

Red Dead Redemption 2 - The College Fund [OC X Abigail Marston]

1899, State of New Hanover,

Life in the 1800s wasn't easy for a man of the modern age. That was James Carlson's life when he woke up as a baby in New York City. But at least he had the comfort of knowing that he was born in a wealthy and politically powerful family.

His uncles and parents were proven businessmen, congressmen, or a Senator. He had all the luxury that era could provide, which meant nothing for a man of modern times. Entertainment was dull, and dating was annoying, as most women were simply bland.

He did sleep around in his teens and early adulthood. He just looked for beauty at that point because mentally, most were boring. At the same time, he decided to do something and prove himself to his father, now the Governor.

James wrote books. He was decades early, so he wrote the entire known Lord of the Rings. He did the same for Narnia and then Harry Potter. He wrote a few more he remembered, editing them to fit the time. He also opened and invested in a few companies he knew would survive and grow in the wars of the next century.

He'd be in his 60s at the time of World War II, he believed. So he wanted to be rich by then and live comfortably while waiting for his last days.

But there was one issue. This world was also different in ways. States with names he'd never heard before existed. New Hanover, West Elizabeth, New Austin, and more. Geography was also different.

"Huh?"

Then one evening, he found something strange in the newspaper. It mentioned one Van der Linde gang and a massacre in Blackwater.

And suddenly, it all made sense.

"Maybe... life won't be so boring after all."

#####

Being rich and the son of a Governor allowed him to do many things. One of those things was taking a private train ride to Valentine, a livestock town in New Hanover. Although the era of the Wild West was over, law was still not as mainstream in that part of the country.

And while James was tall, handsome, good with guns, and great at talking his way through any situation, he knew men like Arthur Morgan and John Marston were a special breed. Dead Eye was a mythical ability to him, something unreasonable. But he didn't want to take chances.

So, he brought four bodyguards with him. All four of them were ex-outlaws, now a part of his own private protection and detective agency. It didn't work for the government, just some rich folks living in dangerous places.

His journey was an inspiration for a new book. At least that was what he told his father and mother, who were both worried for him. He was twenty-five and of age to get married. His parents and the rest of the family tried to introduce women to him, some young, some the same age, some older.

Teachers, nurses, anyone with a brain. The Carlson family loved him as he'd proven himself in many fields, and as a famous writer, even the old ones respected him. But that was the role he played in front of them; the perfect son of a rich family.

In reality, he was still the same man inside who died and got reborn. He still sought adventure, something fun. He was a hydropower engineer and got to travel the world in his last life. But now, he wasn't interested in the same career, but still wanted to see the world. A world without plastic and modern things.

As soon as James arrived at Valentine, he hated it. It smelled, it was dirty, and nearly everything was worse. New York, even of that era, had spoiled him. But he could afford to be luxurious. He rented out the entire top floor of the local tavern and hired servants to bring him food, clean his clothes, and prepare water for his bath.

In no time, word spread that a renowned author was staying in the tavern, exactly what he was hoping for. Every evening when he'd go to the tavern's main floor to drink and play some poker, he'd meet people, some would even bring their copies of books which he would sign.

In time, it became a fest, and the tavern was crowded every evening.

It was his fifth day when it finally happened. He was seated at his reserved table, just drinking and reading a book alone. His bodyguards stood a distance away, blending in with the crowd but always watchful.

"Greetings, Mr. Carlson. It is an honor to make your acquaintance. Might I sit here with you?"

James didn't have to look to recognise that voice, and when he looked, it matched what he knew.

It was none other than Dutch van der Linde, the leader of the gang. And close by, he saw the older man, Hosea Matthews. Finally, the rough-looking Arthur Morgan, eyes distracted and completely uninterested in him.

"Go ahead, it's empty for a reason. I'm always keen to listen to new faces in this town." James closed his book, silently signalling his men to remain calm. "Drinks are on me at this table. Have whatever you want."

"That's a man I like," Arthur blurted and left for the bar instantly.

James stared at Dutch and Hosea, who sat to his right. Dutch was right beside him, pouring himself a drink.

“So? What interesting stories have you got for me, Mr. Linde?” James said with an easy smile, though he caught the way both men stiffened at once, fear and temper close as a spark to powder.

“Easy there. It’s no concern of mine what business you’re in. I don’t wear a badge, don’t pass judgment, and I surely don’t speak for God. Truth be told, I ain’t much of a good man myself. It’s a cruel world we’re in, and a man does what he must to get by.”

Neither Dutch nor Hosea reacted for a long time. But slowly, the frown on their faces started to ease, and then a smile began to form. There was nothing they could do anyway.

“You have quite the interesting way of seeing things, Mr. Carlson. As one might anticipate from a renowned author such as yourself,” Dutch said in his usual articulate way, raising his glass. “To the cruel world.”

James did the same. Truth be told, he couldn’t give a damn. He didn’t like Dutch much and would happily kill him given a chance. He was more interested in Arthur Morgan and John Marston. He wanted to snatch them and add them to his growing private agency. Heck, he was interested in men like Charles and women like Sadie Adler. Good with a gun and tough folks.

“To the cruel world.” James raised his glass as well.

“I’m curious. Mr. Carlson,” Hosea voiced. “How did you recognise us this easily?”

“A man sees what he seeks,” James replied. “I made my way here from New York in pursuit of a finer kind of inspiration. I want to write a novel set in the Wild West, and it seemed only proper to hear of that life from the men who’ve lived it closely. I’ve been reading up on the gangs, the stories, the figures folks speak of. Your name came up, sure enough, same as Mr. Matthews and Mr. Morgan.”

