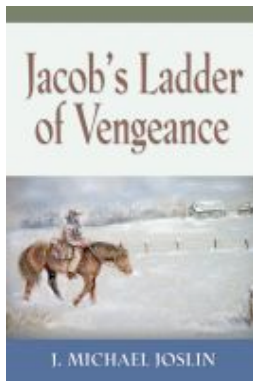


# Jacob's Ladder of Vengeance



J. MICHAEL JOSLIN



*In 1860, Jacob Perigo marries aspiring journalist Catherine Shay and they move to her parent's farm in Kansas, south of Lawrence. In 1861, Jacob goes off to war, leaving Catherine behind. In August 1863, Quantrill's Raiders attack Lawrence, Kansas. After the raid, seven of the men brutally rape and murder Catherine. Swearing to avenge her death, Jacob begins a journey to find Catherine's killers, and bring upon them a slow and agonizing death.*

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**J. Michael Joslin**

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This is a work of historical fiction, partially based on actual persons and events. The author has taken creative liberty with many details to enhance the reader's experience.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **The Lawrence Massacre and a Brutal Murder**

Kansas was admitted into the Union on January 29, 1861. Less than three months later, on April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter, thus beginning the American Civil War.

Jacob's business was doing well, but as soon as the war started, he decided to enlist. This, of course, did not set well with Catherine, but she respected his decision and kept her objections to herself. This would mean there would be no income from Jacob's business, but she was not concerned as they were living on her parent's land, and she still had income from her job at the newspaper in Lawrence.

Jacob could have joined the Jayhawkers, but he was aware of the atrocities they had committed, and he felt that was not the honorable way to fight this war, so he packed up, said his goodbyes to Catherine and her parents, which was heart-wrenching. He assured her, "I shouldn't be gone long. They say we'll whip the Rebs and they will run back home, and we can all go home again." He took the train back to New York where he, and his boyhood friends, enlisted in a New York regiment on May 14, 1861, a month after the attack on Fort Sumter.

His father told him that his half-brother, James Perigo, and Cousins James Putnam Perigo and Henry Perigo, had also enlisted in other New York regiments. Henry had actually formed a regiment himself and was made its captain.

The war raged on. Catherine sent many letters to Jacob, but got few in return. She understood, as she knew the soldiers could not write if they were on the march, or in battle. She kept herself busy as a reporter with the Herald of Freedom.

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Catherine knew one thing for certain...everyone who believed the war would end quickly, and before the end of 1861, was wrong.

It was now August of 1863. She wrote many stories about the fighting going on between the Jayhawkers and Quantrill's Raiders. When she decided to become a journalist, she expected to write stories for the society pages, or upbeat stories of interest, but never would she have imagined writing stories about war, death, and destruction.

She wrote a letter to Jacob, telling him the nature of her assignment, which she volunteered for. Jacob wrote back his concerns for her safety. Even the editor was concerned, but she would not allow him to pull her off and reassign her to something less dangerous.

Relatives of Quantrill's men, mostly women and girls, 10 in all, were captured and held in the old, dilapidated Kansas City prison. When the building collapsed, four of the women were killed, one of which was Josephine Anderson, the 15 year old sister of William T. "Bloody Bill" Anderson. Quantrill vowed revenge.

Quantrill exacted that revenge, when on August 21, 1863, he and his Raiders stormed into Lawrence, Kansas.

Catherine was in the newspaper office at the time of the raid. She attempted to run out to investigate, but her editor, Walter Jansen, grabbed her by the arm and stopped her.

"I know you want to cover this story, but it's too dangerous. Those men have revenge on their minds and don't care who they kill."

"But Walter, it's my job!"

"Yes, but I'm the editor. I decide who does what assignment. I'm telling you to stay put." Catherine did what she was told.

They watched through the windows, and around 9 a.m., they saw a large group of the Raiders ride quickly by and out of town, heading east back toward Missouri. All that was left was the sound of burning buildings and cries of anguish.

"Now can I go out there Walt?" Catherine pleaded.

"I'm not sure that was all of them that passed by. When they rode in, it looked like there were a lot more of them. Here's what I want you to do, and no arguments. The group we saw was heading east. I

don't know if any more of them have remained behind or not. You live south of here. I want you to get on your horse and return home where you will be safe. I assure you, I will send word to you when I know it is safe to return. Then you can go out and interview witnesses and survivors. Now go!"

"But Walt..."

"Go!"

Catherine safely reached her parents farm, but first stopped to tell them what had happened in Lawrence. Her mother insisted she stay for supper before returning to the cottage.

As sunset was approaching, she rode home to the cottage. She checked Jacob's shop and made sure it was still padlocked. She returned to the cottage and went inside.

She sat down at her desk and wrote about the day's events for use in tomorrow's edition of the paper. She then wrote a letter to Jacob, telling him of what occurred today.

When she was done, she decided to heat some water on the stove so she could take a sponge bath. When the water was hot enough, she removed her clothing and began her sponge bath. It was then she heard noises outside. She grabbed her robe and began to put it on, but only got her arm in one sleeve when the door burst open.

