

The Fortune Teller on the Train
by John W. Norton
Prequel to
The Adventures of Eva and Buckskin Charlie
Illustrated by Carol Ruzicka



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A Prequel to

The Adventures of Eva and Buckskin
Charlie

Written by John W. Norton

Art by Carol Ruzicka

A Little Falls Children's Classic

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Dedication

To my readers, the future is yours.

Chapter I

Aunt Helen and the Ten Books

But I don't want to go, thought Eva, for the one-hundredth time that hour. She was the oldest of the twelve children, snuggled under the covers of the big feather bed in the main house, and the only one who still lay awake listening to the music coming from the barn dance.

Outside, the February full moon, called the snow moon, rose on the clear crisp night. Lanterns burned along the tree-lined, dirt drive. A dozen vehicles from farm wagons to a coach-and-four were parked under the trees. The horses munched in their feedbags and swished their tails as music drifted from the open barn doors. Two fiddles, a thumping stand-up bass, and an out-of-tune piano supplied the four-four rhythm of a popular dance

tune while men and women from down the valley gathered inside to dance the Virginia Reel and other selections called by Judge Caldwell.

Eva loved barn dances and dreamed of the day when she could join in the fun, but now she only wanted the music to stop so she could talk with her Aunt Helen about what was troubling her.

“I don’t want to go to Colorado, wherever that is,” Eva whispered to the darkness. I want to stay on this farm with my family and friends.”

Eva was ten years old, and she had deep-set brown eyes and an alert manner that showed the promise of the bright, engaging woman she would become. She had important questions to put to her Aunt Helen, the kind of questions she could ask a trusted adult, but not her parents.

Aunt Helen, who played the piano for these barn dances, was easily the best known and most loved of all these people. She was equally loved by the twelve children in the main house. Everyone’s friend and confidant, she offered advice when asked and stood aside when not. She offered help and never judged. She had shared this gift, at one time or another, with each person there.

When the music finally ended, Eva heard Aunt Helen come inside and put a kettle on the stove,

then the unmistakable sound of cups and saucers being placed on the kitchen table. Soon the smell of chamomile tea drifted to the bedroom. These sounds and smells made Eva even sadder than before, because she couldn't help wondering if she would ever hear them again.

The bedroom door opened a crack and Aunt Helen stuck her head in the room. Placing a finger to her lips, she motioned for Eva to follow her to the kitchen.

Eva folded back the covers carefully, so as not to wake the other children, and tiptoed out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Aunt Helen had placed two cups of chamomile tea on the dining table, one plain for herself and one with milk and honey for Eva. She had even filled a small plate with cookies. This was just one more of a hundred reasons that Eva loved Aunt Helen. Eva adored being treated like an adult and offered tea and cookies at midnight.

Aunt Helen smiled and started by saying, "It won't be long, Eva, before you will be out in the barn, dancing with the adults."

How could Aunt Helen know that this was just what she was thinking, but a few moments ago? In the past, Eva could see herself not just dancing

but leading a quadrille in slow, then fast time. But not tonight. Tonight, Eva's entire focus was on Colorado and plans her Ma and Pa had to move the family there in a few short weeks.

Aunt Helen, a small woman with graying hair and eyes that seemed to bore right through to your innermost thoughts, settled in her seat.

"What's on your mind, Eva, as if I can't guess?"

In one breath Eva rushed ahead, "Ma and Pa have decided that we are moving to Colorado, wherever that is, and I don't want to leave my friends and family and you, most of all, and take a dirty train ride, and a smelly covered wagon ride to the ends of the earth. I really don't want to go, and I wonder if I could live with you. I don't eat very much, and I would be so good, and I would help with the housework and farm work and anything else you asked me to do."

Having finally said everything she had been thinking these last few days, she waited. Her voice had sounded more desperate and childlike than she had wanted it to sound, and she feared that Aunt Helen would laugh, but her beloved auntie paused a long moment, giving every indication of having considered the request very carefully. Then she stood and walked to Eva's

chair and gave her a hug. Moving her own chair closer, she sat down again next to Eva.

“You have to know that I thought of this myself,” she said. “I suggested to your Ma and Pa that you and your little sister stay with me until they were settled. It seems that your Uncle Bill and Aunt Alice offered the same thing. We all love you that much.”

Eva smiled and felt tears welling behind her eyes. Her Aunt Helen was so smart and so kind. If Aunt Helen and Aunt Alice had already talked to Ma and Pa, Eva and her sister Abbey might not have to leave after all.

“Your Ma and Pa thanked us for the offer,” Aunt Helen said, “But they said that they would miss you both too much, and that Abbey is too little to be without her mother. They said that it would be a long trek in the fall, back across the prairie to meet you in Kansas City at the railhead. They want you to learn about homesteading, building a cabin, clearing land, planting crops, and living close to nature.”

Eva felt like she was falling into a deep pit. Her last chance to stay in Virginia seemed to be vanishing.

“But why?” Eva asked. “We have a nice house and farm here. Why would we go someplace where there are bears and buffalo and who knows what else?”

“That, I can answer,” Aunt Helen replied, taking a sip of tea and passing the plate of cookies to Eva. “You are older now, and I think you can understand this.”

Eva had lost her appetite for the cookies. In fact, she felt like she was going to cry all over again, but she wanted to hear what her aunt had to say, so she forced herself to take a sip of tea. It was sweet and hot and it helped calm her down.

“The 1870’s are exciting times with machines now being used for more and more tasks that used to be done by hand,” Aunt Helen began. “Large machines are harvesting and cleaning cotton and are weaving cloth by the mile. This farm that your Pa and your Uncle Bill own has more and more machines to cut and rake the hay and plant and harvest corn and wheat. And in other areas there are steam engine locomotives that run thirty miles an hour across much of the country and steam-boats that cross the ocean.”

Eva followed along, but couldn't see where this was leading. She didn't care about machines; she just didn't want to leave her home.

Aunt Helen went on, "Many people call this progress, and I suppose it is. But it is taking people off the farms to work in larger and larger cities. The cities are not prepared to accept all these people, so the workers are forced to live in shanties or tents with no heating or plumbing."

Oh, my! Eva thought. I would not like to live like that. How do they wash their hands or take a bath?

"Eva, I'm sure you remember last summer when we saw hundreds of dead fish in Rocky Brook."

Eva nodded, remembering the sight of those fish with their glassy eyes and their white bellies floating on the water. And the stink! Who could forget?

Aunt Helen went on, "We didn't know what poisoned that beautiful brook and caused the fish to die, but the result caused us all to be sad. Those innocent fish were killed because someone or some factory decided to use the brook as a dump. Your parents discussed this all winter between themselves and with us. They decided that they want you and your sister Abbey to grow up in a

clean environment where you live with nature and appreciate all her gifts.”

Understanding a little more, but still feeling lost, Eva blurted out, “But Aunt Helen, Pa will only let me take ten books on the trip.” Eva read ten books in a month, and knew she would never survive with just ten. “I need more books!”

Aunt Helen smiled and said she knew just what to do. “Let’s go to your uncle’s library right now and find the ten best books it has. They should be books that require close reading to understand them and books you would look forward to reading again and again.”

With that, she and Eva, still in her nightclothes, lit two candles and went to find ten books to be Eva’s company for the next several years.

Eva loved this library, with its many shelves, comfortable chairs, and scents of Tung oil and beeswax. She would miss it very much when she went away.

Aunt Helen had read every one of the books in this library, and she engaged Eva in discussions about several of them. From those brief discussions, Eva learned that books could be read at different levels and often needed to be read more than once to find meanings below the

surface. Aunt Helen explained that a river described in a novel might not be just a river, but it might be a symbol of something unchanging in a changing world or, even deeper, the secret wish of the character. Eva didn't thoroughly understand this, but learned that there were buried treasures to be found on second and third readings.

