the road. At the bottom of the hill, they passed the little family graveyard where three generations of Ashton's were buried. Unable to bear the thought of leaving them behind, Trace hung his head to hide the tears in his eyes.

"You're too young to remember," Sam said, "but Bolt and I cut a pretty wide swath through these hills back when we were young. It's different now; it's not the same country it was then."

"Bolt wouldn't know this place anymore," Trace said.

"I wish Bolt was here now," Sam said, "He never gave a damn about rules or what anybody thought. I remember the day we met Davy Crockett. One of the things Davy told us was to never let anybody else run our lives. He said as long as we knew it was right, just go ahead. Bolt lived by that and let the devil take anybody that got in his way."

"It nearly killed me when Bolt left to go fight with the Union Army. I prayed every night we'd never face each other on the same battlefield. As time went by, I swear I started to wish I had gone with him. I'm grateful we both survived. I miss that hardheaded brother of yours."

Trace smiled, "Mom always said Bolt was as hardheaded and stubborn as they come."

"She was right about that," Sam replied.

They pulled up in front of the county courthouse in Carthage and Sam led them into the jail next door.

"You boys sit tight. I'll be back later with your supper. In the meantime, I expect you both to stay here. You can light a fire if you get cold, there's coffee in the cupboard." Leaving the cell door open, Sam locked the front door and went down the street.

The jail grew dark as the sun went down. There were seldom any prisoners and the boys were alone. The street was quiet outside and they had plenty of time to reflect on their predicament.

Trace was lying on one of two small bunks in the cell. The light from a stubby candle flickered on the wall behind him. "Yesterday I

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owned three hundred acres of good land. Now I've got nothing and I'm in jail."

Isaiah was sitting on the bunk across from Trace. "We've been talking about going west, now there's nothing holding us here. The frontier is where we belong. I've read about the Missouri River and all the wonders that are in Dakota and Montana."

"That's easy for you to say. You didn't just lose a fine piece of land. My family has owned that farm since the Revolution."

"My family lost everything from here to the salt water."

"You know what I mean."

"God owns that land," Isaiah said, "Always has and always will. All you'll ever really own is your soul. The rest is temporary, and you'll be leaving it all here when you make the journey."

"I suppose you're right."

"It's said, there's land in Montana where a man can see for miles and mountains that reach far above the clouds. They make the Smoky Mountains look like foothills. Herds of deer, antelope, elk, buffalo and a fierce bear they call the grizzly. It can be a hundred and ten degrees in the summer and forty below zero in the winter. It's all just waiting for us."

"I hate that Cherokee attitude of yours," Trace said. "You sound just like your Mother."

"Maybe so, but you know I'm right."

Trace sat up and put his feet on the floor. "Alright, I'm with you."

Isaiah got to his feet, "Good, let's get out of here and head for the river."

"We'll wait for Sam," Trace said. "But I'm telling you right now, if I get all the way to Montana only to end up getting scalped by some of your cousins, eaten by a grizzly, or freezing to death in a blizzard, I swear the last thing I'm gonna do is shoot you."

Not far away, the Lockharts were enjoying a drink at the Walton Inn. They were sitting with two of their hired gunmen, Bert Sloan and Bob Taylor.

"I want you three to go to the courthouse," Landon said. "If Boston is gone, break Ashton and the half-breed out of jail."

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Jacob sat his mug down and wiped the foam from his upper lip, "And do what with them?"

"We're going to make an example of them. Nobody shoots at me and gets away with it. If this bunch of dirt farmers gets the idea they can keep us off their land by shooting at us, we're done."

Trace and Isaiah were sitting in the dark when they heard someone break the glass out of the front door.

"Is that Sam?" Isaiah asked.

"Sounds like trouble," Trace said getting to his feet.

The glow of lanterns illuminated the jail as three armed men walked in and approached the boy's cell. Jacob Lockhart was in the lead. Taylor and Sloan were with him.

"You're coming with us," Jacob said.

"We ain't going anywhere," Trace replied.

Jacob stood in the cell door and held a rifle on them, "Move, or I'll shoot you where you stand."

After tying their hands, Jacob and his companions led the boys out of the jail and down toward the river. A stray dog barked at them from the shadows of a dark alley. The only light was from a couple of oil lamps spaced along the street.

"You know they're going to kill us," Isaiah said.

"For a half-breed, you're pretty smart," Taylor said.

"Let the Indian go," Trace said, "I'm the one who shot at you."

Jacob jammed a rifle barrel against Trace's back, "Shut your mouth, I'm tired of listening to you."

It was quiet down along the riverfront. The low-lying fog created a sense of impending doom as it spread across the dark surface of the water. Assorted bits of debris swirled in the eddy under the dock.

"You two move over there by the edge," Jacob said. "I don't want to drag your bodies any farther than I have to. You boys should be in Nashville in a couple of weeks, but I don't think you're going to enjoy the trip."

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His anger growing, Trace turned to Jacob. “Why don’t you cowards untie my hands and we’ll see who goes to Nashville.”

“Not likely,” Jacob replied.

Taylor was watching with a smirk on his face, “You damned Ashton’s don’t know when you’re whipped.”

Trace spun around and lunged at Taylor, “I’ll show you who’s whipped.” Before he could reach Taylor, Sloan smashed Trace in the back with a rifle butt. Trace went down hard and Isaiah knelt beside him.

“Are you alright?”

“Yeah,” Trace whispered, “Can you swim with your hands tied.”

“I suppose, but...”

“When I rush Lockhart, you take to the river. I’ll try and follow you.”

