

# ENDURING PROMISES *of the* HEART by Penelope Pottifer: VOLUME THREE

BY VALERIE LOVELESS

Lavender did her best to keep her head above the water, but it was difficult with her heavy, water laden dress dragging her down. Out of desperation, despite her terror and realization that she wouldn't be able to swim back to shore, she thought it best she got back into the boat before she succumbed to the freezing waves of salty water.

As she tried to get back into the boat, she heard the bark of a dog— an unusual sound out on the sea. Lavender strained to pull herself back into the boat. Her skirt was too heavy to get a leg up and her arm strength was not enough to pull her own weight, plus that of her waterlogged dress. Her heart despaired, but only for as long as it took her mind to realize, if there was a dog barking, there was a boat that the dog was on and a boat meant rescue.

Lavender released the grasp of one hand from the edge of the boat and looked around. “Help!” She used every ounce of air in her lungs to call out. “Help! Please!” the end of her words started to rasp as her voice gave out. Perhaps she should not call out so loudly, she thought, and preserve her voice. Then her mind went to the dog bark she heard. A whistle! A whistle would surely attract the attention of the dog again, and thus the owner of the dog and the boat. With every ounce of her heart Lavender whistled. The whipping wind carried the whistle over the rise and fall of the waves. At last she heard the dog bark again, but it sounded so far away. Her lips, pale and shriveled from the chill of the ocean waves let out a long whistle and shouted, “please, help!”

From the corner of her vision she caught a color of brown, contrasted against the sweeping grays of the sea and sky. She whipped her head to the vision and saw a brown dog just above the surface of the water. She squinted her eyes to better see it and as she cleared her vision the dog started walking toward her across the top of the bulbous rise and fall of the water.



Lavender wrapped up Mr. Hammonds new pen and ink bottle carefully. “Have a nice evening, Mr. Hammonds.” Lavender smiled.

“You got a full dance card?” Mr. Hammonds inquired with a wink.

“Why Mr. Hammonds, are you offering to fill it?” Mr. Hammonds laughed. He was a seventy-two-year-old man with a seventy-one-year-old wife that he adored.

“Oh, you bet’cha. If only I could pry myself away from my pretty little wife.” He winked again. Lavender smiled again as she handed him his parcel. Lavender was glad that he was satisfied by her answer. She didn’t want to explain to him that her father was letting her go, but only if she agreed not to dance with any eligible young men, claiming she was too young to get involved with anyone.

Lavender was 19. She was practically a spinster.

She was going to go to the dance as allowed but she was also going to ignore her fathers wishes that she not dance with any eligible young men. She closed the doors to the general store after Mr. Hammonds left and locked them and put up the closed sign. Happily, she headed upstairs to change into her dress she had bought herself, from her own shop—a new style straight from Europe. It was dark red and made her skin look paler than usual. It had a larger bustle than she had seen on any other dress, and the skirt was less full than she had ever seen before. It was sure to make a statement.

As Lavender walked down the lane, wiggling lights from the many glowing lanterns from the party reflected on the water of the marina. It looked magical in the dim light of dusk and the magic was only enhanced by the sound of far off music and the sounds of laughter.

“Miss Johnson, you made it!” the younger of the Bookkeeper brothers said. She wasn’t expecting him to be expecting her, but she had spoken to their father earlier in the day that she would be in attendance. “Save a dance for me?”

“Certainly.” Lavender smiled as she waved at Mrs. And Mr. Hammonds.

As she turned around, the world stood still as a familiar face came into view. A face that Lavender had not expected to see. His green eyes sparkled in the lamplight and as he smiled at Lavender, her heart skipped not one but several beats. Like an annoying buzz, a person next to her was saying something, but she could only see John and hear the romantic music playing. “Excuse me.” Lavender said as she walked towards the green-eyed angel. Every step felt like an eternity but finally, across the vastness of the space between them she arrived.

“Good evening, Lavy.”

“Evening, Mr. Buxton.” Lavender wasn’t sure if the words came out right.

“You are, by far, the prettiest girl here.” He bowed. No man had ever bowed to her before.

Lavender, unsure of how to respond to a bow, remembered that her mother once curtsied to a man who had bowed to her and so Lavender attempted a curtsy, but having never done one before, wobbled slightly. John didn’t seem to notice.

“I hope you have saved a dance for me.”