“Mr. Carlson, I take it you have an interest in my... company?” Dutch asked. “There’s hardly much to tell. We live a hard life, but an honest one. True to what we are. And we do not shrink from violence.”

“Fantastic, just like my home.” James chuckled. “You may not be aware, Mr. Linde, but I was raised among a family of some political standing and considerable means. I’ve known high society well enough, and I assure you, it differs very little from this. Only there, men deal their wounds with words rather than lead. And when lead’s spent, it’s seldom by their own hand. As I’ve said, it is a cruel world.”

Dutch brightly smiled, “Those are thoughtful words, Mr. Carlson. You seem young, but you speak with the weight of a man acquainted with the wider world. I must confess, I only came to hear of you recently through one of my associates, a well-read woman. I couldn’t ignore the intrigue. It’s not every day one comes upon a figure of such reputation.”

With an easy smile, James poured the drink into Dutch's waiting glass. "And I hold no grudge against you. World's wide, and not every soul knows me by sight. Yet I do value the tales I might gather here.

"Mr. Linde, I have a proposition for you. I'm aware of your present difficulties. Still, I'm a man of curiosity. Might I pitch my tent upon your grounds? I would very much like to live among your associates for a time, to observe their ways, that I may carry into my writings."

Dutch and Hosea looked at each other, both subtly shaking their heads.

"Of course, I would never dream of taking advantage. For every single day I spend in your camp, I'll pay you ten dollars, and I'll pay my part for the food and drink. My four guards will be right alongside me. My hands are handy enough with a revolver, but between you and me, they're a sight more familiar with a pen."

James saw their faces change. Ten dollars was roughly around three-fifty from the time he came. That was a lot of money for simply letting a man stay with them.

Tap!

Dutch downed the entire glass and flashed a broad smile, raising his right hand. "You are a difficult man to refuse, Mr. Carlson. It would be my genuine honor to host you among my fine associates. What do you say we head there right away? I'll give you a personal tour myself."

"That is precisely the sort of character I expected from a gentleman of your renown, Mr. Linde. While my fellows collect my things, what say you to a round of poker?"

Dutch nodded firmly. "Certainly. But please, do take it easy on me, Mr. Carlson. I've heard tales of your remarkable skill here at the table."

"I only play fair, Mr. Linde."

####

Dutch lost two dollars to him.

James didn't go easy on the man. But he did gift Dutch a nice bottle of scotch afterwards, and all the sorrow of loss was lost. Now, riding his horse, he was following Dutch, Hosea, and Arthur to their camp.

Until now, he hadn't gotten a chance to talk with Arthur. The man was still very antagonistic and bullish toward everyone around. He hoped to find out if the whole tuberculosis exchange had happened yet. If it had, he was ready to give up on Arthur.

A short ride later, they finally arrived at the gang's camp. It wasn't really a hideout considering how close they were. The camp sat near a cliff. It was fairly spread, but not everyone had their

own tents. Some men had their beddings out in the open. Dutch had the largest tent. Then there were tents for women to share.

“Gather around!” Dutch shouted as soon as they had hitched their horses and moved to the center of the camp. “Everyone, come here.”

James watched patiently, the murmurs, the curious gazes. While he was dressed for the place, he didn't look like a man living on the edge. His beard was cleanly shaved, his face lacked the marks of hardship. And his light brown hair screamed pampered, which he was, no shame about it.

He recognised almost everyone. Susan Grimshaw, the Administrator. John Marston with his face scar, and Javier Escuella with his short height. Bill Williamson with his loudness. Then there was Micah Bell, staring back at him like he was candy.

He ignored and focused on Charles Smith, one of the better members of the gang. Lenny was there. And then he took a pause when he saw Mary-Beth Gaskill. She looked to be around the same age as him, and she was simply gorgeous. She stood out in that camp, her freckled face, green curious eyes, and that hairstyle.

James gave her a silent nod and eyed the rest. Sadie Adler still seemed rough. She did lose her husband recently and was now living with outlaws. Karen Jones was like Micah, eyeing him greedily.

“And that is Uncle... we simply call him uncle.” Dutch named them one by one.

James said hello while nodding towards each one. He waved when the only kid at the camp, Jack Marston, was introduced.

“Now, my friends.” Dutch continued. “Mr. Carlson here is a world-famous author. He's come all the way from New York to study us... fine people. He wants to write about the Wild West, so he needs to live as one of us. He and his four companions will be staying in camp with us.

“And before Miss Grimshaw starts her complaints, allow me to say that Mr. Carlson has kindly offered to pay us ten dollars a day for his stay. So I expect every one of you to be on your best behavior and show these gentlemen our finest hospitality.”

James noticed Mary-Beth nearly jumped with a yelp when he was fully introduced. But he paid her no mind and met with the men, who came over to him to shake hands. Surprisingly, Micah acted unusually docile, singing praise of him, and revealing how he knew of his family's political reach.

Interesting.

James didn't really care about Micah. He didn't hate the man for the sake of hating. In fact, he was willing to take him into his company. Men like Micah were needed for their willingness to do the dirty work, men who only cared about money.

But that was for the future. He, for the first time since birth, enjoyed himself. He led his four bodyguards close to the cliff, slightly away from the camp, so he could have some privacy. Then, he pitched his tent.

It was a large, wall-tent, with an A-shaped roof and closable entrances with zippers. Zippers weren't supposed to exist yet, but he had made it happen. Inside, his clothes were hung on a metal rack. A bed was made out of wooden crates, and soft bedding was placed on it. A table was also there with two chairs. Then there was a large square carpet.

