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Ty Fisher is a man of deep honor and when fellow fur trapper Bull Singleton turns to robbing and killing his fellow trappers for their furs, he is honor bounded to see mountain justice served. Ty goes after the renegade killer with his trapping partner Crazy Wayne and the two men quickly plunge into danger, intrigue, and adventure as their hunt for the mountain man turned murderer becomes time consuming and proves to be extremely difficult. The action increases as Ty falls in love with a white woman living with the Sioux and Wayne's brother is killed by Bull.

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TY FISHER

And the Blood of the Mountain Men



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by
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This book is dedicated to Patty, Kristoffer, and Dane, three very close friends who kept me writing when times were rough.

*And, as always, Joann thanks for the motivation and understanding.
You are a woman to walk the river with!*

Foreword

The settling of the American west was not for the faint of heart. Both men and women, at times, had to take the law into their own hands and dispense it fairly. Also, unlike today, there was no long wait to see how your appeals went...the sentence was usually carried out within the hour. Additionally, some of the crimes then would hardly be considered the same type of crimes today (stealing a horse usually resulted in death by hanging is an excellent example). The same could be said of stealing cows or just being dishonest at the wrong time. The moral standards were totally different and the man had to walk his talk. A man had to honor his word once given.

The beaver trappers, or mountain men as they were commonly called, were some of the hardiest men this continent has ever produced. They often spent years alone, or perhaps with a small group of others, in the Rocky Mountains trapping, discovering country side that few, if any white men had ever seen before. It was a dangerous occupation and many did not last their first year. While the times were rough these men were tougher and their sense of unfathomable honor was never compromised.

However, times change and so do the people. In my Novels, I have attempted to show how everyday people, just like you and I, have influenced this great country. It is of these strong willed no-named people I write about, because they contributed the most.

So, pull up a chair, relax and read about the Old West.

Chapter 1

My name is Ty Fisher and I'm in one hell of a mess. I'm not sure I will yet live when the sun comes up, 'cause things are that bad. My right leg has been broken in two spots that I know of and I am slowly freezing to death. I am of a sound mind, but my body has gone to hell on me in jess the last few hours. I figure if the Sioux don't kill me, either the weather or my broke leg will. It is not easy to lay here and keep my small fire a-goin' while I listen to every little sound, hoping it is not the Sioux or death coming to meet me personal like. While the odds may be 'gainst me, I am not a quitter and I never have been. If death or the Sioux want me, let them start the dance and they will find I am able to pay the band.

It all started when the Sioux got on my ass a couple of days back. I gave 'em the slip fer a time, but ya cain't ever really lose a Injun. If they want ya bad 'nough, why they just stay on your back trail until they get ya eventual like. I was doin' fine until just a-fore dark when a shot rang out and I was knocked from my horse with a hard blow to my right leg. The bullet went through the leg and kilt my hoss, but if things weren't a-goin' bad 'nough, two Sioux braves charged from the trees. The first old boy I kilt out right with my Hawken rifle, but the second one got in close and me and him tangled a spell. I 'ventually kilt him with my green river knife, but that red bastard was hard on my broke leg. Now, I am forted up in a blackberry briar patch with a fire the size of a teacup. Things ain't lookin' good, but my life ain't never been that easy to start with, so I don't 'spect no easy death either.

Right after I crawled into this briar patch I set my leg as good as I could and wrapped 'er up tight. Now, that hurt me like all get out, but I didn't have much of a choice. If I can survive this night, I fig'er I have a chance to live a little longer. See, most mountain men will tell ya, the first twenty-four hours are the most 'portant when dodgin'

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Injuns, or gettin' over a hut. Seems if a man is a-gonna get caught or up and die, why he just natural like does it within that there twenty-four hours. After that it still ain't easy, but them first few hours are the most 'portant.

The wind rustled the briar patch a might so I added another small twig of wood to the dying flames. The fire was small and in a hole in the ground, so I knew it was not a flame easily seen by others. I had learned to keep my fires small, unless I wanted unwelcome company and right now that was the last thing I was up to taking on. No, I wanted to rest and regain some strength while I could. I was so tired my eyes felt like they had sand in 'em. The odds were I would be dead way before the sun came up, especially if them Sioux were still back there.