Lavender shrugged. “How could I have? I wasn’t expecting you to be here.” Lavender looked the man over as he grinned at her cheekiness. He was not in his usual tanned leather jacket and wide brimmed, wool felt hat. He was in a clean white shirt with a tweed vest and matching tweed pants, he even had a tie on, his hair was combed expertly, and he was freshly shaven.

Lavender truly did not expect to see him at the party this night. She thought that the last time they had parted ways, after he had rescued her from the bear in the woods that she would never see him again.

“I wasn’t planning on coming, but when I realized that there was hope that you would attend, I rapidly changed my plans.”

“Well, I suppose—since that is the case—I will have to save a dance or two for you.” As Lavender smiled flirtatiously at John, the band began to play “My Nightingale, Evermore”. The music played softly and at a slow tempo, and many couples began to fill the dance floor, swaying and spinning.

“How about I use one of those dances right now?” Lavender took the hand that John offered, and he led her to the dance floor.

He put one hand on her back and held the other hand up high as he led her around the dance floor. He was an exceptional dancer. Lavender wondered how a man who spent all his time alone in the mountains, or with loggers and trappers could learn to dance so exquisitely.

Now as they swayed and spun to the music, Lavender felt safe. In his arms felt familiar, like being home. She knew it would be short lived. Soon, her father would arrive and he would make a scene, ending the magical evening.

John lifted his arm over Lavenders head, spinning her around. “What has you so deep in thought?” He asked as he pulled her back close.

“It’s my father. He made me promise that I wouldn’t even dance with anyone unless they were old and decrepit or old and married.” Lavender laughed lightly but not because she thought it was funny, but because she thought it was sad and chuckling hid her true emotions of anger and sadness.

“I see. Is he here? Are we about to be interrupted?”

“He’s coming, but he’s not here yet.”

John contemplated what she had said for a moment, “Why not stand up to him? You are certainly old enough to see who ever you please and clever enough to make your own decisions. How is it that he trusts you with running the shop, but not your own heart?”

“I suspect trust is not the issue. It is jealousy and fear. He’s afraid of losing me. I suppose part of me is afraid of losing him as well. He is my only family left in the world.”

“You could start a family.” John’s eyes searched Lavenders face.

Lavender almost snorted. “Yes, I could but then I would lose my father.”

“You don’t know that. Perhaps he would be upset at first but he would eventually warm up to the idea. I can’t imagine he would coldshoulder his only daughter, especially if she was happy.”

Lavender had never really considered that all her father’s threats and gnashing of teeth was simply a sad man’s scrambling grasp at control but he would get used to the idea, especially once he saw that he was not going to be abandoned simply because his daughter married.

“It would have to be part of the deal, that I would stay here. At least in town, if not in the shop, to look after him. You see?”

John smiled, “I’ve always seen myself settling down in a town like this.”

Lavender returned the smile with a deep blush. The song was coming to an end and so was the magic of the evening as John looked up and caught a glimpse of Jed, Lavender’s father, now entering the vicinity of the dance. Lavender followed his frenzied gaze and confirmed what she had suspected. “I don’t want to ruin this evening for you, so I’m going to say good night, Lavy.” John quickly kissed her hand and disappeared behind a crowd leaving Lavender standing agitated and alone. Taking a deep breath, she thought it best that she join her father and made her way over to him.

“Lavender, my love. Are you having a good time?”

“It is difficult to have a good time at a dance when one is not permitted to dance, Pa.”

Jed shrugged. “I’m here now. You and I can dance. I’m as handsome as any man here.”

“I’d love to, but you are an eligible bachelor and I was given strict instructions not to dance with any single men.” Lavender gave her father a half smile.

“Now, daughter. You are always trying to push the line you walk. You are too young to be courting and thinking about men. I am doing nothing any father worth his salt wouldn’t do. Protecting his only daughter from no good men, like that mountain man and his ilk that are always trying to stir up trouble.”

“No one is trying to stir up trouble. It’s all in your mind.” Lavender folded her arms across her waist uncomfortably. Her father had truly ruined this evening for her. Thank heavens John had left when he did, for if Jed did see them together it would have been embarrassing to say the least. “I think I’m going to head home now, Pa. I’m not feeling well; it came on very suddenly.” And Lavender rushed off before her father could say another word.