“I’m not leaving you behind with these killers.”

“Alright you two, on your feet,” Jacob ordered. “I want both of you to see...”

Jacob was interrupted by a booming voice from the darkness, “Drop those guns and stand still!”

Spinning around to face the voice, Sloan blurted out what they were all thinking, “Sam Boston!”

With weapons raised, the armed men peered into the darkness attempting to locate Sam. Gripped by panic, Jacob fumbled with his rifle’s lever, ejecting a live round. Sloan and Taylor began firing as Jacob managed to get the rifle cocked. With the first shots, Isaiah dropped to the dock beside Trace to get out of the line of fire. In the growing chaos of pistol shots and muzzle flashes, Jacob finally leveled his rifle in Sam’s general direction and yanked the trigger.

A veteran of many battles, Sam had been killing Yankees since 1861. With Trace and Isaiah out of the way, Sam opened up with his Winchester. The first bullet hit Jacob in the center of the chest, dropping him to the dock and killing him instantly. The second bullet drove Bob Taylor backwards off the dock and into the dark current.

Trace rolled onto his side and kicked the feet out from the one remaining gunman. Bert Sloan hit the dock hard, dropping his gun.

Unable to locate his pistol, Sloan abandoned the fight and rolled into the river to escape. In the darkness, they could hear him swimming for the other side.

Trace struggled to his knees and grabbed Jacob's rifle. Even with his hands tied, he managed to work the lever and fire from the hip. "I hope you drown, you son-of-a-bitch!" he yelled into the darkness. He continued to fire until the rifle was empty, then picked up Sloan's pistol and emptied it.

"Are you about done?" Sam asked when he joined them on the dock.

"Hell no, I ain't done," Trace stormed, getting to his feet. "Untie my hands. Let's get a boat and go after him."

"There's no time for that," Sam warned. "Help me with this body. If we get Jacob in the river it may take a while for anybody to figure out what happened to him."

After rolling Jacob off the dock, Sam turned to Trace, "You all need to get out of here before we draw a crowd. I was coming to get you when I found the jail open. I figured they'd bring you down here. You boys have to get away from here for good. Lockhart won't rest until he finds you to even the score for getting his brother killed."

"I think you just killed his brother," Trace said.

"Either way, they'll be after you. I've got Isaiah's canoe loaded. There are bedrolls, food and water along with your guns and knives. I wasn't going to let Judge Gibbs keep you boys in jail for trying to save your home."

"Won't you be in trouble when they find out we're gone?" Isaiah asked.

"If you'll quit talking and get the hell out of here, nobody will know I was here. I don't think Lockhart will try and do anything to me himself. He'll try and arrange for someone to shoot me in the back. Just remember, you boy's will be wanted outlaws."

"You all stay away from any towns until you're out of Tennessee. If Sloan managed to dodge all that lead and he doesn't drown, he'll be telling Lockhart about his brother as soon as he gets out of the river."

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Trace had finally calmed down. “Sam, why don’t you just come with us? We could find Bolt and be a family again. Last time he wrote Mom, Bolt was somewhere near Coulter Creek, Montana.”

“It has crossed my mind, but I can’t go right now. I won’t allow this Yankee scum to think they ran me out of here. Now get out of here and good luck to you boys.”

“Well, we’re on our way,” Trace said once they were on the river. “It’s a good thing Sam came along when he did. With this current, we should pass Nashville tomorrow night.”

“We can hunt and fish for our meals,” Isaiah said. “We’ll hold up in the daytime and travel at night until we pass Paducah. Then we’ll be on the Ohio River and out of Tennessee. It’s all downstream until we hit the Mississippi. I figure it’ll take us a couple of weeks to reach St. Louis.”

The fog was still thick on the river and the predawn air was cold. The eastern sky was turning gray as Trace sat shivering in the back of the canoe. They were miles downriver from Carthage and making good time as the river was running strong with the spring rains.

“I hope we can find Bolt when we get to Montana,” Trace said.

“Montana is a big territory. Do you have any idea where Coulter Creek might be?”

“I heard Ma talking about it one time. I think it’s in the southeast, near the Yellowstone River. Bolt called the ranch, the Lonesome Wind. We’ll start in Coulter Creek and try to find someone who knows the way to the ranch. I’m gonna take a nap, you keep watch.”

Landon Lockhart was up early, wondering where his brother might be when Sloan walked onto the porch and knocked on the door.

Expecting his brother, Landon opened the door. “What happened, you’re soaking wet, where’s Jacob?”

Sloan was shivering in his wet clothes. “We got those two out of the jail just like you told us and took ‘em down to the river. Boston was waiting for us, must’ve been half-a-dozen men with him. We gun

fought them, but they killed Jacob and Taylor. I held them off as long as I could and took to the river to get away.”

“Dammit, Sam Boston again. What happened to Ashton and the Indian?”

“I said...Boston killed Jacob...your brother...he’s dead.”

“Yeah...I heard you. You say there were six men with Boston?”

“At least...maybe more.”

“Who were they?”

“I ah...I don’t really know...it was dark and there was a lot of lead flying.”

“Doesn’t matter right now; get the rest of the men. I’ll pay five hundred dollars to the man who brings Ashton and the Indian back, dead or alive.”

“I need dry clothes then we’ll get after ‘em. What about Boston?”

“Leave Sam Boston to me. Get those two before they get away.”

The sun was up by the time Sloan rounded up the rest of Landon’s men. He told them about the reward and gave them instructions.