Some folks don't think Injuns fight at night and that is just plain dumb thinkin'. A Injun will fight when the fightin' is good fer 'em. If he thinks he can win, why he'll fight ya during a lightnin' storm just to see the color of yer hair. See, Injuns don't see life like we do and I don't mean that in a bad way. A Injun is taught from birth to kill to protect his tribe, so killin' is a way of life from the beginnin' with 'em. Also, the more fightin' a brave does and the more coups he has, why the bigger man he is among his own people. All this compassion and tenderness the white man wants us all to display towards them folks is just a bunch of hogwash when you apply to the red man. The red man does not understand mercy and he only respects bravery, determination, and a fight to the death. All of that Bible stuff is viewed as a weakness by the Injun's, 'sides most of 'em never heard of no Bible.

I have know'd a few Injuns in my life and most of 'em were good men. They are different, like I just said, but you have good ones and bad ones too. I don't guess no society is much different from 'nother when it comes to good folks or bad ones. What I like most 'bout Injuns is they don't talk yer arm and leg off 'round no campfire, less you have one of them pow-wows a-goin' with a big chief, then them boys can talk fer days and days un-end. They're mostly quiet folk and they are an independent lot when compared to white men. A Injun does what he wants and when he wants too, and he ain't judged harshly 'cause he don't go along with the group. Now, the way I see it that can be both good and bad. Be hard to go to war with a man who

don't follow orders, but hell, they do it everyday and they are most likely some of the best fighters in the world today. I guess you have to be a Injun to unnerstand how they think most of the time.

I pulled out a small strip of buffalo jerky and nibbled on the rock hard meat. It wasn't much, but likely to be all I would eat for a few days. I had a few pounds of it in my possibles bag, so I was not likely to starve fer a spell. I suspected I would not have to worry about hunger for long aways. My biggest fear right now was if my leg would fester or not. If it festered I would loose the leg or die, either equaled the other as far as I was concerned.

The night was long and cold as I would awaken at times and add small twigs to my small fire. I had a horse blanket, but it did little to keep the cold from me or to help make me comfortable. What I needed and didn't have was some whiskey to ward off the pain of my leg. Well, I ain't got none, so I will bare the pain the best I can. I ain't the first man who ever had to handle a hut without anything fer the pain. Oh, I don't like it much, but what can I do 'bout it? Not a thang, 'cept lay here and take it.

Dawn broke with frost on the ground and stiffness in my good joints. I am only a little over thirty years of age, but too many years a-wadin' cold mountain streams a-lookin' fer beavers have added a lot of age to me. I am one of the lucky ones, I guess. I have lived long enough fer my joints to ach, while many of my friends have not. Mostly it was the Injuns, the weather, accidents, or big critters that put most of 'em under.

While my leg is still swollen, it does not show signs of festerin' yet. I am not sure how long that festering stuff takes, but this morning, other than a-bein' stiff and in some pain, I am doing fine. I had just added another small twig to my fire when I heard a small noise. I was not sure what it was actually, but something grabbed my attention. It might have been a snapping twig or a rolling rock, but I didn't hear it clearly enough to identify it. I pulled the hammer back on my Hawken rifle and was surprised by the loud click it made as it locked into position.

Many slow and long minutes pasted before I heard a low voice, "Ty, you there?"

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I knew immediately it was old Pack, and I was one happy mountain man to hear the sound of his rough and graveled voice. I answered in just above a whisper, "I'm in the briar patch, almost dead center."

"I smell yer smoke, but damned if-un I can see ya."

"Just keep walking. I got a broke leg and I cain't come to ya."

A few minutes pasted and looking up I noticed the dirty and unkempt face of Pack looking down at me. He gave me a big smile and I saw he had lost a few more teeth, most likely from fighting and drinking, knowing Pack.

"Well, old son, yer in a fine mess. I came on yer dead hoss back there and 'spected ya was holed up some place. I saw a lot of blood and two dead Sioux, so I knowed you had made a fight of it." Pack spoke as he got down on his knees and crawled into my rough shelter.

"Pack, you got any trader's whiskey on ya? I hut a bit and it would take the edge off of the pain."