Lavender wanted to retreat to the shadows of the party, where no one would notice her. She began walking along the wall of the marina, to the far side where the choppy waters were. It was dark and no one would see her tears there. She was almost to the lighthouse where she stopped because she didn’t want to venture too near where it was well lit, and she may be seen. Stopping a few hundred yards away in front of a little rowboat that had been tied up to a rock on the outside of the marina wall, she thought it strange that a little boat like that would be on the open ocean side of the Marina.

Lavender thought she saw a dog coming her way, but it was too dark to know for sure. There were a few fishermen who had dogs, so it didn’t cause her any alarm. The dog came into view more clearly and was headed right towards her. “Hey scruffy,” she called as it came even closer. It looked like a friendly, medium sized dog. It came right up to her and sniffed her skirt. It smelled like a wet dog, so Lavender did not elect to pet it.

“I’ll bet you have it easy, coming and going as you please. You are probably permitted to sniff anyone you please as well,” Lavender chuckled, and the dog reared up on its hind legs and placed them on Lavender. Not wanting the mutt to ruin her new dress she backed up. The dog did not relent, however, and Lavender tripped and fell backwards into the rowboat hitting her head. Lavender was unable to stay awake and as the night sky swirled around her, she could hear the dog growling and whipping its head back and forth as it wrestled with the rope that tied the boat to the marina, until it came free. The boat began to rapidly float away, out to the open sea, while Lavender slipped into unconsciousness.



As Lavender came to, she heard a gull flapping its wings and screeching. She was able to open her eyes but all she could see was grey. She blinked, thinking she couldn’t see, but as her awareness returned, she

realized that she was looking up at a grey overcast sky, through a heavy mist. She sat up and remembered the dog knocking her off balance into the boat. She could see nothing but heavy mists and grey sky above dark, foreboding waters. In a panic, Lavender threw herself over the edge of the boat and began to swim but her heavy dress made swimming almost impossible, especially as it filled with water and began to drag her down. Before she got too far away from the boat, she thought it best to swim back to it, but she was unable to get herself back into the boat. Then she heard a dog barking. As she looked around, she could see a dog, just above the surface of the water. It started to walk near her. Lavender blinked, it looked as though the dog was walking on the water and Lavender tried to clear her eyes. Perhaps she hit her head harder than she thought and now she was seeing things. As the dog came closer, she realized, it was the same dog that had knocked her into the boat. "Stay away!" She yelled, but the dog came closer still. She still couldn't pull herself up into the boat, but maybe if she could get a leg up over the side, she could do it. Spurred on by the fear of the ghostly dog coming across the water at her, Lavender lifted her skirt up over her leg, so she could have freer motion to lift it over the side of the boat. This time she was able to hook her leg over the side and pull herself back into the boat. She looked around for a weapon but all she found was a single oar. She picked it up and prepared to defend herself from the water walking creature coming her way, but it disappeared.

Frightened, Lavender sat down low in the boat, shivering and cold she wrapped her arms around herself. It was a big mistake jumping out of the boat. It might cost her her life if she got too cold. The cold would slowly draw away the life out of her body and all they would find, if they ever found her, would be a cold, blue and wet corpse holding an oar.

Lavender jumped as she heard the dog bark again. "Leave me alone!" she cried, brandishing the oar out in front of her.

If only she could get a bearing, she could begin rowing back to the shore, but the mist obscured everything, even the sun. Lavender had no idea what time of day it was, or what direction she was facing. Who would save her? How long could she last?

Lavender heard a growl behind her left shoulder, she hesitated to look. The sound was very close, so it must be the creature. Slowly, with her hair matted in a wet mess upon her head, and her heart pounding in her chest, she turned. The same dog as before was standing on the water just outside of her little boat, his ears were back and his fangs out in a fierce display of aggression. Lavender held on tight to her oar, and as she watched the dog, she jumped into action and swung the oar at its head. The oar went right through the dog and it vanished like smoke.

Thoroughly frightened, Lavender's mouth fell agape and a great heat rose inside her as her heart pounded and her mind reeled. She carefully settled back down, this time facing the direction the dog had been over her shoulder and again she heard a growling over her left shoulder. She whipped around, brandishing the oar in front of her. She jabbed it towards the dog. "Go on! Get!" she screeched. The dog remained, fangs drawn, and ears pointed back like barbs. "Go away! Bad dog!" this admonishment seemed to do the trick as the dog pinned its ears tightly to its head, put its head down and fangs away and it whimpered and scampered away into a smoky nothingness.