“Ashton has family on the frontier somewhere, so they’re probably headed west. Some of you take the Walton Road and try to find some sign; they may be headed to Nashville. Two of you come with me. We’ll go downriver by boat in case they went that way.”

The day was warming when Trace was awakened by a gray heron squawking at them from a treetop nest overhanging the river. Isaiah was still paddling along with the current.

“Why don’t you get some sleep?” Trace said, “I’ll take over for a while.”

Ready for a rest, Isaiah was asleep in a few minutes. The river was peaceful and traveling with the current was easy. While Trace paddled, he thought back to the last time he had seen his brother.

Trace was only fifteen when he and Bolt went fishing on a warm spring day. That was just two days before Bolt killed four men in a gunfight over a runaway slave. That fishing trip had been sixteen years before.

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Bolt came home after the war, but only for a day. When he found out the love of his life had married another and he was wanted for murder, Bolt left Tennessee and headed west. Trace hadn't seen his big brother in more than a dozen years.

Trace was seventeen years younger than Bolt. His mother called him her little midlife surprise. He really didn't know if Bolt was alive or even in Montana, but it was too late to turn back. He had nothing to go back to except a jail cell or possibly a hangman's noose. Isaiah talked about the frontier so much Trace was looking forward to seeing the west.

The day warmed quickly as the sun climbed higher. People in the settlements along the river were beginning to stir. After reaching an isolated section of river, Trace pulled the canoe up into a little feeder creek surrounded by thick woods.

"We'll hold up here until dark," he said, "then go on toward Nashville tonight."

Isaiah got out some braided cotton line and a hook to catch some fish for breakfast while Trace covered the canoe with brush. It didn't take long till the Indian had half-a-dozen bluegills courtesy of the grasshoppers he picked out of the shoreline weeds. He made a small Indian-style fire on the bank and roasted the fish.

It was just after three that afternoon when Trace heard men talking, their voices carrying across the water.

"Get down," he whispered. "I think that's Bert Sloan and some of Lockhart's men. He made it across the river last night and now he's after us."

They huddled in the brush and watched as Sloan and his men drifted by without sighting the canoe.

Trace turned to Isaiah when Sloan's boat was out of sight. "We'll follow them when it gets dark and try to sneak by them after they make camp."

"Why don't we get rid of those men tonight and be done with them?"

"What have you got in mind?"

“Sloan won’t travel all night. They’ll likely make camp along the river at sundown. We’ll take them late tonight.”

It was pitch dark and approaching midnight when they found Sloan’s camp. Isaiah slipped out of his boots and undressed to the waist before stepping into the shallow water. Except for drifting smoke from the dying fire, the camp was still. Everyone appeared to be asleep.

“Let’s slip in there and kill all of them,” Trace whispered.

“Did you ever kill anybody?”

“No, but...”

“Me either,” Isaiah said, “and I don’t intend to start tonight. You stay in the boat; I’ll take care of Sloan.”

A thick fog lay in the river bottoms, muffling the night sounds. The darkness was almost palatable as Isaiah left Trace in the canoe and waded toward the bank.

After untying the rope holding Sloan’s boat and setting it adrift, Isaiah grabbed up several big handfuls of black mud and used it to darken his body and face.

He slipped silently up on the camp and stepped over the first two sleeping forms. In apparent drunken slumber, one of the snoring men still cuddled an uncorked jug. The fire was nearly out, offering only a faint glow. Isaiah found Sloan and knelt down beside him. The fog and the pale light of a just-rising new moon made the camp a perfect setting for something monstrous.

Isaiah had smeared the mud all over his upper body and in his hair. His long hair was molded into dreadlocks that hung around his head. He looked and smelled like an apparition from a riverbank nightmare.

Isaiah straddled Sloan’s chest, pinning his arms. “Wake up white man,” he whispered in Sloan’s ear. The Indian’s hand was clamped over Sloan’s mouth and his knife blade was pressed into the unsuspecting man’s throat.

Startled by the sudden weight on his chest, Sloan awoke to gleaming white teeth and burning eyes of a dark wraith. Sloan’s companions were snoring away the night in corn-liquor induced bliss.

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They would be no help to him. He was at the mercy of this riverbank apparition.

“Why do you follow me, white man?” Isaiah asked.

Sloan could only make little gurgling sounds as he tried to answer. Trembling with terror, he lost control of his bladder. Isaiah let his blade slide along Sloan’s throat, slicing a shallow cut in the skin. Sloan’s eyes grew wide with terror as he felt the hot blood trickling down into his collar. Isaiah then grabbed a handful of Sloan’s hair. Sloan could see the moonlight glint off the blade of Isaiah’s knife as the blade pressed against his forehead.

“I will come back for your scalp if you are not far upriver by tomorrow night. Do you understand me?”

Sloan was shaking his head, “No...no...I mean...yes, I understand.”

Sloan lay gasping for air when Isaiah released him and melted back into the fog.

“I think we’ve seen the last of Bert Sloan,” Isaiah said when he got back to Trace. Slipping under water, he scrubbed off the mud. Isaiah told Trace what he had done after he was back in the canoe and they were safely away. The sound of their laughter drifted across the dark water as they disappeared downriver.

Trace and Isaiah drifted past Nashville around midnight the next night. The city lights were bright. They could hear voices and music from the riverfront saloons.

“Maybe we should go ashore and have a look around,” Isaiah said, “I’ve never been to Nashville.”

“We’re going to take Sam’s advice and keep right on going until we’re out of Tennessee,” Trace said. “I don’t intend to spend any time in a Nashville jail. Lockhart may not give up as easily as Sloan.”