Yes, it was luxurious. He had no such desire to live rough or roleplay as some wild west outlaw.

Finally, after making sure his tent was set, he stepped out of the tent to walk around. He found Jack Marston right there, gawking at him with curious eyes. It took some tries, but the boy eventually came running to him at the sight of candy.

"Can you read?" he asked.

"I'm still learning."

James thought a little and went back to his tent. He returned with a signed copy of Harry Potter's book one. "Keep this, and practice reading. It's a story about kids in a magical school fighting evil sorcerers."

"Really?!" Jack exclaimed. "I can keep this?"

"Sure. I wrote it, so it's useless to me."

Jack thanked a dozen times and ran away, jumping. Silently, James thought about Jack's horrible future. The gang wasn't a place for a kid to live.

"&^(&..."

All of a sudden, James heard a soft female voice with a southern accent. But it wasn't English. He turned around, and there she was standing, Mary-Beth in a green checkered shirt and an ankle-length skirt. She held a copy of the first book in The Fellowship of the Ring against her chest.

And the words she'd spoken were in Elvish. And she simply told him she admired him. Not just anyone could do that. One had to be a dedicated devotee to learn a fictional language.

"I didn't know a real elf was reading my book," James replied in Elvish, keeping the meaning close to what he intended to say.

Mary-Beth blushed instantly and reverted to her accented English. "I... I'm at a loss for words, Mr. Carlson. I've read all your works, you know. Writin' The Lord of the Rings at just fourteen years old? Heavens, I can't even imagine doin' anything so wondrous."

James let her talk. He usually didn't enjoy too much flattery since the work was not his. Most embarrassing was when Mark Twain had once hailed him as a great mind. It was exciting and secretly embarrassing.

Finally, when he saw she was done talking, he pointed at the book in her hands. "Do you want me to sign it, Ms. Gaskill?"

"Oh my... you would? Lord have mercy, I-I'd love that, Mr. Carlson."

"Please, call me James. We're near the same years, aren't we? Step in. I've got the table set for us." James held the tent curtain aside and guided her gently within.

Mary-Beth gasped at the opulence, although it was ordinary. But she said nothing about it. "Then... Please call me Mary, or Mary-Beth."

James nodded and took a seat. He took out his fountain pen and opened the slightly worn-out copy of the book. "What should I write, Mary-Beth?"

"Anything you like, Mr... James."

James nodded and wrote her name in English first, and the rest in Elvish. The words meant 'the beauty in the wild'. Followed by his signature. Then he handed the book back to her. But for some reason, Mary-Beth still didn't leave.

Her expression showed hesitation. She clutched the book to her chest, looking down, her lips shivering.

"Need anything else?" He asked.

"I... I... Mr. Carlson, sir... I've been dreamin' of becomin' a writer like you. Will y—"

"Sure." He agreed before she could say it whole. "I'll be here for some time. Whenever you've nothing pressing, bring along your paper and ink and find me. I'll be at my own writing, and we can trade ideas back and forth. Who knows, I may even steal one or two of yours."

Mary-Beth blushed, nodding shyly. "Oh, thank you! Thank you kindly, Mr. Ca... James. This truly means the world to me. I best be goin' now, got some chores waitin'. Again, thank you so very much."

James waved, smiling just because she was. Mary-Beth was one hell of a woman. He knew she was a thief in the past, but it was hard to believe. She was too damn pretty to be one, and educated as well.

I was lucky from birth.

####

Over the next few days, he got to know everyone in the gang. Arthur was mostly out of the camp, however. He got friendly with Charles, Uncle, and Pearson, the cook. But it didn't take long for his life at the camp to get boring.

Most of the men would leave during the day to hunt, scout, or do whatever outlaws do. That usually left him in the company of the women, the kid, and his fountain pen. He spent a few hours helping Mary-Beth outline her novel every day. The rest of the time was spent flirting with all of them.

But flirting, writing, talking, and playing guitar got boring really fast. That was when his eyes grew more curious. The women at the camp were unusually beautiful, except one or two. Mary-Beth, well, she had a crush on him; he knew that much.

Sadie found his existence comforting because of his non-outlaw background. She loved talking to him and often visited his tent to just sit and relax, and ask questions about the world and the country.

Abigail Roberts was on a first-name basis with him. Since he often played with Jack and entertained his curiosities, Abigail would join for a few minutes before taking Jack to bed. Often, multiple of those women would sit around in his tent, enjoy his stash of fine wine, and listen to him talk about New York.

Tilly Jackson was the daughter of a former slave. She was confident, and like an adopted daughter to Dutch. But he still offered her suggestions on where she could go if she ever wanted to start a new life.

And Karen Jones. The plump, but beautiful woman had flashed him her tits on multiple occasions. She flirted with him the most, and he knew he only had to give her a sign, and she'd spread her legs to him every night in his tent.

But he didn't.

Yeah, he was interested, and rather horny after no action for weeks. But Karen was somewhat of a loudmouth, and he didn't want that.

However, that was when he realised there was someone in the camp who may be interested in a transactional kind of relationship. Who wouldn't dare reveal it to others and take the secret to her grave.

It was going to be a shot in the dark. But he reckoned it was worth trying.

####

Three days later,

That night, most of the men were away planning god knows what. He never involved himself with those things. The last thing he wanted was a criminal record. He stayed at the camp with Uncle, Charles, Hosea, Pearson, and all the ladies.

He sent one of his bodyguards to the town to bring fresh meat and drinks. He threw a small party that night to lift spirits. He danced with Mary-Beth, then Karen, who didn't hesitate shoving her massive breasts onto him. He showed them a few card tricks and then played guitar to them singing.