Chapter II

Gramps

Eva was very sad, so Ma kept her busy during the few days before they left by train for Missouri. There they would join a wagon train for the long journey across the wide plains to Colorado.

Pa's brother, Bill Norton, was very helpful finding everything they might need for their first year in the wilderness. Eva heard him say that tools and supplies were very expensive at the railhead where the wagon train trip would begin. He insisted on supplying these from the farm that he and Pa jointly owned and shipping these supplies by rail to Kansas City. Eva loved to watch Pa and his brother cooperate and problem-solve together.

In the chill of early spring, Eva helped Pa count and pack axes, wedges, chains, carpentry tools, mortar, trowels, a bottom plow, scythes and sharpening stones, tack for horses and other essentials. Pa built wooden crates with rope handles for shipping these things. These were heavy boxes that would fit on the floor of the covered wagon.

“We must consider the size, weight and use of each item before we pack it.” Pa explained. “We will only have one wagon and one horse.”

Eva helped Ma pack barrels with flour, hardtack bread, bacon, rice, coffee, tea, sugar, dried fruit, corn meal, vinegar, cooking pots and other kitchen and household supplies.

Ma said, “This food will get us through the winter and spring until new crops can be harvested. We will take four hundred pounds per person and half that much for you and Abbey. This will supply the basic provisions and meat will be added by hunting and fishing.”

Eva loved to fish and smiled when Pa said he would build their cabin close to a stream or lake with good fishing. Some of Eva’s best memories were times she and Pa spent in their little, flat-bottom pirogue, fishing on their farm pond.

The closer their departure date, the more worried Eva became about the future. Each day, one or two carriages would arrive with neighbors and friends offering well wishes for the journey west. To Eva, Colorado seemed so far away; she would leave her friends and family behind and for what? She had not met anyone who had been to Colorado, so all their comments were second hand or worse, rumors. She knew that many of the mountains were so high that they had snow all year-round. That sounded cold and forbidding. Colorado was not even a state, but a territory. Were there schools? Was there a post office where she could get news from home? She hoped so.

“Jack,” Eva heard Uncle Bill say when they were packing up the wagon supplies, “You are going to need a big strong horse to pull the wagon across the plains, drag the logs you need to build a cabin, pull your sleigh and plow your garden. There will be a lot of people looking for such a horse when you get to Kansas City. Have you considered finding one here and shipping him by rail with you and your baggage?”

Pa didn't know where he could get a horse on such short notice, but Uncle Bill had a suggestion. His suggestion was named Gramps, and he was a

big and powerful horse, but he was also young, moody and headstrong. Uncle Bill had gotten Gramps as a gift from a neighboring farmer who was a Quaker. The Quakers in the community were a Christian people who lived quietly and used gentle persuasion, rather than stern discipline with their children and their animals. They were generally successful with both, but not with Gramps.

“This horse has a mind of his own,” said Uncle Bill.

“Why did they name him Gramps?” Eva asked.

Uncle Bill shrugged and said he didn’t know but he thought the name fitting for a horse that was so difficult that no one was sure he would ever make old bones and become a grandfather himself.

Gramps, the horse, stood eighteen-hands high and was not responding to Pa’s exasperated commands.

Earlier, Eva had seen Uncle Bill try time-tested techniques of training horses with Gramps. Each encounter seemed to drive Gramps deeper and deeper into his stubborn self.

Watching Pa lead Gramps to the barn, Eva knew that he, too, had decided it would not be wise to ship this horse to Kansas City. But, Eva felt that this was a smart, biddable horse that just needed some understanding.

Eva stepped out of the shade from a large oak tree and asked, “Pa, may I work with him a little before you put him in his stall?”

Pa looked a little surprised then answered, “Of course you may, if you think he will respond to you. He is a very large, headstrong horse, so be careful. Do not let him out of the yard.” With that, Pa hurried away to do one of the thousand things that needed to be done before they could leave.

With the sun at her back, Eva walked around this huge horse and talked to herself. Why won't you listen? Why are you being difficult? I get the sense that you are a good solid horse, but one with a problem. When do I act like this? When does little Abbey act like this? She took some time to think and then it came to her.

“When we are sick!” She shouted out loud.
“That's it! He is sick.”

She walked around the horse again, seeing Gramps anew and noticed that he seemed to be swollen around the belly. It didn't show from the

side, but if you looked at him from the front or rear, his sides bulged out. He was so big that it was hard to see, but the bulge was there.

He has gas, thought Eva. She ran to the house and got a small glass of mineral oil and the ball syringe her mother used to baste a turkey when it was roasting in the oven. Then, just like she had seen the animal doctor do, she sucked the medicine up into the tube and squirted it down Gramps' throat.

Next, she led him to a mounting block that people used to climb on a horse's back. He was so large that she had to jump up and land on her stomach, then squirm around to sit on his broad back. She was turned around facing his tail, but Gramps was so big that her legs stuck straight out like one of Abbey's wooden dolls. She massaged each vertebrae of his spine on either side, poking her fingers through his tough skin until she felt the bone. She slowly, but firmly massaged each, moving towards his tail. Within minutes, Gramps began to expel gas, not the blat of a real fart, but a long "whoosh" that went on and on for what seemed like minutes. Finally, and with sore-fingers, she jumped down and untied Gramps and led him through the gate and into the pasture.

After closing the gate, she ran back to the barn and the tack room to get the straps and chains necessary to hitch Gramps up to the hay wagon. She thought this would be the closest they had to a covered wagon to test to see if Gramps could do this job. She ran back to the pasture, carefully closing the gate each time. Kids on a farm learned early to close any gate or door that they opened. The old expression, “It makes no sense to close the barn door after the horse had escaped,” was a truism on the farm.

Gramps was so large that every piece of leather harness had to be extended to the last hole punched in the leather strap. Like all horses he tried to take in a large lung full of air to expand his barrel chest and not let the girth cinch tight around his belly. But Eva knew how to force him to exhale and with a heave, she made the strap tight. As the sun was slowly descending, she hitched him to the hay wagon.

With a worried breath of her own, she exhaled and said, “Go!”

Gramps moved slowly out into the hayfield. Eva was elated.

She set out for the furthest corner of the wide-open field. She loved this field. It was planted

every year in a three-crop rotation to keep the soil balanced with minerals. Right now it was bare earth, but soon it would be planted in clover. If she drove north-south she bumped over the plowed rows, but east-west was smooth along the plowed ground.

With a strong voice she tried, “Gee!” for a right turn.

Gramps turned and the wagon bumped over the furrows.

With more confidence she commanded, “Haw!” for a left.

He obeyed without breaking stride. He even obeyed tugs on the reins as she pulled left or right, lightly slapping the reins on his enormous rump to go, or pulling back on both to stop. Eva was so happy she laughed out loud.

She turned the cart around in a big circle, came to the gate, and said, “Whoa!”

Gramps stopped.

Eva jumped off the wagon, tied the reins to the fence and opened the gate, but, before climbing back on the wagon again, she rubbed Gramps’ nose.

“I knew you were a great big love,” she said.

He just blinked his big eyes and patiently waited for her to climb back on the wagon seat.

“Go!” she said again, then “Whoa!” again, so she could close the gate behind them. This time she left the reins on the ground and he stood like he was hitched to a post. Back on her seat, she said, “Go!” one more time, and they drove up the well-worn drive to the house.

Uncle Bill was the first to notice and he ran to get Pa, Ma and Aunt Alice. Pa, looked a little worried, but pleased.

“What did you do to make Gramps mind?” Pa asked.

A little embarrassed, Eva said that she would tell her mother. Ma, laughing behind her hand, told the other adults and no one could contain their laughter. Clearly, before now, Gramps had his mind on something other than the commands given by adults. He was uncomfortable and in pain.

Eva put Gramps through a series of commands including, “Whoa-back,” to drive backwards with a wagon attached, the most difficult command.

There were cheers from the four adults.