Lavender sighed. Perhaps her rebuke of the creature would keep it away for good. Lavender settled back down and as the pounding in her chest settled down the cold settled in. She began to shiver uncontrollably. Her teeth chattered and body shook so that she became exhausted. The misty air prevented any of her from drying out and she knew, if the sun didn't come out soon and dry her clothes, and show her the way home, she would soon be dead.

Then Lavender heard the soft splish-splash of an oar hitting the water. “Help!” Lavender called as soon as she heard it, and this time she heard a reply.

“Hello?” A raspy old man’s voice wafted toward her ears.

“Hello! Please! Help! I’m wet and frozen; I can’t find my way!”

“I’m coming, hold on! Keep calling so I can find you in the mist!”

“I’m so grateful you’ve come along. Do you know, are we very far from the shore?”

“No, not far. This mist sure is a bugger though. If it weren’t for my compass, I’d have no earthly idea which way I was goin’.”

“Oh, thank heavens. I got pushed into this little boat by a mangy mongrel of a dog, I’ve hit my head and I’m afraid I’ve lost my senses.”

“I can see you now!” Lavender looked in the direction the voice was coming from and slowly, emerging out of the mist, she saw the dark shape of a row boat and a stranger sitting inside. He was dressed quite dapperly, and Lavender was curious as to why he was out here.” His boat bumped up along side hers. He offered her his hand and oar in hand she climbed aboard his boat. It rocked dangerously as she tried to steady herself. “Sit down now, I’ll get you back to shore. He offered Lavender his jacket and she graciously accepted and wrapped it tightly around her shoulders, still shivering.

“What is it you are doing out in this little boat in such unfriendly weather?”

“I love the misty air.” He said simply.

“How do you avoid becoming lost?”

“I use my compass and I’ve been out on these waters for many decades.”

“Oh.” Lavender chattered.

“I’ll keep coming out on these waters until I find my daughter.”

“Your daughter?”

He nodded in affirmation, “She came out here one night many years ago. She was angry with me. I wouldn’t let her see a boy; you see.”

“How old was she?”

“She was only 16. She got angry with me and took a little boat like this. She rowed out and never came back. I keep on hoping, if I stay out here long enough, she’ll come back to me.”

“I’m sorry,” Lavender shivered, but not because of the cold in her bones.

“She looked a lot like you. Pretty little thing. I only wanted the very best for her. She wanted to go along with a boy that was no good for her. He had no family, he had a mediocre job, washing windows. That’s no job for a man to support a family. He wasn’t good enough for her.”

Lavender nodded. “You sound much like my father. I’m 19 and he still thinks I’m too young to find a husband.”

“Your father, he won’t be long for this world. Make him a happy man and wait just a little longer, be his little girl for just a while longer.”

“Ha.” Lavender snorted. “You know the difficulty for a woman to marry once she is past the age of 21? Why would you wish your daughter to die a lonely spinster?”

“A pretty woman like you would have no problem finding a husband, at any age.”

“I thank you for the compliment, but I disagree. Men assume there is something wrong with a woman who is not married by the ripe old age of 21- maybe 22. All my friends are married and have one or two children by now. It’s not that I am in a hurry to have children, but I do wish I had the option to choose for myself. My father has taken away my freedom to choose. If I still had a mother, she would not stand for my father’s behavior. She was only 17 when they married. It is hypocrisy.”

“Is there some man that you particularly have your heart set upon?” He wiggled his handlebar mustache.

“Not particularly. There is a man that I am very fond of, but I am not even allowed to be in his vicinity.”

“Is he a good man?”

“I think he might be. It’s hard to know for sure when you cannot spend any time with him.” Lavender shivered, but the jacket from the man helped.

He rowed in silence for a time, Lavender became very sleepy listening to the slip slop of the oars. She wanted to speak some more so that she would not fall asleep. “How much farther do you think?”

“I rowed out for about an hour before I found you. I recon it’s been about 30 minutes since we started back. Not too much longer now.”

“What do you think happened to your daughter?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I come out here and look, day after day.”

“What do you hope to find? I don’t mean to be unkind Mr., but she likely went back to shore or she didn’t.”

“I know, but I don’t rightly now what else to do. I just know that when I’m out here rowing, I feel like I’m doing something. That’s probably why your Pa holds on to you so tight, he feels like he’s doing something to protect you when there’s nothing that can be done.”