The city lights were fading behind them as Isaiah wondered about their future. “What are we going to do when we get to Montana?”

“I guess we’ll be cowboys. Hopefully, Bolt will get us a job on the Lonesome Wind.”

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“Do you think they’ll want a Cherokee cowboy on the Lonesome Wind?”

“I’m sure Bolt remembers you,” Trace said. “You know my brother, he don’t care what color you are or who your parents were. He’ll be more interested in what kind of man you’ve become.”

Traveling only at night, it took nearly a week to reach the Ohio River near Paducah. After gaining the relative safety of Kentucky, they began to enjoy the trip down to the Mississippi. From there, they would head upstream to St. Louis.

Chapter Two: The Return of Lone Elk

Far to the west, a Mandan Indian village sat along the upper reaches of the Missouri River. Due to an unlikely set of circumstances, it was also the home of a Lakota warrior named Lone Elk. He had taken refuge there after the battle at Little Bighorn. Over time, he met and married a Cheyenne woman who also lived among the Mandans.

The village was quiet as Lone Elk lay in the pre-dawn darkness thinking of the dangerous journey that lay ahead of him. An agency Indian had come with word his mother was very sick and was going to die. The mighty Sioux was the last of her children and she wanted to look upon him one last time before she took the journey. Lone Elk planned to leave that afternoon to make the ride to the Red Cloud Agency to see her.

Lone Elk would have to sneak onto the agency undetected as he was still considered a hostile by the U.S. Government. The agency was far to the south in the Dakota Territory. It would be a trip of five or six days each way.

Red Calf Woman was his wife. She had been feeling sick some days, especially in the morning. Lone Elk had misgivings about leaving her. He would reluctantly make the trip and be back as soon as he could.

There was an old woman living among the Mandans. She was the spiritual leader of the village. No one knew how old she was. She remembered Lewis and Clark spending the winter of 1804 in her village. That had been seventy-three years before, and she was a grown woman at that time.

Wind in the Grass managed to survive the smallpox epidemic in the 1830's when the runny-face sickness decimated the Mandan people. She cared for the sick, but miraculously escaped becoming infected. The old woman's mind was sharp and she was a clairvoyant. She spoke English very well and she had been teaching Lone Elk to speak it also.

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Lone Elk left Red Calf's side late that afternoon and prepared to travel south to the Red Cloud Agency. The mighty Sioux was a striking figure with his long black hair flying in the wind. When he was painted up for battle and on his war horse with his feathers and lance, Lone Elk could strike fear in the heart of the bravest of enemies. That fierce appearance however, would not serve him well on this journey.

He traded his wing-bone vest and eagle feather for worn white man's clothes and an old floppy hat. Lone Elk was a proud warrior, but now he must appear to be a loafer Indian. He didn't want to draw attention to himself as he made his way south. He would avoid any contact with the whites by traveling mostly at night and bypassing their towns and roads.

He held Red Calf in his arms to say goodbye as the sun was setting. "I'll be alright," she said. "Wind in the Grass will take care of me and she will pray for your safe return."

Lone Elk swung up on his pony and rode out of the village. Red Calf watched until he was out of sight before she went back to her lodge. She had been to see Wind in the Grass the day before. Red Calf thought she was expecting a child. It would be her first and she needed to be sure.

Wind in the Grass held her hand on Red Calf's belly for several minutes.

"You are with child and he will be a great warrior like his father," the old woman said. Red Calf was pleased, but she held back telling Lone Elk.

As darkness overtook him, Lone Elk thought of his mother and the happy days of his childhood on the plains around Paha Sapa. They hunted buffalo, deer, and antelope. He could remember swimming in the cold mountain streams that flowed from the hills. His father, Gray Wolf was a famous warrior with many coupes in battle against the Shoshone, Crows and others.

There were white men around the Black Hills when Lone Elk was a child. They were trappers and mountain men who traded with the Indian. They never tried to take the land. These men didn't want to

Buffalo Grass Rider

own everything. They treated the Indian as equals, took what they needed and moved on.

Lone Elk's father instilled in him many of the characteristics that made him the warrior he was. As unlikely as it would seem, in addition to his Sioux heritage, Lone Elk carried the blood of Ten Thunders, a legendary and brutal Cherokee warrior who lived almost two centuries before.

Lone Elk was a good man, he killed many men in battle, but he never harmed any women or children. He fought against the white man many times. His first wife and child had been killed by the cavalry. In spite of all that, he tried to see the good in all men whenever he found them, at least until they proved to be his enemy.

Lone Elk was at Little Bighorn. As much as he hated the army, he felt sorry for the individual soldiers. They never had a chance and many of them were just boys. Lone Elk didn't participate in the mutilation of the bodies after the battle. He rode away as soon as it was over to make his way east to the Black Hills.

Wise enough to know the white race could never be defeated he was resigned to getting on with his life in peace, but with honor. He would not live on one of the Indian agencies like a captive. He was not looking forward to being so near the army, but he wanted to see his mother.

The moon was bright as Lone Elk rode south. He spent the next four days traveling by night and holding up in the daytime. One day he saw a column of troopers traveling west. He remained undetected and had not crossed paths with anyone, white or Indian, since then.

Late on the fifth night, he was sneaking across the boundary of the Red Cloud Agency when he encountered several mounted soldiers on patrol. The soldiers really didn't expect any trouble and were not as alert as they should have been. Lone Elk could hear them talking as they passed. The soldiers rode out of sight allowing Lone Elk to cross undetected into the agency.