“It is clear that Gramps will do anything for Eva. She seems to understand his needs and tries to help,” Ma said.

Eva now had total charge of this huge horse. And now, at least she had a friend to take with her to their new home.

It wasn't until later that Eva discovered she had solved one problem with Gramps, but succeeded in uncovering another: Gramps was a champion farter. At least ten times a day, the trumpets would sound, and anyone who heard, had to smile.

He will never have colic again, Eva thought. The gas doesn't build up; it just passes right through him.

Chapter III

“All Aboard!”

There must have been twenty people at the train station to wish the Norton family well. Aunt Helen surprised Eva with a gift. Eva loved gifts, and gifts from Aunt Helen were extra special.

I wonder what it is, Eva thought, as she untied the string and removed the stiff, brown, wrapping paper. Inside she found a large, leather-bound sketchbook.

“Your Ma and Pa showed me several of your recent drawings, and you have a unique talent,” Aunt Helen said.

Eva smiled shyly. This was high praise, indeed. If Aunt Helen thought she had talent, she would work hard to prove her right.

“Take this with you, and please send me sketches you think I would like. That way it will be like I’m there with you.”

Once again, Eva marveled at how Aunt Helen knew just what to say and do to help her feel better. She held the sketchbook tightly to her chest.

“I love it,” she said. “It’s the best gift.”

In addition to Aunt Helen, Aunt Alice, and Uncle Bill, most of their small town had gotten out of bed early to see them off. Ma and the women shared hugs and tears and there were handshakes and back-slaps from the men.

The cold wind made these goodbyes short.

Eva was assisted by a porter to help load Gramps into a cattle car. The porter pulled a heavy wooden ramp stored on a slide under the car and attached it to an iron fitting on the lip of the sliding door.

Eva held the rope attached to the bit in Gramps’ mouth, but she didn’t need to lead him at all.

“Go!” She said, and he surged up the ramp like a colt.

The porter congratulated Eva on her skill, and, with a smile, said, “The railroad should charge double for such a large horse.”

Walking back along the train Eva counted two baggage cars, five carriages, and two cars with sleeping berths. Ahead was the massive locomotive with the steam engine, boiler and water tank and a wood car with split wood for the boiler. At the very back of the train was the red caboose. The caboose was where the engineer, fireman, conductor and brakeman slept and ate during the trip. Food for the crew was cooked on a small cast-iron stove in the caboose or in the maw of the huge fire for the steam boiler.

Eva found this massive train both intimidating and exciting and the passengers even more interesting. Some of them brought food baskets. Others would have to eat at rooming houses or hotel dining rooms along the way, or buy supplies at the frequent stops the train made for wood and water. Nearly all the passengers were men, young men with little more luggage than a haversack and bedroll. All except one lady, a very large lady, who was having trouble mounting the steps to the last car. She was being assisted by a porter on the station platform. He was pushing from behind, while someone, probably the conductor, pulled from the inside. She had an unusual number of

packages, bags and boxes tied to her person that were catching in the door or tripping her helpers.

“Madame,” said the porter, “We have a baggage car for these things.”

But the woman, in strongly accented English, insisted that these things remain with her. This scene was drawing a crowd, but Eva thought that it was impolite to stare and she moved on, but not before being convinced that one of the packages was yapping like a small dog.

Chapter IV

Riding the Rails

Before Eva realized it, the goodbyes were done and Eva and her family were aboard the train seated on a wooden bench as the steam whistle announced their departure. It was with great sadness that Eva watched Aunt Helen, Uncle Bill and Aunt Alice wave as the train left the station. But there was a growing sense of adventure as the wheels turned faster and faster and the small town gave way to trees and farmland.

As the days went on, there were fewer farms and more forests. The train stopped frequently for wood and water for the boiler. At every stop, Eva walked to the cattle car to check on Gramps. For the longer stopovers, Eva asked the attendant,

named Mr. Moore, to attach the ramp so she could take Gramps out for some exercise.

Eva smiled when she overheard comments about a little girl exercising a huge horse. But the job helped take Eva's mind off the new life and the unknown challenges ahead.

On the first two stops for wood and water, Eva exited the train from her carriage and walked the length of the train to the cattle car. Soon she learned that she could go from car to car by opening a door at the end of one, stepping across the heavy coupling used to attach the two cars, then entering the next door. There was a railing from each door, but it felt a little dangerous as she stepped over the empty space between each car with the tracks running underneath.

She didn't tell anyone, but the real reason for walking from car to car was to get a quick look at the large lady she had noticed getting on the train. Eva learned that her name was Madame Romanoff, and seeing her was worth the trip.

Somehow Madame Romanoff had managed to commandeer two entire seats that faced each other that would normally accommodate four people. She sat like a princess, a very large princess, among her possessions. These included a

large trunk that sat on the floor between the two seats. The trunk was studded with colored stones on its sides. Its top served as a table and work surface. Trunks were supposed to be in the baggage car, but the rules didn't seem to apply to Madame Romanoff. There were more small trunks, packages and cloth bags on the seat facing her, but Eva could only glimpse these as Madame Romanoff had contrived to hang a curtain, a beaded curtain, from the baggage rack around her special domain.

She wore a very large green felt hat that reminded Eva of the toy sailboat Pa built for her to sail on their farm pond. This ship would certainly not float because her hat had jewels and feathers and tiny bells that chimed every time the Madame moved her head. She wore layers of skirts and brocade blouses with two black bands on each arm to hold the sleeves up and away from her hands.

There was one common theme: the color purple. Purple trim, purple designs on her blouse, purple belt and even one slipper that peeped out from her long skirts had a purple pattern.

She had large rings on each finger, several gold and silver necklaces and large gold hoop earrings.

And, yes, she did indeed have a dog: a tiny creature with huge protruding eyes that stood trembling on her lap. This dog didn't have any hair!

I have to find out more about this lady, if it takes the whole trip, Eva thought.

There was another challenge, and that was four-year-old Abbey. Abbey hated change and had trouble sleeping on the train. Each joint of the steel track caused a clickety-clack sound that kept her awake. She complained of no warm, just-baked, sugar cookies, no other children to play with and the smoke and soot that drifted back into the passenger car from the train engine.

Eva played dolls with her, stacked blocks with painted letters and sang children's songs to help keep her occupied. Eva knew many of the songs written by Mr. Stephen Foster because Aunt Helen used to play them on the piano and the family would sing along.

Eva was more than a little surprised to find that Abbey had absorbed many of these songs as well. She had an unusual ability to sing. She seemed to have perfect pitch, could begin and end each song in the same key, and would even add simple harmonies. This blond-headed little girl sang

Beautiful Dreamer or *Oh!, Susanna* or *Swanee River*, in a small sweet soprano voice. Often the whole car would join in, singing well-known hymns, or popular songs. Many of these songs were associated with the awful Civil War that had just ended, and Eva could hear the pain in the voices of these rugged men who had lost so much.

Eva learned that most of passengers were ex-soldiers who fought for the armies of the North or the South. Many wore remnants of their blue or grey uniforms. These men now joked and talked about their shared war experiences like old friends and not enemies. They had lived rough, fought in desperate battles and had not found their way since the end of the war. Each of them was moving west to find farmland, work on a ranch, go farther north to trap beaver or prospect for gold. At first glance, these were unwashed, rough-looking men with full beards, chewing tobacco and spitting tobacco juice into the brass spittoons supplied by the railroad company. Eva found this habit disgusting and was silently pleased that her Pa didn't chew. The change that came over these men when they were singing or when they played with Abbey was remarkable. They were like choirboys in church.

Playing with Abbey began when a tower of wooden blocks that Abbey stacked fell over and one block skidded to the far side of a wooden bench occupied by two bearded burly men. One of the men picked it up and with a growl pretended to eat it, slipping it into his sleeve so it disappeared.

At first Abbey didn't quite know how to act. Was the man playing with her or had he really eaten the wooden block? She solved the problem as only a four-year-old could. She quickly went and got another block.