“Interesting. I never thought of it that way.”

“He’s likely not trying to punish you.”

“No, I never thought that. He wasn’t always like this you know. It wasn’t until after my mother died in a tragic accident that he began to be so controlling and unyielding.”

“Same happened to me. After my Deloris died, I didn’t want anything to happen to my baby girl. So, I kept her from doing anything dangerous or anything that would pull her away from me. In the end I just pushed her away. Please don’t push your Pa away young one. It would just break my heart to see you push your father away when he only wants what’s best for you. He’s not long for the world. Couldn’t you give him just a few more years of a daughter’s undying love and companionship?”

Lavender nodded. “I don’t know about a few more years, but I will try. I can’t replace my mother, you know.”

“No. No father expects you to, but you can fill the hole that her dying left a little. It eases the pain.” His mustache twitched as he held back some deep emotions. Lavender noticed a little blue in the sky. It was now morning and she was seeing the clouds break.

“I’ve been out here all night. I must have hit my head very hard.”

“I think you’ll be all right once I get you back to shore. But you’ll have to make your own way from there.”

“Of course, I think I can manage, I’ll go straight to Ol’ Doc. He’s very close to the marina.” The sky closed back up and became grey again, but now Lavender could see the town; a dark and towering shape growing in the distance.

“I see the town. I can’t thank you enough for rescuing me. It’s lucky you came along. It’s lucky for me that you still look for your daughter every day. If it weren’t for that horrid dog, none of this ever would have happened. He knocked me into the boat you know.”

“So you said. My daughter had a dog. An unfortunate looking brown thing. It was with her the night she disappeared.”

A cold shiver went up Lavender’s spine. She didn’t want to tell the man that the dog had behaved in a way that would suggest it was otherworldly, walking on water and vanishing into thin air. She didn’t want to sound crazy. “How interesting.”

The little boat bumped the side of the marina. The man grabbed the marina wall and held the boat steady and Lavender hoisted herself out of the boat. “You keep my jacket. You will need it yet.”

“Please, your name, so that I might return it to you someday?”

“My name’s Gordon James. Have a safe trip home young lady, and remember, give your father just a few more years of your love.”

“Thank you, Gordon. I will try—really, I will.” Lavender watched as Gordon rowed away from the marina and back out to the sea. The brown dog materialized on the water. It barked at Lavender several times and then dashed to his boat. It jumped into the boat and Lavender could faintly hear him say, “good boy. Let’s keep looking for Laura,” leaving Lavender speechless.

“Lavender, is that you?” A voice startled Lavender as she watched the man with the ghost dog. She looked at who had called her name. It was John Buxton. When she looked back to the boat it was gone.

“Did you see the boat?”

“Lavender are you alright? You are soaked!”

“Did you see the boat, John?”

“No, I’m sorry I didn’t see a boat. The whole town is looking for you. Where have you been?”

Lavender fell into John’s strong, and more importantly warm arms. She still had the jacket about her shoulders. “Look, I still have his jacket, the man that rescued me and the dog, they disappeared but I still have his jacket.”

“I’m so relieved someone found you, but where did they go? What happened to you?”



“I was pushed into a boat last night by a dog, I think I hit my head.” Lavender gingerly touched her head, she winced as she touched the affected area. “I drifted out to sea. I was rescued by a man named Gordon James. He was looking for his daughter but found me instead.”

“Well, I thank the lord that he was out there and found you. Let’s get your home immediately. You are soaking wet; you might catch your death!”

“I can’t be seen with you by my father!”

“Lavender, do not worry about that now, you must be looked after immediately!”

Lavender had so many conflicting thoughts swirling around her head, she didn’t know what to make of anything, and so she allowed John to pick her up and swiftly carry her home.

When John arrived in front of the store where Lavender lived, a crowd had amassed around him. They cheered him and congratulated him on finding the missing girl. He took her into the shop and up to her room.

“Doc will be here soon.” An elderly woman with kind eyes and curly gray hair said as she followed John up the stairs, it was Ol’ Doc’s wife.

“Quickly, get her out of these wet clothes!” he suggested to Doc’s wife and her teenaged daughter as he stepped out of the room and shut the door.

In a few minutes, the doc’s wife came out the door while John paced in the hall. He had seen others succumb to the cold of being soaked. “She seems to be doing alright, considering. You best go find her father and let him know she is home.”