Many of the Sioux at the agency still had their ponies so Lone Elk wasn't too conspicuous. He had no idea where he would find his

mother, as there were many lodges. He rode easy until he saw a campfire with four men sitting around it.

The Indians around the fire were talking about the old days when Lone Elk walked into the light and introduced himself.

“I am Lone Elk. My father was Gray Wolf of the Oglala. I seek my mother’s lodge. I have come far to see her.”

“I know of your father,” the smallest member of the group said.

“What is your name?” Lone Elk asked.

“I am Prairie Dog, a warrior to be feared.” The others around the fire chuckled at their small companion.

Prairie Dog was barely five feet tall. He was twenty years old and an orphan. The diminutive little warrior had been on his own since he was thirteen. The people of the tribe had taken care of him and provided him with a place to sleep. Over the years, he had taken much abuse because of his small build.

This little warrior was not to be taken lightly. He could run like a deer and he could strike with the lightning speed of a prairie rattler. He had grown up tough and he had to prove it every day, if only to himself.

“Prairie Dog, do you know of my mother?” Lone Elk asked.

“I think she is in the lodge of Wolf Walks Alone, but he is dead.”

“Wolf Walks Alone was my cousin. Can you take me to her lodge?”

“I will take you, but we must be careful. The soldier father doesn’t like us to move around in the dark. They still fear the Sioux. Leave your rifle and pony with ours and follow me. If the soldiers see you are armed they will take it from you.”

Prairie Dog guided Lone Elk to the lodge of his cousin’s widow. Lone Elk announced himself and waited for a reply. A woman’s voice asked what he wanted.

“I am here to see my mother, is she here in this lodge?”

“Come in, Lone Elk, it has been too many years since I have heard your voice.”

Buffalo Grass Rider

When Lone Elk entered the lodge, he found a small fire burning in the center with an old woman lying near it. She appeared to be very frail and weak. When she opened her eyes, a slight smile crossed her lips.

“Lone Elk, my son, you have come at last.”

“Mother, forgive me for staying away so long.”

“My son, where have you been? Were you at the greasy grass?”

“I was there, but it wasn’t as glorious as many storytellers would like you to believe. Our victory was short. I fear we will suffer the white man’s revenge for many years.”

“The Lakota are a mighty people, my son. We will live on in this land. We were not meant to live like the white man. Someday soon, a great war-chief like your father will arise. He will drive the white man back beyond the big muddy river and we will live as free people again.”

“If you say so, Mother, then I will believe it. I have taken a Cheyenne woman to be my wife. I found her among the Mandans. We live in the breaks above the big muddy river. Her name is Red Calf Woman.”

The old woman took his hand. “I am happy for you. It is good that you have found love again. I have lived many years and spent many happy days with Gray Wolf and our children. My time has come to join Gray Wolf again.”

Lone Elk knelt by her side as she closed her eyes and peacefully passed into the next life.

“The old ones know when it is time to die,” the woman with him said. “She waited to see your face; then she was ready.”

Lone Elk still held his mother’s hand, “I am the last of my family now.”

“You are welcome to stay here tonight if you wish. We will bury your mother in the morning; then you should leave here.”

“Bury her,” Lone Elk said.

“It is the white man’s way.”

Blood on the Rosebud

The next day, Lone Elk could see the harsh conditions his people were living under. It was spring and the weather was improving, but there wasn't enough for them to eat. The Indians at this agency depended on the white soldiers for their total existence.

The army was threatening to starve the agency Indians if the few remaining bands of wild Sioux didn't come in. The Hunkpapa had gone to Canada with Sitting Bull. Crazy Horse and his people were still at large, but suffering greatly because of it.

Crazy Horse was an indomitable warrior, but many of the ranking Sioux chiefs saw him as a trouble-maker. They had accepted the fact that they were finished as a free people. They knew the end of their nomadic hunter lifestyle was in sight, even for Crazy Horse.

Lone Elk knew his only hope of remaining free was to stay clear of any lodge circles or gatherings of his people. One lone man could avoid the army if he was careful. The mighty Sioux was determined to escape agency life and to live as his father had. After watching from a distance while the soldiers buried his mother, Lone Elk said goodbye to his cousin's wife and went back to the lodge of Prairie Dog.

"Lone Elk, my friend, please take me with you when you leave here," Prairie Dog asked. "I have no family. I don't want to live here alone like a slave. I am a Sioux warrior. I want to ride free."

"I live among the Mandan many miles north from here. You are welcome to come with me, but it will be up to the Mandans to say if you can live among them."

"We must leave after dark to avoid the sentries. I have jerky and combread to take on our journey."

Right after darkness fell, but before the moon was up, the two warriors made their escape. They had only gone about a mile when they heard voices.

"Stop, who goes there?" a mounted sentry called out, "stay where you are!"

Prairie Dog let out a war-cry and put his pony into a hard run as the bullets started to fly. The troopers followed them only a short distance. There were only two of them and they didn't want to pursue

Buffalo Grass Rider

these Indians too far into the darkened prairies. The soldiers had heard stories about chasing Indians right into an ambush. They had no intention of fighting a bunch of warriors alone in the dark.

It was dawn, two days later, when the warriors passed through the badlands of the White River and climbed the prairie wall. Late the next morning, they reached the Cheyenne River. Lone Elk decided to stop among the trees for the day, fearing he had pressed his luck by traveling so long after sunup.

“We will hide here in the brush until dark,” he said, “We must avoid any contact with the whites.”

It was late afternoon when Lone Elk was awakened by voices. He touched Prairie Dog’s arm and held his finger to his lips. Lone Elk pointed down the river. Prairie Dog was wiping the sleep out of his eyes when he saw two young white men approaching on foot.