"I got some, but let me look at ya furst. If you get to festerin' there will hell to pay." Pack spoke as he pulled the rough bandage back and checked my broken leg. I could see by looking at the relief in his eyes that things were all right.

"How's it look?"

"Looks jess like a broke leg. I'll go and get that whiskey fer ya and be right back. There was two Sioux on yer back trail, but I done 'em in. I don't know if-un there was others 'hind them, but you ain't gotta worry 'bout them two fer sartain." I watched as the big man wiggled out of my briar patch and disappeared. He was only gone for a few minutes when he returned with a small jug of trader's whiskey and a beat up old tin cup.

Smiling, Pack said, "Some fellers will do damned neart anything fer a free spot of whiskey!"

I had to give a light chuckle as the course amber liquid burned a trail down my parched throat. That one drink struck my belly like a bolt of lightnin' and I could almost feel an immediate dullness in the

pain. Then again, it might have just been relief of having another person beside me. There is something comforting in having another person with you when you are seriously hurt and I could feel either the alcohol or relief fill my whole being. I might just survive this after all.

“Pack, what in tarnation are you doin’ up heah? Last I heard, you was down by the Low Water trappin’ fer pews.”

“Me and Hatch got runned out by them damned Blackfoot. They kilt old Hatch, so I made a bee line to the mountains where I could hole up a spell. I came ‘cross yer hoss and here I be. Not much to ‘er really.”

“Well, I am sorry ‘bout Hatch, he was a man to walk the river with. Good man. But, I am glad ya found me. If you hadn’t, I’d be a gone beaver by now with them two Sioux on my trail.”

“Waugh! Who is to say. I have knowed men to survive much more and you’re one to do the same. I hated to lose old Hatch, me and him go back a few years, but you and me both know in these mountains a man is on barrowed time.”

“Pack, we gotta move. I ‘spect more Sioux are on my backside and it will only be a matter of time a-fore they come lookin’ fer me serious like.”

“I hear ya and I knows it to be true. I will have to leave some gear, ‘cause I only got one riding horse and one packhorse. Mayhap we can make it to Butterfield’s Tradin’ Post, if we ride long and hard. The thing is, can ya ride with that busted up leg?”

“Pack, I ain’t got not choice, either I ride, or I die right heah.”

Pack gave a light laugh and said, “Well, let’s do ‘er. This is a’gonna hut ya some old coon, but they ain’t no gentle way to do this. I’ll pull ya outta these briars, load ya on the hoss, and then we’ll make tracks fer Butterfield’s.”

The next few minutes were some of the most painful in my life. I even bit a green twig in two pieces to keep from screaming. At one point I must have pasted out, because I came to on the packhorse. The rest of that day was spent in pure hell as I experienced a bone jarring ride like I have never felt before. Most of the time I was semi-

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conscious, but I could feel the horse moving smoothly under me. The problem was the slightest jar or jolt and I would get a sharp pain up the entire broken leg to my lower back. It was after dark before Pack finally lowered me to the dirt beside a campfire and covered me with a buffalo robe. I vaguely remember him feeding me broth of some kind and then I drifted back to sleep.

It was not until almost noon the second day I was able to carry on a conversation of sorts, "How much further we got to go?"

"I fig'ure we'll be there some times tomorrow, if the weather stays clear. But, there are some rough clouds hangin' over by the mountains. Now, we can ride long and hard today or stop early and hole up. Which you want to do?"

"Keep ridin', as much as it huts it gets makes me that much closer to hep and relaxin'. I'll do 'er all right."

Pack leaned over and spit a dark stream of chewing tobacco juice into the dirt as he said, "I was hopin' you'd say that. I ain't been comfortable since them damn Blackfoot got on my butt. And, you have the Sioux on yer-un, so thangs ain't goin' too good fer us right now. I fig'er the sooner we get to the Tradin' Post the better off we'll both be."

We rode until late that night and finally stopped in a grow of pines at the base of a large mountain. I knew where we were and I guessed we would finally be at the tradin' post a little before noon the next day. Well, unless we had problems between then and now. One thing 'bout a-livin' as a mountain man, things could get down right excitin' at times.

