

*Mrs. Bell dragged me along by my ear*—my right ear, to be precise. It hurt, but Ma's shocked face hurt even worse after Mrs. Bell had had her say. Was anybody ever as unlucky as I was? Mrs. Bell was the only white woman in Kamloops besides Ma. She was a guest in the factor's home, and she had to catch me!

"Doing laundry on the Sabbath, *Missus Schubert*," she said, looking down her long nose. "In the home of a single man—and him in his underdrawers. Is that how you train your girls?"

"No," said Ma quietly. "Lisa, is this story true?"

My face flamed.

"Do you doubt me?" If Mrs. Bell had been angry before, now she was spitting mad. "Your girl breaks the Sabbath. No doubt, she'll lie as well. What can you expect, taking in orphans?"

"It's true." I gulped and burst into tears.

Ma opened her arms, like always when one of us is hurting, and gathered me in. She talked over my head to Mrs. Bell. "I have to thank you for your information, Mrs. Bell," she said, "though Lisa is not an orphan. She was born our niece, and now she's our daughter, as much as the others. Please go now. Mr. Schubert and I will deal with this."

"She needs a good whipping," said Mrs. Bell, "and I hope she gets it. Spare the rod and spoil the child, *Missus Schubert*. This girl has no respect for her elders. There'll be worse to come, you mark my words." Her skirts rustled as she turned, and the door slammed shut behind her.

"Tell me, Lisa," said Ma.

"Money to get to the Cariboo," I sobbed. "I know you and Papa aren't leaving Kamloops, Ma. I heard you talking. So I have to go by myself. I can live with Archie, can't I?"

Papa came home just then. He never has whipped me, but then I've minded him and Ma the best I could since my own papa died. Papa rubbed his spectacles with his handkerchief while he listened.

"Was Mr. Simpson really in his drawers?" Papa was angrier about that than anything. "He's the one should get a beating, and I'm the man to give it. Destroying your reputation, Lisa, and you still a child."

“Papa, what else could he wear?” I asked. “Both his shirts and his two pair of trousers, three pair of socks, and his red flannels—every stitch he owns, I think, was caked with dirt. I’ve never done such a stinking wash.”

Papa’s shoulders shook and his face turned red. I trembled for Mr. Simpson. “Papa, don’t beat him, please,” I begged. “I’ll never get more work in this town.”

Papa let out a snort and then a great roar of laughter. “I doubt your career as a laundress is going to last, Lisa,” he said, “not on the Sabbath. We cannot allow that, and well do you know it.”

I had told myself that this was a matter of life and death, the same as when we were on the trail and starving and winter was coming on, when the Sabbath had become a day like any other. But I knew the difference. I wanted to go to the Cariboo. I wanted to go mining and find gold. I wanted to get away from Mrs. Bell and all the others who kept watching me and looking down their noses. I was not about to argue with Papa. But I had to say something, to explain.

“What other time do I have?” I was still crying. “I’ll never get to the Cariboo. I’ll never find gold and make us rich and send for my trunk from Fort Garry.” I snuffled again.

“Most men who go to the Cariboo don’t find gold either,” said Papa. “It’s not lying around everywhere for the taking, Lisa. There is gold, but it’s hard to find, and it costs plenty to get it out of the ground after you find it. The stories here are nothing like the ones we heard back home. There’s steady work for me here in Kamloops while the Hudson’s Bay Company moves the fort to the south side of the river. I need the work, Lisa, with five children to feed. Once I get ahead, I can decide what to do next.”

“It’s hard for you here, Lisa,” said Ma slowly. “More than I knew. Now it will be worse. I will never whip you, but Mrs. Bell won’t let it go, I fear. She’s only a visitor, but she’s a busybody who’ll turn others against you. Augustus, what’s best to do?”

“It is the Sabbath,” said Papa. “Let us bow our heads and ask the good Lord to guide us.”