“No, I won’t leave her side.”

“Very well.” Just then the Ol’ Doc came up the stairs and met John in the hallway.

“Are you the man that found her?”

“No, I found her at the Marina, but she says some one else rescued her out on the water.”

“Hmm, let me take a look.” Ol’ Doc opened the door and stepped inside; John followed him. Lavender was sitting up in bed, she looked well and had good color. Doc looked her over and only noted that her fingers were cold, and she had a bump on her head. “I guess you are alright then. Who do we have to thank for finding you?”

“His name is Gordon James. He was out on the water looking for his daughter.”

Ol’ Doc and his wife looked at each other. With disbelief written in deep lines on their faces. “Are you sure? Gordon James died 20 years ago. His daughter got lost at sea and he went after her. He never came back either. His body washed up on shore with his dog. His daughter was never found.”

“He gave me his jacket. I’m certain that’s the name he gave me, but I did hit my head. Could I have hit my head that hard?” Lavender nodded toward the jacket hanging on a chair in the corner of her room. John went over to fetch it and he noticed a label, hand sewn to the inside.

“Look at this Doc,” John said as he handed him the jacket and showed him the label. It said GJ.

“Well I’ll be.” Doc said as he laid the jacket on Lavender’s lap. “I’m not sure what’s going on here, but I’m sure glad you are alright.”

“Me too. Thank you, Doc.”

Doc, his wife and daughter left the room and John pulled up the chair from the corner and placed it next to the bed. “Lavy, what happened to you?”

Lavender related her story to John in detail. Even disclosing to him about how the dog had evaporated, and the boat had disappeared.

“You believe me, don’t you John?”

John took Lavenders hand. “Yes. Yes, I do.” He smiled as he kissed her cold fingers.

Jed could be heard stomping up the stairs. Lavender flinched and pulled her hand away from John’s. It would be bad enough that John was there, they didn’t need to stoke the fire more.

“Lavender, my girl! What happened to you? I was worried sick! We’ve been searching the whole countryside looking for you!”

Lavender hugged her father who sat on the edge of the bed next to her and held her tightly. “I thank you Mr. Buxton for the safe return of my daughter. If you don’t mind, I’d like to give her some time to recover.”

“Of course.” John said as he winked at Lavender. Jed was more polite than Lavender could have imagined. He must have been truly terrified of her disappearance and grateful for her return.

“Pa, I just want to have a private word with Mr. Buxton. I feel I need to adequately thank him for his rescue.”

Jed’s eye twitched, but he kept his composure. “Alright. I’ll be downstairs getting you some hot tea and some breakfast. Don’t be too long now, you need some rest.” Jed lumbered out of the room but not before giving John a very disapproving look.

“John, thank you again for bringing me home safe. You seem to always be there when I need you.”

“You’re welcome, Lavy. Perhaps now, your father will warm up to me.”

“No. He won’t. He will likely only tolerate you a few more minutes and then he will be back to his old ways.”

“Lavy, couldn’t we try to stand up to him?”

Lavender thought about what Gordon had said. Just to give her father a little more time to fill that hole left in his heart by her mother.

“I think there will be a time for us if you are patient, but it is not now.” John looked very disappointed. He looked like a man who was rarely turned down. He sighed.

“Very well. I would wait many years for you, Lavender Johnson. Mark my words. You are worthy of it.”

Lavender blushed and took John’s hand, “You better go. Your time is just about up.”

John kissed Lavender’s head and solemnly left the room. Lavender heard Jed downstairs, “You don’t make a habit of coming around now, you hear! Just because you are a hero, don’t make you welcome whenever in this house!”

“Of course not, Jed. Best of luck to you and your daughter and God bless.”



Lavender slept through the much of the day. Jed became worried about her and went into her room to check upon her. She was looking pale and clammy. Jed put his hand over her forehead. She was burning up. Jed ran out of the store in a rush and straight to Ol' Docs, passing John on the way.

“Jed!” John called after him, “Is it Lavender? Is she alright?”

“No, she’s burning up!” Jed puffed.

“Jed, go back to her, I’ll get the Doc!” John yelled as he overtook Jed’s lumbering run and continued onward to fetch the doctor.

Panting, and out run, Jed turned around and headed back to his precious daughter, who was dangerously close to the other side.

TO BE CONTINUED