"Do it again!" she said.

This got a laugh from the neighbors and a sort of competition began with who could amuse Abbey.

It started slowly and only after Ma or Pa nodded permission. The men picked her up with their huge calloused hands and made funny faces or animal noises and Abbey would laugh. One taught her to whistle. He put two fingers in his mouth and let go a blast that rivaled the train's steam whistle.

Of course, Abbey just had to learn how to do this. She blew until she turned blue, but soon learned to fold her face around her small fingers and blow a high soprano to her friend's tenor.

And there were more ways to whistle. One young man taught her how to hold a pretend ball in her two hands and blow between her thumbs. This sound was quiet, but sounded like the mourning dove on the farmyard in the summer. Both Ma and Pa admitted to feeling a little homesick and Eva wondered if there were there mourning doves in Colorado.

Abbey's favorite was a young man who had a glass eye. He was a little shy and uncertain with everyone and sat in a seat where his blindside was protected. He clearly enjoyed watching the games with Abbey, and with permission from Ma beckoned Abbey over to sit beside him. She looked up and to her total amazement he removed his glass eye. Then he pretended to swallow it, hiding it in his other hand. Abbey screamed with delight and the young man received a round of applause from the other passengers. He won the prize for best entertainer, and this shy young man was folded into the group of rough men traveling west. At least once a day Abbey insisted that he 'do it again!' and puzzled how to do it herself.

Once in-a-while in the evening some of the men would drink whiskey they called rot-gut, and Ma and Pa took Eva and Abbey to their sleeping cabin

and played word games or read books. On these nights Eva heard loud voices and loud singing.



The train seemed to roll on forever. Eva saw farmland and woodland, small towns and remote outposts. They crossed rivers with narrow wooden rail bridges that seemed to sway as the train moved along. At night, Eva, unlike Abbey, found that the clickety-clack of the wheels rolling over the ties sang her to sleep. She knew that the steam whistle meant they were passing through a town or a road crossing.

Because of her frequent exercising of Gramps, she got to meet the train crew, and especially liked Mr. Moore, the cattle car attendant, who pulled out the heavy ramp for Gramps without complaint. He hoped someday to become an engineer and drive the train.

Mr. Moore had somehow inherited the job of taking Pepé, Madame Romanoff's dog, for a walk at each stop. The contrast of Eva walking a huge horse and Mr. Moore, a large man, walking this tiny dog, was not lost on the entire train. Mr. Moore told Eva that Pepé was a hairless breed from a very hot area of Mexico and he didn't know

how this dog could survive in cold Kansas City. It turned out that, in the cold mornings, Pepé had a waistcoat, or sweater to help keep him warm. Of course, the stitches displayed a purple pattern and he looked adorable in it.

Gramps, a solitary being, seemed to accept and even enjoy the company of this small creature and was careful where he placed his feet when they walked. Ma suggested that Eva make a drawing, a cartoon drawing, of this and Eva entered the world of cartoons and caricatures. Eva sketched a huge caricature of Gramps, with an exaggerated wrinkled brow, looking startled and even frightened while Pepé, with even bigger eyes than normal and large sharp teeth, held him at bay protecting a scrap of meat. Mr. Moore and Eva laughed to split their sides. This drawing was passed around to all five cars with roars of approval.

Chapter V

Telling without Telling

One early morning, Eva decided to sketch some of the men while they slept. Because it was raining, Eva could not ask Mr. Moore to drag out the ramp to exercise Gramps when they stopped. The men were traveling coach class, which meant that they slept in their seats and not in a sleeping berth. Eva knew that some slept on the floor with a bedroll for a pillow. She was tucked away in a quiet corner of the car concentrating on how to draw the different faces she saw. Most of the men were thin and angular from lack of a healthy diet, but different nonetheless. As she considered this, she noticed that one of the men, called Jim, sat down on a bench seat where her friend, Mr. Clyde, was sleeping. Pa had told Eva that Clyde was

joining their wagon train as a drover, driving cattle to the settlements for breeding. Pa also told Eva that Clyde had a wife and child back East and would send for them when he was settled. Pa seemed to enjoy his company.

Eva was surprised when she noticed that Mr. Jim slid his hand inside Clyde's coat. When he took his hand out, he had Mr. Clyde's wallet. As he began to quietly slide out of the bench seat, he looked up and saw Eva watching.

He gave her a hard stare, then raised his fist and made a threatening gesture towards her. It was clear he was saying, "If you tell anyone, I will hurt you."

Eva was scared and didn't quite know what to do. Yes, she should tell her Ma and Pa, and Mr. Clyde as well. But how could she tell Ma and Pa or Mr. Clyde without telling them?

This was trouble. Would this man really hurt her or her sister? He looked so big and strong; would he hurt her Pa? Should she just let it go and let poor, innocent Mr. Clyde lose his wallet and his money? She would feel badly for the entire trip across the prairie with him. What should she do? This was a serious problem and one where she could not ask for advice. She wished that Aunt

Helen were at hand; she would know just what to do.

Thinking, she walked the whole length of the swaying train and said hello to several people who were awake and knew her from her walks with Gramps. She wished she could see Gramps. That great, big, massive horse always had a calming effect on her. He seemed to say, "Don't worry. This will pass. All will be well." But it wasn't, and it wouldn't be. She was taught not to steal and to always tell the truth. How could she tell this story and not tell the story? And then it came to her. It was like Aunt Helen was talking to her in that quiet, confident way she had.

"Tell the story without words," she said.

Eva knew just what to do. She settled down in a quiet corner of a train car, got out her sketchpad and charcoal and drew the most important picture of her young life. When it was finished, it told the story in all its detail. Her sketch of Mr. Jim was exact and caught the evil in his eye. It could be no one else. He had Mr. Clyde's wallet in his hand. Mr. Clyde was not suspecting a thing. It was Eva's best work and her most important. Now she could "tell" Pa and he would know what to do.

Before she lost her courage, she went into the next car and asked Pa if she could show him something in their sleeper berth.

Pa gave her a questioning look, but immediately understood that this was serious.

In the sleeping berth, Pa closed the door and asked Eva what was bothering her. He seemed to know that she was upset.

Eva showed Pa her sketch. He looked at it for a long time; then he closed his eyes and then opened them and looked at it again.

He leaned down so that he was on her level and lowered his voice. “Did you see this happen, Eva?”

Pa was staring directly into her eyes, and she knew he wanted her to tell the truth. She nodded her head, yes.

“Did Mr. Jim threaten you if you told Clyde or me?”

Eva nodded her head again.

Pa straightened up, and as Eva watched, he seemed to grow, to grow bigger in stature, to swell in a way Eva had not seen before.

In an even, but controlled voice, Pa said, “You have done exactly the right thing, Eva, and I am very proud of you. I will take care of this. Please

go to the car and ask your Ma and Abbey to meet us here.”

Eva returned with Ma and Abbey. Without a word, Pa showed Ma the sketch. Ma took in a deep breath and covered her mouth. She reached out and protectively gathered Eva and Abbey closer to her.

“What are you going to do, Jack?” Ma asked.

“Show this to Clyde and ask him how he would like to handle this.” Pa replied. “And make it clear that no matter what he decides, no one can threaten my family.”

To Eva’s surprise, Ma agreed. Ma was a peaceful woman who carried spiders from inside the house and placed them outside so they could live. But it was crystal clear to Eva that Ma would protect her children like a she-bear.

“Jack, do what needs to be done,” she said, “But please be careful.”

Pa returned about twenty minutes later, without Eva’s drawing. Ma raised a questioning eyebrow and Pa said, “Clyde looked at the sketch, turned a little pale and said that he would take care of it at the next stop for wood and water. He also asked me to thank you, Eva. He said that he loved the drawing and he would like to keep it. It would be

a reminder to be more careful in choosing his friends and to button the pocket holding his wallet.”