As it got late, the crowd filtered. Uncle was dead drunk, and Charles had to drag him away. Karen was the same. Grimshaw and Hosea were old and left first. By the end, it was just Mary-Beth, him, and Abigail left.

"Oh, that sounds just beautiful, James," Mary-Beth dreamily muttered. "I wish I could write somethin' like that."

"Who's to stop you?" he asked with a quick lift of his brow. "Go on, find your pen and write the idea out while it's still fresh in your mind."

"I really should do that!" cried Mary-Beth, springing up and giving her skirt a quick brush. "Oh, Abigail, I'll put Jack to bed for you. You said there was something you wanted to ask James."

"Ask me? Well, I wanted to ask her something as well."

James stared at the woman curiously, the light from the bonfire flickering over her pale skin. Mary-Beth had told him about her. Abigail was only twenty-two and had a four-year-old kid already. And before that, she was in... the flesh trade. While he knew it was common in that time period, he still didn't like it.

Someone that young. Looking at Abigail, he could never tell she was younger than Mary-Beth. Abigail looked well in her late twenties, though still a beautiful woman.

Once Mary-Beth had taken Jack away, he closed the gap and took Mary-Beth's seat. "What do you want to ask?"

Abigail seemed shy, never looking at him. Instead, she looked into the fire. "James... You best leave here quick. This place ain't safe. Them men... They got somethin' ugly brewin'. You been real kind to us, me, to Jack and Mary-Beth both. I don't want you gettin' mixed up in all this mess."

James' gaze softened. Looking into her blue eyes, there was actual concern. And that was when it hit him. While not all, he'd been treating most of the gang like 'characters', not actual people with a heart. He knew their life, their future, but never considered who they were as people.

Uh, let's not make that offer.

“Yeah, I plan to leave soon.”

“That’s good.” Abigail gave a tired little smile. “As for what I wanted to ask... I talked to your men. They said they was once outlaws, and I swear I remember one of their names. They told me they work for your company now, as bodyguards and detectives? I mean no disrespect by it. Would you consider hirin’ on a few more? John ain’t perfect, Lord knows, but he’s a tough one.”

James remained silent for some time, watching her expressions go from hope to worry. Her lips pressed shut, her thin brows high.

“I can tell you’ve a sharper head than most here,” he said, smiling faintly. “You’re no fool. You see things plain as they are. This gang, those old days are gone. The law’s tightening its grip, and you know well enough it won’t come to a cheerful end. You’re hoping for a safe future for little Jack. You’re hoping to set Marston straight. Alright then, I’ll take him on.”

Abigail perked up.

“But,” he went on, lowering his voice a touch, “Is he willing? From what I’ve seen, Dutch runs this whole gang like it’s his own church. Every man obeys him without question. I’m impressed, truly. He talks like some kind of prophet, and they all love him for it. John’s the same way, Abigail. He’s not woken up yet. He’ll fight you tooth and nail before he ever chooses the life I’d offer him.”

Instantly, Abigail deflated. Sitting on the ground on the carpet, she sighed and pressed the bridge of her nose.

“I know you’re right. Dutch just keeps goin’ on about this one big haul before we stop. I ain’t seein’ it happen. We’re wanted folks, every last one of us.”

“I can get rid of that wanted status,” James offered, taking out a cigarette to smoke. It was getting cold. “Plenty of men who came to me were in a similar fix. I gave them a chance to begin again, to earn an honest wage. You would be surprised how many of them are now married men, living quietly and respectably.”

Abigail smiled, as if imagining that sort of life.

“Don’t worry,” James added. “Discuss it with him. Think it over. Even when I’m gone, and if he agrees, write me a letter. I’ll take him in.”

“Thank you... Lord, thank you so much,” Abigail cried, “I’ll kill John myself if I gotta make him see sense.”

He snorted with laughter, imagining her actually beating him up. John did sound like someone who’d tolerate domestic violence at home.

“So? What was it you wanted to ask me?” Abigail asked then.

“ ... ”

James shut his damn mouth and gulped. Abigail had just spent minutes telling him how much she wanted to start a new life with her kid and man. It was suicide to still go ahead and ask her to sleep with him.

Was a dumb plan from the get-go. Should've gone for Karen.

“Eh, it was nothing.” James waved his hand, looking away.

“Come on now. You can tell me. I done told you mine, so it's your turn. I ain't gettin' up till you do, James.”

James awkwardly scratched his head. “Well, I was hoping... No, forget it.”

“What is it?” she asked with a long draw.

“Alright. But promise you won't shoot me.” He huffed in a breath and turned to face her sitting. “Just consider it the ramblings of a madman, if you will.”

She eyed him with suspicion, but nodded.

“So, I've been away from home for months now. And... I'm a young fellow who... has needs. And I learned about your past... occupation, and... I had the silly idea to ask you to...”

“Warm your bed?” Abigail finished.

“...For a hundred dollars. That was the end of it.” He finished, noticed how she had crossed her arms, and her brows were creased. “I know, I know. I was being silly. Just forget ab—”

“A hundred?” Abigail asked back, “Ain't that too much?”

“ ... ”

James looked at her face dumbly. He imagined her getting angry, or disappointed, not asking him a question about the price. And she didn't even look angry. But a hundred was indeed a lot. Almost four thousand from his time.

“Abigail, I know it wasn't the wisest thing to ask. Still, I thought, since I'm asking at all, and knowing you've left that life behind you, well... You're a beautiful woman. I'm paying for your time, not for... body. To me, your time is worth at least that much.”