“We must kill these white men,” Prairie Dog whispered.

“No, they are just boys, they do not hunt us. Mount up and be ready to ride.”

The two Sioux swung up on their horses and waited for the boys to walk behind some willows and out of sight. The boys were only forty feet away when Lone Elk gave the word.

Lone Elk and Prairie Dog both let go with a blood curdling war-cry as they erupted out of the brush on horseback, nearly running over the white boys. The boy with the rifle fell backwards as his gun went off harmlessly in the air. The other turned around to run and tripped over his companion.

“Indians!” he screamed as he fell on his face in the mud. The boys were a tangle of arms and legs struggling to get up as Lone Elk and his companion crested the ridgeline.

By the 1870’s the fur trade was done in the Rockies. Beaver had been replaced by silk for men’s hats. Prior to 1804, the Spanish and then the French had controlled most of this vast country. After it became American territory, many of the French went to Canada to continue with their trapping. One party of them, led by a man named Fate Matisse, was on their way down the Missouri River.

“Fate, how long will it take us to get to St. Louis?” A young fur-trapper named Jack Kelly asked. Jack was on his first trip down the Missouri River and he was curious about their journey. Matisse and his men had been trapping the wilderness in Saskatchewan all winter. They had a boatload of fur to sell in St. Louis.

“It will take several weeks if we don’t have trouble with the Indians,” Matisse said.

Matisse had a large keel-boat. Normally, it required a crew of at least ten to man the poles and keep it going downriver. “*Destin De Tentation*” was carved on the stern. It meant “*Tempting Fate.*” This boat was completely self-contained. It could support these men for days without having to stop and camp.

“What do we have to fear from the Indians?” Jack asked.

“The Sioux and others are being hunted for killing the American General, Custer. Many of them have crossed the border into Canada, but there are still some wild Sioux on the prowl. We must be careful when we camp to avoid them. They are fierce warriors and any white man, Canadian or American are their enemies.”

Matisse had traded with the Mandan Indians many times in the past. The Mandans would swap their buffalo hides for tobacco and other trade goods. With the fur trade dying, this would be the last time Matisse would make this trip. Buffalo robes however, were all the rage in the east, and Matisse wanted to get his hands on as many as possible.

His crew was made up of hard men who spent most of their lives battling the elements of the wilderness. They had few refinements and little use for the rules and customs of civilization. The trappers would do just about anything that put a dollar in their pockets.

The night was cold as it was still early spring. The Missouri’s water was frigid from the snow-melt upstream. The trappers built a fire in the sand-pit on the deck to ward off the evening chill and cook supper.

Jack shot a deer in the breaks above the river before they left the last camp. The roasting meat smelled good to the hungry crew.

Buffalo Grass Rider

Plate in hand, Jack settled back against a wooden crate. "Fate, tell us about St. Louis."

"St. Louis is the greatest city in America as far as I know," Matisse said, "There is a saloon on every corner. The women will fall in love with you, but only as long as your money holds out."

"Sounds like my kind of town," Shaun Priest said, "I'm sick of Indian women." Shaun was another French-Canadian.

"You'd be lucky to have any woman to look at you, you big ugly Canuck," another man said. His name was Lon Spencer, a relatively new member of the party. He was an American who had been living in the far north for several years. Spencer fled to Canada to avoid prison after he murdered a man in Kentucky. That had been years before and he felt safe returning to America.

"Tomorrow night, we will stay with the Mandans," Matisse said. "They should have buffalo robes and furs to trade. We will stay a day or two before we move on downriver. I'll feel better when we get through the Dakota Territory and away from the Sioux. The tribes further downriver are much less troublesome."

Matisse liked most Indians. His mother was an Ojibwa and he had always been attracted to Indian women. He loved their dark eyes and brown skin. They seemed to be stronger and healthier than the pale white women he had known. He married a woman in Saskatchewan, but she died from the fever. Matisse was alone now and he wasn't happy.

Fate Matisse was a big man, a mixture of Ojibwa Indian and French-Canadian. He was over six feet tall and powerfully built. He had long black hair with dark eyes. His men respected him as he was usually easy going and he loved to laugh, but he had a dark side. If the truth were known, they all feared him just a little. Matisse was dealing with some personal demons that overwhelmed him at times.

It was early afternoon in the Mandan village when the fur-trapper's boat pulled up on shore. The people of the village went down to meet them.

"Welcome my friends," one of the Mandans said. His name was Lame Deer.

Blood on the Rosebud

Matisse knew Lame Deer from his previous trips. “We have many goods to trade with my friends the Mandans.”

“We will trade tomorrow,” Lame Deer said, “tonight we will eat and tell stories. Come up to the village and make yourselves comfortable.” Lame Deer helped them secure the boat and led them up the steep trail to the village.

The Mandans built a huge council fire in preparation for a night of feasting on buffalo and venison. Red Calf Woman was helping to serve the visiting white men. With her raven-black hair and dark sparkling eyes, she was a beautiful woman. Many men tried to court her, but her heart belonged to Lone Elk and she longed for his return. The trappers made her uneasy, watching her every move.

“Lame Deer, whose woman is that one,” Matisse asked.

“She is Red Calf Woman, the wife of my friend, Lone Elk. He is a Lakota that has lived among us since last summer. He is away in the south, but should return any day now.”

“He is a fool to leave a woman like that one alone.”

“My friend it would be good for you to keep those thoughts to yourself. Lone Elk is not a man to be taken lightly. He was at the Custer fight and he has killed many white men.”