This made Eva feel like she had confronted a difficult problem, one that didn't seem to have a solution, and found a way through it. Aunt Helen would be proud.

The stop was coming up for wood and water and Eva and her family were alert and a little worried. This one time, Eva did not visit Gramps. They were not sure what might happen. But Mr. Clyde got back on the train and Mr. Jim did not return at all. Mr. Clyde did not have any cuts and bruises or torn or stained clothing, so he had not been in a fight. Of course, they were curious, but Pa only said that problems on the frontier, where there are no judges, lawyers and juries, were often solved in a direct, face-to-face manner. And they were all relieved that Mr. Jim was no longer a threat. Mr. Clyde became a good friend on the wagon train and told the best stories when everyone sat by the fire at night. He always asked Eva to sit by his side.

Chapter VI

Madame Romanoff: Fortune-Teller, Clairvoyant, Seer, Soothsayer, Psychic, Medium, Astrologer, and Mystic

Eva spent hours and hours on the train sketching in the folio Aunt Helen had given her. She made many sketches of Gramps. One included a water tower where the train stopped. Ma thought it was perfect. There were several sketches of the men who shared their car and more of Madame Romanoff and her Aladdin's cave behind the beaded curtain.

The story of Aladdin and the Magic Lamp was one story in the book, *A Thousand and One*

Nights, which Aunt Helen had helped her select to take on the wagon train. Madame Romanoff's cave did not have gold, silver, fruits and sweet meats, but rather small trunks, boxes and cloth bags. She could usually be seen dealing out and reading a deck of oversized cards with rapt attention.

While walking Gramps in a brisk wind, Mr. Moore speculated that Madame Romanoff was a Gypsy from Bohemia and a fortuneteller. He had heard of such people when the train had layovers in Boston or New York. Many gypsy families traveled throughout Europe in one-horse carriages that were decorated with bright paint and secret marks to protect the family from evil forces. They earned money from playing music, dancing and various forms of fortune telling. The music was in a key and rhythm not familiar to western Europeans and played on a violin and tambourine. Gypsies were admired for the building and repair of violins. The tambourine is a small hand drum with metal discs cut-in on the sides that rattled when the drum was played and gave rhythm to their songs.

“What is a fortune teller?” asked Eva, eager to learn anything about this strange lady in coach number five.

“I only know what I have heard,” said Mr. Moore. “But people pay them to look into the future or to talk with ancestors who are dead. You have probably noticed that the Madame constantly shuffles those oversized cards and lays them out on her trunk. I think she is trying to foresee the future.”

“My!” Eva said. “Can she really do that? Would she do that for me?”

“I’m not sure,” replied Mr. Moore. “But, I’m told that poor President Lincoln and now, his wife, Mary Todd, consults with a medium in Washington.”

It was Abbey, sweet innocent Abbey, who broke the ice and made a friend of Madame Romanoff. It was another windy morning and Abbey wanted to visit Gramps and help Eva exercise Gramps at an all-night layover. Madame Romanoff had her usual problem of getting on and off the train and while being pushed and pulled to get back on, her huge hat fell off her head and landed on the station platform at Abbey’s feet.

Abbey picked the hat up, looked at every jewel and gently shook the hat to hear the tinkling of the tiny bells.

Abbey looked at her sister and said, "I want one of these toys."

Eva, laughing, said, "That is not a toy. It is a hat and it belongs to Madame Romanoff. We need to give it back to her once she is settled."

Once Eva and her sister were in the coach, Pepé the dog jumped off the trunk and danced in front of Eva insisting that she pick him up. He must recognize me from our walks with Gramps and Mr. Moore, Eva thought. In her accented English, Madame Romanoff said that Pepé was shy of most people. It was a mark of distinction that Pepé trusted Eva.

Abbey, also feeling a little shy, walked up to Madame Romanoff and offered the hat. She said, "My name is Abbey. I'm sorry you dropped your hat and I love the sound of the bells."

Madame Romanoff, now in a bright kerchief that she wore under her hat, took the hat with all the bells jingling and placed it on her head. In a heavy unfamiliar accent, she said, "Thank you Abbey. I

am pleased to meet you. Would you like one of these bells?”

“Oh yes!” she said. May I, Eva?”

“Madame Romanoff,” Eva replied while holding Pepé, “We do not need a reward for returning your property, but thank you for the kind offer.

“Now I know you must take it.” Madame Romanoff replied. “It is rare that I meet such polite and well brought-up children. Your parents should be proud.”

Madame Romanoff reached into one of her many capacious pockets and came out with a long pair of scissors. With a practiced motion, she snipped-off two of the bells, one silver and one brass. She passed the silver bell to Abbey. When Abbey held out her hand, Madame Romanoff seemed to take an extra second before placing it in her palm.

Blushing, but very happy, Abbey said, “Thank you.”

Madame Romanoff held out the brass bell for Eva and once again seemed to take an extra beat to look at Eva’s palm before passing her the bell.

“Thank you for being so generous.” Eva said.

Madame Romanoff looked at Eva and said, “Would you be so kind to ask your beautiful mother to stop by today, if she has time?”

“Is there something wrong?” Eva asked, worried that they may have offended Madame Romanoff.

“Not at all, Eva,” she replied. “You and your sister are those rare children who will make a difference to our world. I want to talk with your mother about the full of the moon.”

Chapter VII

When Ma was a Girl

Because the train was now moving, Eva had to take Abbey from car to car across the couplings. This was easy for Eva by herself, but scary to watch Abbey walk those four tottering steps with the tracks seeming to move underneath. Eva held Abbey's hand, but every step was a worry. Abbey shrieked and giggled thinking it was great fun. They repeated this three more times and Eva felt exhausted by the time they reached their own car.

Once in their car, Abbey ran to Ma shaking the silver bell and excitedly said that the funny woman in the big green hat gave it to her. Eva, walking the length of the car, caught her breath

from the car-to-car adventure and showed Ma her brass bell.

Ma was worried because she was not sure if the girls had been left behind at the station and now breathed a sigh of relief. “Tell me what happened,” she said.

To the jingle of Abbey’s silver bell, Eva recounted, “While loading back onto the train, Madame Romanoff lost her large green hat. Abbey picked it up and thought it was a new toy.”

Ma covered her mouth with her hand as she often did when she was laughing.

“I told Abbey that she must give it back. We waited until Madame Romanoff was settled and Abbey politely gave it back, but not before saying that she liked to hear the bells tinkling. Madame Romanoff offered Abbey a bell and I stepped-in and told her that we did not need a reward for returning her property.”

Ma nodded her head and smiled. “That’s only right, and I honor you for remembering that.”

“Then Madame Romanoff insisted that we each accept a bell,” Eva continued. “And she used a giant pair of scissors to cut two off.” Eva hesitated for a moment. She wasn’t sure how to explain the

way Madame Romanoff had looked at her and her sister's hands.

Ma waited patiently for she knew there was more to come.

“When Madame Romanoff passed the silver bell to Abbey, she seemed to pause and take a second look at Abbey's hand.” Eva said. “She did the same to me when she gave me the brass bell. At first I thought that my fingernails might be dirty, but I think there is more than that.”

She repeated Madame Romanoff's invitation for Ma to visit her sometime during the day.

“Is that all she said?” asked Ma.

“No,” replied Eva, “She said she wanted to talk to you about ‘the full of the moon’ tonight.”

“The full of the moon?” Ma repeated. “What can she mean by that? Do you have any ideas, Eva?”

Eva hesitated, then plunged in. “Mr. Moore tells me that she may be a gypsy fortune teller or soothsayer. He says they use astrology to make predictions. Could it have something to do with the moon?”

“This is more and more interesting,” said Ma. “I went to a fortune teller as a young girl at a county fair with two of my friends. She sat at a table in a darkened tent, with a lantern casting shadows

over her face. We were all scared and didn't quite know what to expect. It was great fun."