Strangely, Abigail flashed a smile and relaxed, hands returning to her lap. “That's real sweet of you to say, darlin'. Don't you worry none, I ain't mad. You ain't the first to ask me that. Most folks don't even bother offerin' nothin', they just want it. So you thinkin' of me like that... It's kinda nice, in a strange way. And yes, I done left that life behind for good, so I can't.”

“And that’s perfectly understandable. It was a bad idea to begin with.” James clarified.

“What about Mary-Beth? She likes you, y’know. Bless her heart, she ain’t been with a man yet. Keeps sayin’ she’s savin’ herself for the right one.”

Oh? That... makes me weirdly happy.

“In that case, I’d rather marry her instead. She’s far more interesting than those high society women my family introduced me to.”

“Then how about Karen?”

James shrugged. “Loudmouth. Entire Valentine would know I fucked her by morning.”

“Pfft... yeah, that’s about right,” Abigail said and shifted to stand up. “Well, I best be headin’ to bed now, James. Was real nice talkin’ to ya. Don’t you worry none, I don’t think no less of you, alright?”

He got up as well. “Still owe you an apology. Oh, and don’t think it had anything to do with the John thing we talked about. That’s different. I’m no saint, but neither am I evil, I swear.”

Abigail let out a soft little laugh and stepped right up close to him. She rose on her toes and gave him a quick, warm peck on the cheek. “Stop gettin’ all worked up over nothin’. I know you ain’t that kind of man.”

“Alright then, good night.” James smiled and walked away to his tent.

Didn’t get shot. That’s better than all possible scenarios at this point. Time to head home now.

#####

James didn’t know what hour it was.

Once he reached his tent, he threw off his shirt and pants and jumped under the warm blanket to sleep. Having drunk quite a bit, sleep came easily, and before he knew it, he was dreaming. Dreaming of Mary-Beth of all women.

What he’d learned from Abigail changed his thoughts for the aspiring novelist even more. Aware that she had a crush on him, he could see an actual relationship developing with her. As for his parents, they wouldn’t mind. He had found a woman he liked; they would be satisfied just with that. Besides, Mary-Beth was gorgeous.

In that dream, he saw him and Mary-Beth cuddling. It wasn’t even a wet dream, just warm cuddles. Every man’s weakness.

Shh...!

But all of a sudden, the bed in the dream changed into hard ground. The air started to blow.

Shhhh...!

And then, Mary-Beth got swept by the wind. He could do nothing and then... he also got swept away. But not long after, he fell from the sky and right as he touched the ground, his eyes sprang open.

"Ah..." James woke up from the nightmare, frowning.

Shhh...!

But then he noticed a sound coming from his tent's zipped-up curtain. Someone was sliding their hand on it heavily. He instinctively reached for his gun beside the bed.

James was already half out of the blanket, colt cool against his palm, when a voice came through the canvas.

"It's me."

"Abigail?"

He stared at the tent wall for a beat.

Then he swung his bare legs off the bedding and padded over in just his underwear, hair a mess, cock already half-interested. His body had picked up on the tone of her voice faster than his brain had. He slid the zipper down and opened the flap.

She was standing there in the dark, arms crossed tight under her breasts, eyes flicking past him into the tent as somebody might see.

"Abigail? What happened?"

"I changed my mind." She stepped past him without waiting for an invitation.

He zipped the flap shut behind her and rubbed his eyes a bit, then went around the tent, lighting the four lanterns, watching her out of the corner of his eye.

Same worn amber shirt, sleeves folded to the elbow, dark blue skirt to her ankles, and brown belt cinching the dip of her waist. Her hair was still pinned up in that soft bun, but a few strands had come loose against her neck.

"Why?" he asked.

She didn't look at him. She stared at the lantern he'd just lit and rubbed her own arm like she was cold.

"I been thinkin' on it," she said slowly. "And you ain't a bad man, James. I... I need to start savin' up if I wanna send Jack to a proper school one day, maybe even college. I ain't that kind of woman no more. I ain't. But—"

"I know." James stepped closer to her and placed a hand on her shoulder. Warm skin through the thin shirt. Her pulse was up; he could feel the slight tremor where her collarbone met her throat. "But are you sure?"

Abigail gave a firm nod. Her cheeks were already blushing pink.

"I had time to settle my head. You ain't gonna be around forever... And Lord, you're awful easy on the eyes. But there's gotta be rules, James. Not inside me. And this secret dies with us. Just tonight. Nothin' more."

James said nothing. He didn't want to degrade her or make her feel uncomfortable. He walked over to the small writing table, counted out a stack of crisp banknotes from his case, and laid them down neatly beside the inkwell.

"Dies with us," he said, turning back to her. "I promise."

And he let himself leer at her now the way he'd wanted to since the campfire. He looked at her from head to toe.

Abigail was tall, nearly to his mouth without heels, with that pale smooth skin that didn't belong out here in the dust, blue eyes, a mouth he'd been picturing for three days, and the few locks of her hair falling over her face that only made it more charming.

She came towards him. Three steps, and her hands were pressing flat against his bare chest, pushing. Not hard, just enough to push him down onto the bedding. She stood between his knees, looking down at him while biting her lower lip. Her fingers found the waistband of his underwear. She tugged them down and off his hips in one slow pull.

His cock came up thick against his belly. She went still for a hot second and just stared at it.

"Christ almighty," she breathed.

"You can still walk away," he quipped with a smile.

She didn't. She took a step back instead, and her hands went to her own belt.

Clink!

She unwound the leather and let it coil onto the carpet. Next, the shirt came off her shoulders and landed on the carpet. With no bra, her breasts sat pale and heavy with the softest hint of sag from having nursed a child, nipples a flush so light they looked rose-pink in the lantern glow. She didn't hide anything from him.