“You’ve misjudged me,” Matisse said in an attempt to downplay his remarks, “I only meant she is a beautiful woman, nothing more. I would do nothing to offend my friends the Mandans.”

“That is good to hear, now eat up my friend, then we will smoke.”

The Mandans spent the rest of the evening entertaining their guests. When it was late, the trappers were given a lodge to sleep in for the night. Matisse watched Red Calf as she retired to her lodge.

Matisse lay awake in the dark thinking about the desirable Indian woman sleeping not far away. She was everything he wanted in a woman. He didn’t know she was expecting a child as she wasn’t showing yet. The more he lay awake and thought about her, the more desperate he became to possess her.

In the early years of the fur trade, it wasn’t unusual for a trapper to marry an Indian woman. Many of them married more than one. Most

Buffalo Grass Rider

Indians welcomed a union between their people and the white trappers. That however, would not be the case with Red Calf Woman.

The next morning, the Mandans brought all the buffalo robes and assorted furs to be traded and placed them in the council ring. Lame Deer was sorting through the trade goods to see what was there.

“Matisse, my friend, we will make good trades today.”

Matisse was looking for Red Calf among the women, but she stayed away from the council ring. The bartering went on all morning as the Mandans tried to get the best trades for their robes.

“A good day,” Lame Deer said when they were finished. “You must stay with us one more night before you go downriver.”

“We’ll be grateful for another night among our friends.” After Lame Deer was gone, Matisse gave instructions to his crew. “Pack up the fur and load the boat. I want to get away at dawn tomorrow.”

As Matisse lay awake for the second night, he thought of Red Calf and the fact she was never seen throughout the day. He thought about this Indian woman’s naked body lying under a buffalo robe and how good it would feel to be lying there with her. The lust in his heart would soon overshadow his kind feelings toward the Mandans. He began to hatch a plan to take her with him downriver. He would never see these Mandans again and he couldn’t leave Red Calf behind.

It was just after four when Matisse slipped into the lodge where his crew was sleeping and roused Jack.

“Get the men up and head down to the boat. I want to be gone before sun-up.”

Jack sat up, rubbing sleep from his eyes. “What the...why are we in such a hurry?”

“Just do as I say and be quick about it.”

It was quiet as Matisse slipped through the sleeping village and went to Lone Elk’s lodge. He silently entered and placed his hand over Red Calf’s mouth.

“Don’t make a sound,” he warned, “Get up, you’re coming with me.”

Blood on the Rosebud

Red Calf was trying to struggle, but Matisse was a big man. Matisse bound and gagged her, tossed a dress onto her body and wrapped her up in a buffalo robe. Lifting the struggling bundle, he slipped away to the river.

“Cast off and be quick about it,” Fate said to his men when he got to the boat.

“What’s going on,” Jack said, “I thought these people were your friends?”

“Don’t trouble yourself, just do as I say. I’m never coming back here and I want this woman.”

“You can’t kidnap that woman.”

“Don’t cross me, Jack. I’ve killed men over much less.”

As they pulled away, Lame Deer suddenly appeared on the shore. “Matisse, what are you doing? She is Lone Elk’s woman!” Raising a rifle, he fired a shot at the Canadians. Wooden chips exploded as the bullet landed near Matisse’s head.

“No!” Matisse shouted as Shaun Priest raised his rifle, but he was too late. The big Canadian shot Lame Deer in the chest.

“Do you see what you have done?” Matisse yelled at the mortally wounded Lame Deer, “I was your friend...now...you are dead!”

Lame Deer lay bleeding on the sand as the rest of the village ran down to the river. Some of the warriors started to get in their bull boats until they found they were cut to ribbons and sunk by the trappers.

Some of the Indians fired shots at the trappers, their bullets falling harmlessly in the river. They carried Lame Deer to his lodge and tried to save his life as the trapper’s boat drifted out of sight. Red Calf was gone and beyond the reach of any of the warriors from the village.

At that very moment, Lone Elk lay sleeping. He was far from the army and felt it was safe to travel in the daylight. His companion was tired from all the nights they spent on horseback.

Just before dawn, Lone Elk was awakened by a rush of wind. He was surprised to find Lame Deer standing in his camp.

“Lame Deer, where did you...”

Buffalo Grass Rider

“Red Calf Woman is in great danger,” Lame Deer said, “You must ride for the Mandans at once. Get up now and go to the lodge of Wind in the Grass.”

By the time Lone Elk got to his feet, Lame Deer was gone.

“Prairie Dog, get up, we must go.”

It was afternoon when Lone Elk reached the village. He swung off his horse as everyone came out to meet him. They were all talking at once.

“Where is Red Calf Woman?” Lone Elk asked.

One of the Mandans stepped forward, “She has been taken.”

“Taken...by who? Where is Lame Deer?”

“He lies dead in his lodge.”

“He was in my camp at dawn.”

“That cannot be,” the Mandan said, “Lame Deer died a short time after he was shot by the white man, Matisse. The white trappers went downriver with Red Calf Woman.”

“Why did you not go after her?”

“We followed them for hours on horseback, but we could never catch up to them. They are many miles away by now.”

“My friend,” Lone Elk said to the Mandan, “Go with Prairie Dog and gather two of my best horses. I must see Wind in the Grass before I go after the trappers.”

Wind in the Grass was looking feeble and weak when Lone Elk entered her lodge.

“Lone Elk, we have been betrayed by the white trappers. They have taken Red Calf Woman. They have killed Lame Deer.”

“Lame Deer came to me this morning.”