Eva had never imagined Ma as a young girl before now. She had always just been Ma. She, too, must have been young once. Eva relished the idea of Ma and her friends behaving just like herself and Abbey: curious and a little scared.

"Ma," Eva said. "What did you ask of your fortune teller?"

Ma colored a little and said, "I think we all asked whom we would marry."

"Was it Pa?" Eva asked.

Ma rose from her seat and, making a decision, said, "Please ask your Pa to watch Abbey and let's meet Madame Romanoff. You will need to show me how to go from car to car on this moving train."

Eva did as she was asked and when Ma saw the tracks rushing beneath the couplings, she took a step back and held tight to the rail with one hand and put the other hand to her chest.

"Did Abbey cross here?"

"Yes." said Eva. "Four times! I thought I would die each time. I did hold her hand and could save her if she slipped, but it was scary."

“Please don’t do it again by yourself,” said Ma,
“Ask for help from Pa or from me.”

Chapter VIII

The Worm Moon

Madame Romanoff clearly was expecting them, for she had tied back the beaded curtains and cleared a small space opposite her for Ma to sit. With a smile and a deep bow, while sitting, she said in her heavily accented English, “Welcome. My name is Ivanka Romanoff. Thank you for coming. Please do sit down.”

Pepé, dancing on his hind legs, insisted that Eva pick him up. The little dog was light in her arms and his toenails tickled her when he moved. Madame Romanoff smiled in approval.

Ma smoothed her skirts and sat down. Always equal to any occasion, she replied, “It is an honor to meet you, Madame Romanoff, and thank you for the invitation. My name is Margaret Norton

and you have met my daughters, Eva and Abbey. You have been most kind to them.”

“They are the reason I asked you to join me, Mrs. Norton. Your children do you much credit.”

Ma nodded and smiled and waited for Madame Romanoff to continue, which she did right away.

“I am from Bohemia in central Europe and from a family who is recognized throughout Europe as having foresight or who sees events in the future. We are called gypsies and travel from village to village playing music and dancing and often we are asked to pull back the veil and see what the future may bring.”

The hair on the back of Eva’s neck stood up, and she inched forward on her seat, listening intently to what Madame might say.

Madame Romanoff continued, “One of our clues to understand the future is to read the lines in the palm of the hand. I know that you have not asked for my services, but I was struck when I glanced at Abbey’s palm and, later, Eva’s.

Ma tightened her lips, as though she were concerned, or not sure if this was appropriate.

“I tend to do this with everyone I meet, much like other people might notice a hair style or fashion.” Madame Romanoff continued. “I did not

read or discuss your children's palms with them, but I wanted to ask if you and your husband would join me this evening to explore this further. Tonight is the full of the moon and a very good time for discovering secrets of the future. In our culture, the full moon in March is called the worm moon, because it is when the worms come out and begin to loosen the soil for cultivation. It is when the earth reveals her secrets."

Worms, thought Eva, and secrets from the earth! I hope Ma accepts the invitation.

"Thank you Madame Romanoff," Ma replied, not quite as self-assured as when they arrived. "I will discuss this with my husband and let you know our decision. And thank you again for being so kind to my children."

Ma rose from her seat and as they made their way back to their car, Eva could barely contain her excitement.

Oh, to see the future! But would Ma agree, and how would Ma ever convince Pa to join this kind of adventure?

Chapter IX

Anticipation

Pa, it turned out, was no problem. He at once he gave his blessing. Ma smiled and said she thought Madame Romanoff was an interesting person with many stories to tell. Pa could tell that Ma and Eva were dying to find out more and Abbey was up for any adventure. She wanted to step over the moving tracks again. There was much speculation over dinner.

Dinner was roast chicken Ma bought from a family by the track siding who cooked and offered fresh meals to the railroad passengers. This was special, for both Ma and Pa were careful with their money, but Ma bought a full meal every three or four days to be sure the children had proper nutrition. The meal included baked potato,

onions and carrots. There was apple pie and a sharp cheese for desert. This was a feast when compared with the smoked meats, bread, cheese and onions that made up their usual fare.

The train rolled along through hilly country with forest and fields. The purple shadows of darkness merged with the woods and made Eva think of Madame Romanoff and her love of that color. Deer fed at dusk and as the shadows lengthened, Eva saw a small herd of deer moving at the wooded margin of a field.

I wish I could paint that scene, she mused. This was a frequent thought as she now saw many scenes in terms of light and shadow.

What would their future be? No one knew exactly what to expect from Madame Romanoff, so over dinner, it was decided that each family member would suggest one question that Madame Romanoff might answer.

Pa was first.

“Will we find a great site to build on? Will there be trouble crossing the prairie?”

“Wait a minute,” Ma and Eva said together, “That’s two questions!”

“Okay,” Pa said. “Do we find a great building site?” He explained that if they found a building site, they must have made it across the prairie.

Then, it was Ma’s turn.

“Wait a moment,” Eva interrupted again. “Ma is going to want to know if we all arrived safe and healthy. Ask something fun, like will we discover gold?”

Ma laughed and said, “Eva, you are right. But you may have all the gold. I want us to be safe and healthy. That’s what I want to find out.”

Eva said, “Will I ever write a great book like I am reading now? Will I ever produce a great painting like I see in the illustrations? Will I ever do anything to make a difference in people’s lives?”

Both Pa and Ma were taken aback. Ma said, “We have always encouraged you to dream and to have goals and I think you will do all of those things. Is there something more immediate you can ask?”

“Okay,” Eva said, “What I really want to know, is will we see Aunt Helen again? I miss her so much.”

Ma caught her breath and replied, “I miss her too, Eva. More than anyone. I hope Madame Romanoff has an answer.”

Abbey, who always understood more than her family realized, piped up, “I want to ask when will we eat sugar cookies?”

Everyone roared.

It was time to visit Madame Romanoff. First Ma made them scrub their hands. If Madame Romanoff were going to read their palms, they would be clean palms. Then, they started out and Pa got to see the passage from car to car. Pa didn't listen to Abbey, who begged to walk, but silently picked her up and carried her over the couplings. Both girls knew when Pa was serious and would not listen to argument. Pa was always kind, but would not allow dangerous acts.

Madame Romanoff had cleared the entire seat across from her so both Ma and Pa could sit. Eva wondered where she had found room for her boxes, baskets and bags. Pepé singled out Eva and jumped from his perch on the steamer trunk and again insisted that Eva pick him up.

Eva looked out the window and watched the silvery landscape slide past. The shadows were gone and replaced with purple turning to night. The moon, as it rose, was full indeed and seemed to race along with the train. Had it been a whole month since the barn dance? A lot had happened

in those short weeks: a worm moon lighting the Earth's secrets; lines in the palms of hands, and a real live gypsy fortune teller. This is an adventure, she thought.

Madame Romanoff introduced herself to Pa and, once again, praised his children in her heavily accented English.

“Mrs. Norton tells me that you are moving to the mountains of Colorado to begin a new life. That must be very exciting and worrisome for everyone; change can often be confusing.”

And scary, Eva thought. What must it be like to see into the future?

Madame Romanoff continued, “I explained to Mrs. Norton that over the generations, many in my family have had the gift of prophesy. I am fortunate that I inherited this gift as well. When I met your wonderful daughters, I was struck by the shape of their hands and some of the lines in the palms of their hands. I did not read their palms without your permission, but just a glance inspired me to want to see more. Palmistry plays a large part in getting clues to the future and I asked if I could meet with you and your lovely wife. Thank you for coming. I would like to read

your palms to look at the way you and your wife have passed on your fate to your children.

The moon was shining its soft light on Madame Romanoff's lined face. The moonlight, interrupted by passing trees, made her large gold earrings seem to melt and her many rings seemed to glow and float above the table. Eva noticed that Abbey, sitting on Ma's lap, couldn't keep her eyes off those rings.

"Mr. Norton," Madame Romanoff began, "Shall we start with you?"