She unhooked the skirt at her hips and let it drop. Then she pushed her underwear down her thighs with her thumbs and stepped out of them. Finally, she was fully naked.

James admired her from head to toe. Hourglass. That was the only word for it.

Full breasts, a waist he could nearly span with both hands, and hips that flared wide. Her body was carved by bearing a son and then walking that son across half the country. A small dark thatch of curls rested between her thighs.

"Abigail, did I tell you you're beautiful?"

Abigail blushed and climbed the bed, crawling until she straddled his lap, her soft hand gripping his cock. She lifted herself up on her knees and nudged him to her entrance. He felt the heat before he felt the moist warmth.

"Um-hmm... More'n once."

"Shit—" James gulped as he felt her soaking lower lips. She was wet; she wanted this, he reckoned. He hoped for some foreplay, some sucking, but he wasn't going to complain.

"Hush." She murmured, "You're a bit too much, darlin'. Don't go makin' me holler, hear? I sure don't want to wake the whole camp."

James nodded and licked his dry lips. He couldn't have spoken even if he'd wanted to.

And then he felt it.

Her weight was sinking down on him. The head of his cock pushed past her petals as they opened up for him, and she was tight... tight in a way he hadn't braced for, wet, hot, and squeezing. She was going slow, taking him in stages, eyes shut, teeth biting her lip.

"Mmmh~" She whined through her nose.

James had to grab the edge of the bedding under him in both fists; the urge to buck up into her was almost violent. He could smell her skin and the faint sweat of her, and he could feel the give of her flesh, opening and accepting his cock an inch at a time. Such delicious torture.

Her hips settled with his cock buried in her, and she let out a small moan of relief. "Mmph~"

James was shaking, just a fine tremor of hunger down his thighs. His hands came up from the bedding and found her breasts. They filled his palms, soft and heavy and warm, and he molded them and thumbed her nipples, feeling them stiffen harder under his touch.

"Ummph—" She clasped her own hand over her mouth, stifling her need to cry out.

And then she started to ride. Back and forth at first, not up-and-down, a slow grinding rock that kept him buried, her hips working in tight little circles that ground her clit against the base of his cock.

Slosh! Slosh! Slosh!

James heard it. The wet squelches, the soft sound of her cunt working on his cock. She was tight. Christ, she was tight, like an angry fist that couldn't wait for him to burst.

He felt wrapped in something small and greedy that wouldn't let up. She rolled her hips, and his eyes moved with her. He'd been inside her for maybe three minutes, and he was already close.

"Not a good position," he muttered, voice stretched tight. "I'm close."

He moved and caught her around the waist, pivoted, and rolled her sideways off his lap onto her back on the bedding.

Abigail gasped, and before she'd caught her breath, he was on top of her, between her knees, reaching down to fit himself back to her pussy.

He pushed in, all the way this time. Not the careful, gradual sink she did before; instead, it was one long, steady push from tip to root. A long steady stroke, as if the pleasure would never end. Sliding in between and parting her sensitive walls like a man on a mission.

He felt her body yield the last of what she'd been holding back, felt her cervix kiss the head of his cock, felt her back arch up off the bedding, and finally that scorching hot wall at the end.

"Ooh! Press... press my mouth... James... aaah~" Abigail moaned a panicked cry.

He kissed her instead. Her mouth felt hot. His tongue pushed past her lips just like he'd pushed his cock past her folds.

Abigail felt his cock, felt the stretch that ran up through her belly, and caught somewhere behind her navel. She could feel him inside her, feel the shape of his cock deeper than any man had been in a long time, pushing up as she bit back a whimper and stared up at him with her mouth open.

She saw him above her on his forearms, his city-boy's clean, strong shoulders; his chest was smooth where the men at the camp were all scarred and had rough hair. More than that, he looked hungry. He looked like a man who'd been denied something for a long time.

She couldn't control her moans and opened her mouth to beg him again to press it shut for her. But she didn't expect him to kiss her.

Kissing was for sitting under a tree with John when she'd been foolish and seventeen. Kissing was the one thing she'd kept off the table through every dirty back room and paid hour of her old life. It was special... It was for love.

She felt his tongue sliding against hers, curled around it... claimed it, just like his cock had claimed her cunt. She didn't realize it when her arms went around his neck, her heels hooked up over the small of his back. She didn't do it intentionally... it just happened.

Her whole body lifted up to meet him, and she kissed him back. She lapped her tongue against his, followed his lead, and tried to match the filthy rhythm. She kissed him the way she'd never kissed John, the way she'd never kissed anybody, sloppy, open-mouthed, greedy, and mindless.

Then, he started to move.

Plap! Plap! Plap!

The boxes under the bedding creaked under them. His hips came down, each thrust driving her mad. His cock scraped her wet walls, touching every sensitive spot. His cock head nudging so far up, she felt her insides shifting.

"Mmmph~"

The sounds of her own slick sloshing around his cock, the slap of his thighs against hers, pounded in her ears.

She swallowed her own moans between his teeth. She was soaking, she could feel it pooling in the small of her back, she could feel her cunt clutching around his cock every time he pulled out, her body was trying to keep him there.

Yes, this was wicked, she knew it was. She'd come in here thinking of Jack's schooling and dollar bills on the writing table, and somewhere in the last few minutes, that had all blown out of her head like ash in the wind.

God, she knew she wasn't doing this for the money anymore. She just... felt like taking this chance and forgetting everything else for that night.