“Even in death, Lame Deer is your friend. His spirit came to you.”

“I must go now, Grandmother. I will ride all night until I find their camp and kill them all.”

“You cannot catch them on horseback. Their boat is a camp. They can sleep and eat on it as it moves constantly down the river. The Canadians will not stop until they are far away from here. You know nothing of the white man’s city. They go to the biggest city of them

all. It sits where the great muddy river meets the grandfather of all rivers, hundreds of miles southeast of here, the city of Captain Clark.”

“I won’t just let her go without trying to find her.”

“You will find her, but only if you listen to me. I must tell you one more thing before you depart. Red Calf Woman is with child. She was going to tell you when you returned. You must find her and save your son.”

“My son,” Lone Elk said as he began to tremble. Big tears were forming in his eyes. “Not again, I can’t lose another child to the white man.”

“These are not just white men; they are evil men that happen to be white, they respect nothing. There is a way to find them, but you need a guide. One who knows the white man’s ways, a brave man with a true warrior’s heart.”

“I don’t understand, Grandmother. Who could this man be?”

“The one known as Buffalo Grass Rider, he will help you find your son. I will make the journey soon. I may not be here when you return.” The old woman took him by the hand. “Listen to me, you have no time to waste. You are a mighty warrior with a true heart. I am happy I lived long enough to meet you. Now, you must go.”

Lone Elk thanked her and left her lodge. Prairie Dog was waiting with fresh horses.

“Where do we ride now?” he asked.

“West, to find Buffalo Grass Rider, he will guide us to the white man’s city to save Red Calf Woman and my son.”

Weary and in need of rest, Wind in the Grass lay back on her bed and closed her eyes. “Grandmother,” she heard someone say. Opening her eyes, she found Lane Deer standing at her door. His hand was outstretched to help her up. He led her out the door of her lodge and helped her up on a pure white horse. It was the brightest day she had ever seen.

Buffalo Grass Rider

Lone Elk and Prairie Dog had their horses at a high lope as they headed west toward the Lonesome Wind. It would take two days of hard riding for them to reach the ranch.

“Is Buffalo Grass Rider a Lakota?” Prairie Dog asked when they stopped to rest their horses.

“Buffalo Grass Rider is a white man with some Indian blood,”

“A white man, why do you think this white man will help you find your wife?”

“Buffalo Grass Rider is much more than just a white man. Buffalo Grass Rider and I share the blood of an ancient warrior.”

“How can that be?”

“It’s a long story,” Lone Elk said. “On the day we first met, Buffalo Grass Rider knew I was trying to kill him and take his horses. In spite of that, he helped me after my pony fell. He saved my life. He is different from the other whites I have known.”

Prairie Dog had had very little contact with the whites in his lifetime until he got to the agency. He was belittled and forced to learn English by the missionaries who ran the school there. They cut his hair and made him wear white man clothes. His experiences with the whites had never been good ones.

“The story is even stranger than you know,” Lone Elk continued, “If I hadn’t lived it, I would never have believed it. There is a powerful force that connects me to Buffalo Grass Rider. In the moon of red calves, I was traveling to the Lonesome Wind to face the white man that killed my cousins. I didn’t know he was the same man that saved me.

“I had a vision just before I came upon Buffalo Grass Rider and his son. It was revealed to me that I am descended from a great warrior chief named Ten Thunders. I learned Buffalo Grass Rider is also descended from Ten Thunders.”

“Buffalo Grass Rider and his son had been attacked by evil white men. Buffalo Grass Rider had been shot three times and was near death. His young son was alone and afraid. I cared for Buffalo Grass

Rider's wounds as best I could. Then I took both of them to the ranch and left them with his woman."

"It is a strange story," Prairie Dog said. "If I heard it from anyone else, I think I would not believe it. Why is it that I have never heard of Ten Thunders?"

"He was not a Lakota. Ten Thunders was a mighty Cherokee that lived many years ago, in the mountains of smoke, between Grandfather River and the great salt waters."

"You both share the blood of the Cherokee, Ten Thunders and you each owe your life to the other," Prairie Dog said, "It is a powerful story."

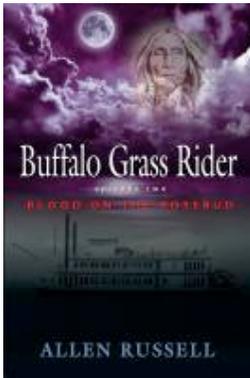
"Buffalo Grass Rider is a legend among the Sioux. Did you ever hear of the Spirit Warrior of Wolf Creek that killed ten Indians all alone and took their hands?"

"I did hear that story. I didn't know the Spirit Warrior was a white man."

"The story is true. Buffalo Grass Rider is the Spirit Warrior. The grandmother messenger in my vision warned a dark demon lives in his spirit. It is said Ten Thunders was possessed by the same demon, now it lives in Buffalo Grass Rider. I did not see it, but it must have been present that night along Wolf Creek."

"This one you call Buffalo Grass Rider is truly a warrior," Prairie Dog said. "I would like to meet him, but only with empty hands."

"You will meet him soon."



Blood on the Rosebud is episode two of the **Buffalo Grass Rider** series. It chronicles the life of Bolt Ashton, a man known as *Buffalo Grass Rider* among the Indians. Bolt and the Sioux warrior Lone Elk are once again united as Bolt is drawn into a bloody confrontation with a well-financed and powerful group of land grabbers and their army of hired gunmen intent on taking over the vast Lonesome Wind Ranch.

Buffalo Grass Rider

Blood on the Rosebud

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