Eva wasn't quite sure how her Pa would react. Was he doing this just to please Ma and the girls, to learn more about Madame Romanoff and her family's inherited gifts or would he refuse and suggest that she read Ma's hand? She would soon find out.

Chapter X

Pa's Future

The bright, silvery moonlight, the clickety-clack of the railroad tracks and the swaying of the carriage put Eva in a dream-like state: a dream-like state where she was fully awake.

She heard Madame Romanoff say to Pa, "Please give me your dominant hand, or the hand you write with or use to swing a hammer, for I can see that you are a carpenter."

Pa raised an eyebrow. He had not done any carpentry on the train, nor had he worn his work-clothes with a loop sewn in to hold his hammer.

How can she know that? Eva thought. I don't remember Ma telling her that.

Pa moved Eva to one knee and extended his right hand, palm up. Madam Romanoff took his

hand and inspected it, pinching the skin, measuring the length of his fingers, squeezing the outer side of his palm and feeling the pads on each finger.

This is more like a doctor's examination than a fortune telling, Eva thought.

Then Madame Romanoff said, "Yes, I was right. The ridges on the top of your hand can only be present with the strong hard muscles in the palm of your hand and the callus at the base of your thumb. You are a carpenter. But this is mere anatomy, not clairvoyance."

Pa nodded and Ma let out a small laugh and looked at Eva. They knew that Pa was getting hooked.

"A few basics, first," Madame Romanoff said in a slightly deeper voice than her usual alto. "Palm shape, feel, and lines give clues about your personality, relationships, health, work, and travel."

Pa nodded and caught his tongue between his front teeth, which Eva knew to be a sure sign of concentration.

"Your dominant hand, which we call 'the hand of now' reveals your dominant traits. Your other, or recessive, hand often modifies or clarifies these

traits. I will look for any important or unusual traits first.”

Madame leaned forward and inspected Pa’s hand more closely.

Eva leaned forward too. She was so excited that could feel her heart beating fast with anticipation.

Madame Romanoff’s face stiffened slightly and her eyes seemed to reach across the table when looking deeply into Pa’s eyes. How does she do that? Eva wondered. Is it the moonlight? I would love to be able to draw that. I have been sketching with charcoals, now I need to learn to draw with colors. The light is more blue or indigo than the silver white of the moonlight.

Then Madame Romanoff went to work. With the quick assurance of many years of practice, she turned Pa’s hand over, looked at the nails and squeezed in several places.

“Your skin, while toughened from hard work, is flexible and has bounce when I tap it. This is an indication of your unusual natural energy. The way your thumb will bend back farther than normal indicates that you are very generous with your time and your possessions. You have a spatulate or wide, dominant hand. The size and shape of the hand is a strong indication that you

are flexible and adaptable. Your little finger seems to stand alone from the rest of your hand. This is a sure sign of independence.”

Eva knew her Pa so well that she could tell the reading did not overly impress him. This was ordinary stuff than any charlatan could say.

Then Madame Romanoff pointed to Pa’s thumb. She pulled a magnifying glass from another large pocket, made a noise in the back of her throat and looked at it closer.

“These two lines around your thumb indicate that you have or will have two families,” she said.

Two families? This was a thunderbolt. Pa and Ma look at each other in confusion. Everyone was paying attention now.

Ma sat up straight as if to challenge Madame Romanoff. “You must be mistaken.”

Madam Romanoff shifted her position on her bench to face Ma. “I am quite sure of this.”

“Why two families?” Pa asked.

Eva knew a family that took in orphans in Virginia, was that what Madame Romanoff meant by two families?

But Madam Romanoff just shook her head. “I’m sorry, Mr. Norton, we only get a glimpse into the future, often just shadows.”

Chapter XI

Ma's Future

Madame Romanoff reached over and took Ma's right hand and, with her magnifying glass, showed her two rings around Ma's own thumb.

"Two rings here, also," she said. "There is no doubt. I see two families clearly from the shadows, but I see no details."

The air seemed charged around the little group. The train whistle blew and Eva knew in the back of her mind that they were at a road crossing, but also some important crossing from now into the future.

Two families? Was another family going to move in with them? If that is the case, I hope they are nice, thought Eva. They would have to build a

larger cabin. Perhaps they would bring books. She had already read the ten she was allowed.

Madame Romanoff gave Ma the same deep penetrating look before proceeding. A beam of light seemed to pass from Madame Romanoff's eyes to Ma's. Ma unclenched her fingers and seemed to relax into Madame Romanoff's power.

She squeezed, and brushed Ma's skin and felt different areas of the palm and the finger pads as she had done with Pa's.

"Your skin is what I call medium fine and shows a great refinement of the mind. This usually means deep reading and a serious attempt to resolve life's important mysteries. It shows up again with the padding under your fingers. This shows deep sensitivity, and, with your refined mind, a deep understanding of the universe around you."

Abbey was so transfixed by the light reflecting off Madame Romanoff's rings that Pa had to hold her hands to stop her reaching out.

"The padding under your index finger," she went on, "is called the Mount of Jupiter. This is a sign of strong ambition and leadership. I suspect that if we looked at your recessive hand, we would find that this is hidden, and you are one of the few

who knows how to lead when people are not aware that they are being led. I think it is called, in English, “leading from behind.”

Eva noticed that Pa was nodding his head, yes.

Now Madame Romanoff was looking through her magnifying glass again. “The padding at the base your little finger is the Mount of the Moon. Yours is well developed and this usually points to imagination, intuition and even dreaminess. You have all of these, except dreaminess, but...” She looked up from Ma’s hand. “I feel that yours has more to do with language. Do you speak another language? *¿Habla español?*”

“Si,” Ma replied, a little surprised.

Ma spoke Spanish like a native speaker. She had been teaching Eva the language so that when they arrived in Colorado they would both be able to speak Spanish. But how could Madame Romanoff know this?

Eva shivered. This was getting scary.

“The lines on your palm get complicated very quickly and to fully understand would involve the reading of both hands. We will not do this tonight, but I see that you are worried about health, especially the health of your family.”

Eva nearly gasped.

“How can she know so much from just looking at her hand?” Eva asked. “This was the one question that Ma said she wanted answered during dinner.”

Pa tapped Eva’s knee with his free hand to remind her that it was impolite to speak out of turn.

Eva had to bite her lip to keep from saying more.

“Your health line begins at your little finger and journeys around the Mount of Mercury to the base of your palm,” Madame Romanoff was saying.

“Please put your mind at ease; the health lines of you and your husband are very strong. It is the life line from your index finger around the Mount of Jupiter to the base of your palm that is complex and of interest to me. Your lifeline shows a deepening area that may have to do with the second family.

“I see that you are going to meet a mystical person of great power and long lineage. Speaking personally, I would love to meet and study under such a person. She, for this person is a woman, will be a great influence on you and your family over the next several years. This is a privilege given to very few, and you have been chosen.”

Eva was on the edge of her seat, holding Pa's other hand and not wanting to miss a word. A second family and now a mystic! Any thoughts about missing the family farm and her friends were gone. I can't wait to meet this second family!

Madame Romanoff asked to see Pa's hand again and then went back to Ma's.

"As I tried to explain," she went on, "Our look into the future is at best cloudy and we try to accept what we see in spirit, not in detail. I see many shared experiences and one involves a great fire. This shows on both of your hands in the intersection of your lifelines and headlines. This foretells a massive fire that you and your friends come together to fight."

Fire! Though Eva. Madame Romanoff is talking about a massive fire and we are involved. Eva sat back in Pa's lap for reassurance.

"To put your minds at rest, no one dies, but a great effort is expended. I know no more details, but this fire leads to many experiences for you and your children that are life changing."

Eva hoped these experienced changed their lives for the better, not the worse. Children were taught from their earliest days to be careful with fire. They were never allowed to have candles at

night unless enclosed in a lantern and no light at all in the hay barn. A fire on a farm could wipe out decades of work in a very short time.