Abigail's whole body turned rigid under him, her cunt spasming around his cock. Muscles strung tight. Her heels dug into his back. Her nails raked down his shoulders. She clenched around his big cock once, twice, and she came.

"Mmmphh~"

Her back bowed. Her eyes rolled shut, and finally, finally, that lovely pressure in her belly shattered. Wave after wave of warmth flowed out of her core. Her sticky nectar enveloped his pistoning cock, churning inside her like butter. She could feel the heat spread between her legs, gushing out between them and staining the bedding below.

"Uh... legs."

She heard James groan and panicked. She had kept the man locked in place, her ankles crossed tight behind him, a vice she didn't even know she'd made. She yanked her heels off him fast, legs flopping open to either side, and felt him drag out of her in one long, wet pull that made her whimper.

Before she knew it, he was moving up her body. She watched him plant one knee on either side of her ribs, then crawl forward, higher, higher, until he was straddling her chest and his knees were at her shoulders, and he was astride her upper chest.

Abigail stared up at him in a daze, and she saw his cock in his fist.

Thick, flushed, and veins stood out proudly along the length of it. His cockhead was swollen and shining wet, she realized the sheen was from her own juices... and he was stroking it hard, once, twice, right above her face.

She felt it land flat across her lips. In a daze, her mouth fell open before she'd told it to. The head sank in past her lips, hot and heavy and pulsing against her tongue, and...

"Mmmm..."

She moaned as she felt the warm batter flood her mouth. There was so much. So thick, potent, full of scent, musk, salt, and man. And it kept coming.

The first spurt hit the back of her tongue so hard it clogged her throat before she'd even thought to swallow, a heavy rope of it that made her eyes water. And then another. She felt his cock throb against her lips with each one, a hard little pulse, and each pulse dumped another thick load of him into her mouth.

It filled her. So viscous it slid slowly across her tongue, pooled under it, coated the roof of her mouth, and ran down along her teeth. It made a mess inside her mouth, and she could do nothing but lie there and take it.

She tried to gulp. It wasn't easy.

It was thick... thicker than she knew, thicker than anything she'd felt before, and the first try, it just sat there, heavy on her tongue, half-sliding down the wrong way, and she almost coughed.

And he was still doing it.

She felt his cockhead throb against her gullet again, and another hot spill flooded in. Then another. He was feeding her, pulse after pulse after pulse. She lay there with her hair spread around her, her arms gone limp on the bedding, and her mouth full of his cum. Some tiny panicked part of her realized there was nowhere for it to go if she didn't swallow.

She didn't want to dirty her face. That thought, of all things, was what moved her. Not shame, not disgust, just vanity.

So she swallowed.

The first gulp was hard, a heavy sticky slide down her throat that made her shiver. On the second, she'd found the rhythm of it, purse her lips tight around the shaft, hollow her cheeks, pull, swallow. Suck, swallow. She felt his cock twitch in delight every time she sucked, and she did it again just to feel it.

Abigail gulped and licked and found a strange excitement in it.

Finally, she felt James sliding back. His cock drew out slowly, and she let it go with one last lick along the underside, and then he was straddling her midriff instead, cock laid flat between her breasts, still throbbing hard, and shining with her spit.

She blinked up at him, dazed. Her mouth tasted of him. Her lips felt swollen. There was a pearl of white at the corner of her mouth, and she licked it in.

James was staring down at her as he'd never seen anything like her before.

"I hope you're not in a hurry, Abigail."

She gave a small, sly smile and slowly shook her head.

"Oh!"

Before she could blink, his hand closed hard around her wrist, and she was hauled off the bed entirely. Her feet hit the carpet, wobbly. The world spun as she found herself pushed over the nearby writing table, her chest and face flat on the dark grain of the wood.

She felt him behind her, the heat of him between her thighs, before he nudged her pussy, spread the lips with the head of his cock, and stuffed his flesh rod in.

"Mmph—!"

Once again, he was inside. Balls deep in one stroke. This time, she slapped both her hands up to her own mouth, fast, stifling her moans herself. She was out of the bed, out in the more open part of the tent, only a few yards of canvas between her and the sleeping camp, and the sound was going to carry.

Plap! Plap! Plap!

James didn't hold back anymore, giving in to his urges.

He gripped her waist with both hands hard, thumbs digging into the soft flesh above her ass. He pounded into her tight pussy. Each plunge was balls-deep, and the pull was to the tip. The table would have creaked if it hadn't been on the carpet.

Plap! Plap!

But it was getting loud. Her moans, while stifled by her own palms, were still loud. Muffled whines, high and desperate, her voice breaking on every thrust. Her legs shook as her toes curled against the carpet. Her ass bounced with every slam of his hips, a soft clap of flesh on flesh that seemed to echo in the canvas walls of the tent.

James stared down. He watched his cock sink into her cunt, the pink of her cunt stretched tight and glistening around him, and drag back out, gleaming with her juices. He could feel every ridge of her inside, every little fold, his cock squeezed on every push.

He reached up with one hand, still pounding her, and found the loose bun at the back of her head. He tugged the pins free. Her dark hair came tumbling down around her shoulders and over the edge of the table, and he wrapped the whole length of it around his fist and held her by it; not yanking, just holding, using it as a rein to rock her back onto him every time his hips drove forward.

"Mmh—Mmh! Mmh—!" She whimpered into her palms.

He felt her start to go, felt her thighs clench, felt her cunt squeeze down tight around him, felt the tremor run all the way up her spine, and that's when she came hard, squirted, a hot wet gush down the insides of her thighs and a clear splash on the carpet below them.

Plap! Plap!