Over a small fire we shared the last of Pack's coffee and I was able to eat and keep down a bowl of his stew. Even in the best of times Pack's stew if hard to keep down and as hurt as I was right then it was a real chore. See, when you eat Pack's stew you are constantly throwing gristles, bones, and even fur from yer bowl. He tends to skin a critter jess 'nough to get to the meat and doesn't worry much 'bout anything else that ends up in the pot.

The night passed cold, but uneventful for us. The normal night sounds were there and the stars were bright overhead. At one point I could see lightning flash near the mountains and knew that we would

be lucky to get off without any rain. But, it passed us by without even a small spatter of drops and the lightning was the only hint of bad weather.

In the morning a check of my leg showed the swelling had gone down and there were no angry red lines of infection. I was more worried about the risk of infection than a quick healing. I knew festering could kill me and I had suffered too much from the injury to consider death that way. It is a painful and horrible death, and one where nothin' can be done for the victim. A person just died away slowly and in great pain as the festerin' would spread throughout the body. Pack changed the bandage and rewrapped the leg before he placed me on the packhorse. I was starting to hate that horse, fer all the pain it caused me, but I knew that it beat walkin'.

Just a little before noon we topped a slight rise and saw Butterfield's tradin' post below us beside a shallow river. It was not much to look at, but it was the biggest thing around fer miles and the only tradin' post this side of the Mississippi as far as I was concerned. Oh, there were others, but a feller could trust Butterfield to trade fair and square and not take 'vantage of a man. I knew now I would be laid up for at least two weeks and this was about as safe as it ever got in the mountains. I also knew Butterfield would not charge me room and board like some fellers would, but he would expect me to help him out when I got some strength back in me. I have always been a hard working man, so helping him out to pay for my room and keep would do me just fine.

"Ya know, it shore ain't much to look at, is it?" Pack asked with a low chuckle.

I gave him a crooked grin and said, "It looks jess fine, if yer leg is broke up and ya hut all over. It'll do."

Less than ten minutes later we were in the fort and I was lifted from the horse by a small group of mountain men. They carried me into the trading post and put me in a bed of all things. Hell, I hadn't been in a bed in five years or more. But, there I was in a feather down bed with a patch work quilt over me like I was back on the farm.

"By damn, "Butterfield said as he looked at my injury, "yer a lucky son of a bitch. It that had been a fifty caliber rifle ball and not a

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smaller one, why you would have lost the whole leg. Looks like the ball hit ya with less powder than a full load too."

I grimaced with the pain and replied, "Well, how come I don't feel so lucky?"

Butterfield gave a deep hardy laugh and said, "Well, now, pilgrim, I guess it all depends of the side of the fence yer on. I can see where you mighten not feel very lucky, but son, you are. Like I said, a big ball would have ruined that whole leg."

I grumbled a bit and leaned back into that big comfortable bed. I realized a big bed like that could make a feller down right lazy if-un he slept in it everyday. I knew right then and there, though, it was perfect for me in my condition.

I glanced up at Butterfield and asked, "Did Pack tell ya 'bout them Sioux on my backside?"

"Yep, he did Ty, but that ain't much like them Sioux. Oh, they'll kill a man fast 'nough, but they usually need a reason. You bein' healthy and such it is not like 'em at all. Did you make 'em mad that you know of?" As Butterfield spoke I could see the concern on his face. See, if the Sioux got stirred up good and ugly, why the whole fur trade was in danger.

"Nope, I had felt them on my trail for a couple of days a-fore the attack. I had no idea it was even the Sioux until I kilt that first man. I saw the way he wore his hair and knew he was a Sioux. I never knew a man what had much serious troubles with the Sioux, unless he asked fer it somehow."

Butterfield gave a light chortle and replied, "Well, they be fired up now if they attacked you. It just don't seem like them boys of old Hump's would be out a-lookin' fer hair when there ain't no good reason. Hell, they get plenty of coups a-fightin' with the Crow and Blackfoot that they don't need to mess with white men. Unless something has lit a fire unner 'em."

"I don't know Butterfield, but when them two came at me they was as serious as all get-out. They wanted my hair." I said in a tired voice as I lowered my head to the soft pillow. My last thought before I fell asleep was how comfortable that pillow was when compared to my old saddle.