Madame Romanoff continued, "Each of you has a pronounced sun line next to the Mountain of Apollo: exact and definite in each of your hands. Once more I do not see details, but I can see travel to far places within the next two years. I know you are traveling to Colorado, but this trip includes travel across the ocean."

"The ocean!" Eva spoke out loud again, unable to contain herself any longer. Pepé, asleep in her lap, started, and nearly jumped down before she caught him.

"That is what I see," repeated Madame Romanoff. The line is very strong on both of your hands. The thing I see clearly, but hesitate to bring forth, is that you, Mrs. Norton, get to use your Spanish language when speaking to the King of Spain. It is rare that I get such clear visions, but this one is very strong."

Eva had trouble breathing. Traveling across the ocean and meeting the King of Spain was better than the storybooks she had read on the train. This was far beyond the questions they had thought up for Madame Romanoff over dinner.

Eva wanted more details, but just knowing that something like this was ahead made her look forward to every day rather than dread them.

“I must also mention that I see something unusual. It is a barrel and two crossed sticks dressed as a scarecrow in a garden. This image comes up again and again, so it must be important and I must mention it. The hints we get about the future are often distorted, but this one appears so often that I need to bring it forth.”

“A barrel with a dress?” asked Ma, laughing. “What on earth could that be?” They all needed a laugh. After the predictions of two families and a huge fire, a barrel with a dress was easy to accommodate.

“I fear that I have gone on too long,” Madame Romanoff said.

“You have not gone on too long,” Eva said, “What happens to the barrel?”

“My darling, these images are often confusing, but this scarecrow grows to a very large size and it is frightening and venerated and it travels with you. I am as confused as you, but I see it clearly.”

Chapter XII

Music and Art

“Now let’s look at the children’s hands.” Madame started by gently holding Abbey’s tiny hand. “You are the reason I invited you to join me. When I first noted your palm, Abbey, I heard music. Not just any music, but serious music with many instruments.

“We gypsies are intimately involved with music in our nomadic way of life. If you were in Bohemia, you would be honored for your music. My people would come to your door to hear you play. We would give you our best instruments and we would feel rewarded just to hear you. Your palm and aura are that strong.”

Eva thought Abbey was asleep, but the intensity of Madam Romanoff's gaze seemed to transfix Abbey into alert concentration.

Speaking to Ma and Pa, Madame Romanoff said, "Please be sure to encourage this talent. Her palm lines are not developed yet, but travel, far distant travel is showing. I hear loud applause and many honors in her near future. Abbey, you are a treasure and I am honored to meet you and your remarkable parents."

Ma preened, Dad looked at Abbey with love in his eyes, and Eva thought, this is already more than I can take in, and I'm next!

Madame Romanoff looked at Eva with that deep penetrating stare from coal-black eyes that seemed to see every corner of Eva's mind. Eva felt weak. It was one thing to observe her eyes when looking at others, but now she got the full effect.

"Eva, it is also an honor to meet you and read your palm." Madame Romanoff said as she reached for Eva's hand.

Madame Romanoff's grip was cool and secure. She felt the pads of Eva's fingers and probed the folds of her hands, seeming to withdraw into herself and consult with an inner being. And then, once again, she favored Eva with that intense

gaze, a look that was not frightening, but deeply concentrated.

“You have many traits in common with your unusual parents and several that are yours alone. The lines in your hand are beginning to take shape as you mature, but the story they tell even now is complex and encouraging. Much like your mother, your Mount of the Moon, for imagination and love of language, is very strong. But, on you, this is combined with Mercury for clear communication, imaginative thought and inspiration.”

What can this mean? Eva thought, could it have to do with my love of reading or the sketch book that Aunt Helen gave me?

As if reading her mind, Madame Romanoff continued, “I understand that you sketch.”

Eva nodded her head enthusiastically, ready to listen to anything Madame Romanoff might say about this.

“The Moon and Mercury will combine to take your art to important places. You will travel with your parents across the sea and your art and writing will be the focus of the trip.”

“My family will travel because of my sketching?” Eva asked, knowing that Madame Romanoff saw

only hints of the future. But this she needed to know.

“Eva I don’t know if it is a result of your sketching or some other form of art, but you and your family travel and your art is the reason. Happily, the Moon and Mercury are your controlling traits. There are many honors for you and your work in several fields. Your work is your love and it results in jobs and happiness for a large number of people in need.”

Oh, this is a dream, thought Eva. If only a small portion of this is true, I will be more than satisfied. With a glance at her Ma and Pa, Eva resolved to become the best artist she could be.

But Madame Romanoff was not through.

“As important as your art will become, your most important gift is to see a problem from many aspects and find unique solutions. I see a close relative of your family with a similar gift. This is a gift beyond any I can imagine.”

She is speaking of Aunt Helen, Eva thought, and she knew that Ma and Pa were thinking the same. To be even a little like Aunt Helen would be a future worth having.

Madame Romanoff ended this with a gentle squeeze of Eva’s hand and a tear fell from her

huge eyes. "I must confess," she said, wiping the tear, "That I have never, in all my years, seen a future so clearly."

Looking up, Eva noticed that Ma was openly crying and Pa was wiping a tear from his eyes as well. Only then did she feel the tears running down her own cheeks.

"I want to thank each of you for letting me see into your futures. I fear that I have been too long and detailed, especially for Abbey who is nearly asleep. I plan to confirm these observations with my Tarot cards, but the hour is late and my questions are too complex for tonight."

Madame Romanoff continued, "It is a tradition in our family over many generations to charge silver for reading these cards."

Pa stiffened like he was about to protest. He was likely worried that this whole evening was a trick for Madame Romanoff to get silver.

"I'm very sorry, Madame," Pa said. "If I had known that there was a charge involved, I would not have allowed this session to take place. We must be careful of our expenses at this time."

Madame shook her head. "Without silver, the cards will not tell the truth."

Eva wanted to believe these fortunes would come true. She hoped Pa would agree to pay Madame Romanoff.

Madame glanced at Eva. Then she looked back at Pa and said, “I think we have a misunderstanding. I know you are not prepared for this, Mr. Norton. I read your palms because of the glimpse I saw with Abbey and Eva. The Tarot card readings are for me to confirm my readings. You may have silver and not know it.”

She reached under Abbey’s hair and pulled a silver coin from Abbey’s ear. Abbey became alert instantly. Next, she placed a hand under Eva’s nose, snapped her fingers and a silver coin fell out of Eva’s nose and into Madame Romanoff’s hand.

Abbey dug in her ear to find more coins and Eva felt her nose for more. But the one Madame Romanoff had found was the only one.

Ma and Pa laughed and thanked Madame Romanoff for an enjoyable and instructive evening and wished her success in her travels.

Instructive? Enjoyable? These words did not even come close to describing the evening. It was amazing, Eva thought. The best evening of my life!

Turning her head to include the entire family, Madame Romanoff said, “You are going to experience many adventures. Please, if you can find the time, post an occasional letter to me at General Delivery, Kansas City Post Office. I long to see how these prophecies play out.”

The End

...But not the end! Now you can follow Eva and her family into the future through *The Adventures of Eva and Buckskin Charlie*.

Book One, *Eva's Secret Name*, is available from [Best Publishing Company](#), North Palm Beach Florida, and Amazon.com

About the Author

John W. Norton is a scientist, former executive, antique dealer, outdoorsman and teller of tall tales. His fondest memories are summers with his son, Jack, and their dogs at their camp at Grand Lake Stream, Maine, population: 125. John's passions are fishing, falling into a great book, and family.

It is for his granddaughter, Eva, age ten, that the *Adventures of Eva and Buckskin Charlie* books were conceived, and for Abbey, age four, that they will be continued.

John now lives in Charlotte, NC but returns to Grand Lake Stream with his fishing-partner, Helen, whenever possible.