She let out a scream as several men entered, seven in all. All were scruffy, unshaven, dirty, smelling of sweat, dirt, and even manure. Each and every one of them was ugly and mean looking.

She was backed into a corner, totally exposed, except for her left arm and shoulder, covered by the robe. She attempted to pull the robe around her.

"Well, look it here. My, my, my. What have we got here boys?"

"I ain't never seen no woman looked as good as this one."

"Hell, I ain't even had a woman in years, 'ceptin' whores."

"My pecker is standin' up already. I gotta get some of her."

"Okay, but you boys got to wait your turn. I'm in charge, and I get her first."

"Aw hell, Archie..."

“Why’d ya go and hafta say my name, Woot? You got a brain smaller than a gnat’s.”

They all, but one, took their turn, brutally raping and sodomizing Catherine. Though she didn’t resist, some felt a need to punch or slap her. The one that didn’t take his turn was the one called Woot. He tried, but with all of them watching, he could not perform.

When they were done, she lay there, barely breathing, naked, bloody, with the men’s sweat and grime smudging her body.

The men had brought bottles and jugs of liquor they had stolen in Lawrence, so they stayed the night drinking, and eating what food was in the cottage.

Every once in a while, one would walk over and have his way with Catherine, but she just laid there almost totally limp. The severe trauma she had gone through now caused her to be unable to any longer comprehend, or care what they were doing to her.

Archie, who claimed to be their leader, sent a couple of the men outside to stand watch. He and the rest went to sleep. After they awoke they prepared to leave. Archie looked at Catherine and then turned to Woot.

“You spoke my name last night, so we can’t let her live. Since you’re the one that screwed up, you kill her.”

“That ain’t fair,” objected Woot. “I wasn’t even able to have a poke like the rest of you did.”

“Just do what I told you. It’s an order!”

Woot pulled out his pistol and put the muzzle against her forehead.

“Don’t shoot her, you dumbass. We don’t know how many people live close by. One shot and there might be hell to pay. Use your knife.”

Woot pulled his knife out of its sheath, reached down with one hand, put his fingers under her chin and pulled her head back to expose her neck. With the knife in his other hand, he slit her throat. Catherine tried to let out a scream, but only a gurgle came out. She quickly died.

Then Woot got an idea. “Hey Archie, can I scalp her like Archie Clement always done?”

“Woot, I don’t care what you do with her. Just get it done. We got to get moving,” said a much annoyed Archie.

Woot quickly performed the grisly task.



The next afternoon, having not seen Catherine all day, Nancy decided to take some tea and cakes to share with Catherine, so she could check on her.

As she approached the cottage, she had this strange feeling that something wasn't right, but she shrugged it off, telling herself she was being silly. She stepped onto the porch and called out, "Catherine...Catherine. It's your mom." She noticed the door was ajar. Through the opening she could see it was dark inside. The hairs on the back of her neck stood up. Her hands were full, so she pushed the door slowly open with her foot. As she did so, a beam of sunlight illuminated the bloody, crumpled, naked body of Catherine, in the dark corner of the room.

Nancy dropped the teapot and the plate of cakes, and she let out a loud, agonizing scream, then fainted and slumped to the porch floor.

Samuel heard the scream and ran down the hill to the cottage. When he arrived at the cottage and saw Nancy passed out on the porch, he knelt down next to her, propped her up on his lap and began patting her cheek. She soon regained consciousness and he asked her what had happened. All she was able to do is point towards the open door. He sat her up and propped her against a post. He then slowly walked to the door and looked inside. His wife would later say that she had never heard such a sound as had come from her husband. She could only compare it to a badly wounded animal, howling in agony, and then she said the sound stopped, his mouth remained open, but nothing came out. It was not until the funeral, days later, that he spoke again.

It was decided to bury Catherine on her parent's land on a beautiful knoll near the Wakarusa River. On a tree nearby, was a rope swing that Catherine, as a young girl, used to swing out over the river and then let go of, landing in the cool water. This was the same knoll where she used to sit and read for hours.

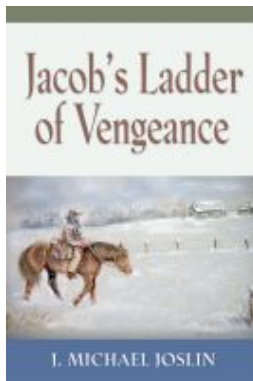
Prior to the war, an undertaker in Lawrence asked Jacob to apply his talents to building coffins. The last one he built, before going off to war, was his masterpiece. Catherine was placed within it.

Because she had been a reporter, Catherine became well known, and was well liked by the people of Lawrence, and some of the other

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communities and farms. Her burial appeared to be attended by hundreds.

Catherine's parents did not attempt to immediately notify Jacob of Catherine's death, as they knew Catherine had to be buried before Jacob would get word and return. They would write him after the burial.



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