He did not stop; instead, he fucked her through it. His cock was coated in her release, thighs slick to the knees. Her spill pattered onto the carpet in fat drops. She sobbed into her hands.

"Ah... Quick—"

Finally, as he felt himself on edge, he pulled out fast.

Her knees gave out, he caught her, one arm under her armpits, and let her down onto her knees on the carpet in front of him. His cock pulsed in his fist, feeling as if he wasn't fast enough.

His came over her chest and throat in thick white ropes. It painted her pale skin lighter. The first rope landed high across her collarbone and one cheek, the second striped down between her breasts, the third pooled in the dip of her throat and ran slowly down the slope of one breast to bead at her nipple.

Abigail stayed on the floor, panting. Her hair was wild around her face, eyes half-closed. Multiple pearls of white slid down the curve of one breast and dripped onto her thigh.

James pumped his cock, stroked it until no drop was left, milking the last pearls onto the top of her breast.

Panting with ragged breaths, he turned around on wobbly legs and grabbed a bottle of whiskey from the cabinet, took a small mouthful straight from the neck, and then crouched down and offered the bottle to her.

"The night ain't done yet."

Abigail said nothing. She just took the bottle in a shaking hand and sipped some whiskey to wet her lips and dry mouth. A drop ran down her chin, through the mess on her throat.

He took the bottle back.

"Up you go." James grabbed her arm and pulled her up.

He pushed her backward until her ass hit the edge of the table. He lifted her by the hips and sat her on the wood, facing him. Her legs fell open instinctively.

Her cunt was puffy, sore, red, and fucked-open, still leaking a mess of her juices onto the table under her ass.

James stepped between her thighs and pressed his cock against her. He slid in gently. The sloppy, wet cockhead sank easily until he bottomed out.

He took her wrists and lifted her arms up and looped them over his shoulders around his neck. He braced his hands on her thighs and stared right into her eyes, his nose an inch from hers.

"We should do this every day."

Abigail shook her head weakly. Her hair stuck to her damp cheek. "Only tonight."

James sighed, mock-sullen, and rolled his hips. "Well... just sayin'. Tuition ain't cheap."

"Hah—" A broken little laugh bubbled out of her. "I'll think about it... Ah!"

James hooked both his forearms under her knees and lifted Abigail straight off the table.

Her whole body came up off the wood, knees hiked high, ankles riding over his elbows as he took her weight on his cock, suspended, impaled on him, her arms locking desperately tight around his neck.

He started to walk. Pacing in slow circles around the tent. The lanterns cast huge shadows against the canvas. The boxes topped with bedding, the writing desk, the rack of clothes, the scattered banknotes under the table, the whole little luxury kingdom he'd built in the middle of an outlaw camp, and in the center of it, a needy woman hanging off his cock, kissing him like the world was going to end at dawn.

Plap! Plap!

The night was indeed very long.

####

Turns out, the very next day, Abigail asked John to consider his offer to join his bodyguard and detective company. As James had said, John protested and fought Abigail, declaring his loyalty to Dutch.

In the end, Abigail did think and concluded that she could only rely on herself to raise Jack. And that meant... a lot of stolen moments over the next ten days. Whenever they got the chance, they fucked. She even let him try the other hole, but gave up halfway.

Blowjobs behind a tree. A pounding, rough moment in the town's tavern where she could moan to her heart's content.

He asked if she felt any remorse. All she replied with was, 'Just let me have this moment. You'll be ridin' off soon enough.' so he gave it all to let her really have that moment.

The final night before heading back to New York, he threw a big party in the camp with everyone present. They drank like pigs, vomited, and then drank more. During that time, he handed his business cards to some of the men, like Charles.

He offered them jobs if they chose to come his way. They thanked him, declined, but kept the cards. He also offered the same to Sadie, who was entering her gunslinger phase. She, too, refused with a sweet kiss on his cheek, but agreed to look for him once she had settled her score with O'Driscolls.

James let them be. He couldn't force them. Arthur was a gone case anyway; the man had gotten TB, but didn't know it yet.

That night, after everyone had gone to a drunken sleep, he slipped away with Abigail in a stagecoach. They went to a secluded spot, and there he ploughed her until she saw stars behind her eyelids, and the sun threatened to rise.

It was their last stolen moment. No regrets, no holding back. Both of them blurred all lines, and a little mistake was made. Neither of them seemed to care about it at that moment.

The next morning, James packed all his bags and let his men load them on the carriage. He had a train to catch from Valentine.

"It was a genuine pleasure having you with us, Mr. Carlson. You kept the spirit of this camp bright even in these dark times. You have my thanks, and the thanks of every man and woman here. We would have loved to keep you a while longer, but I know a busy man like yourself has

places to be. I trust this little experience will help you write one hell of a book soon. One we'll all be proud to read, I promise you that."

It was the usual Dutch's grand speech.

James smiled, shook Dutch's hand, and gave a few words in return. "It truly was an experience. You fellows have my respect. It is no easy life you lead out here. Still, I found friends among you. I found compassion and good company. A brotherhood, if one must call it that..."

He eyed Abigail. She was smiling back at him. He found it funny how he had paid Dutch three hundred dollars only. But Abigail had more than double that. Clearly, Jack was going to have to aim for the top university now. He'd already offered a letter of recommendation if the boy studied well.

"I understand the times are difficult. Still, should you come through on the better side, an entirely new world will open before you. Lastly, don't forget my offers. Think of me as your friend. Goodbye now, and look after yourselves. Especially you, Mr. Morgan. You appear quite ill. I have seen those signs before; it is tuberculosis."

"..."

Everyone fell silent; some frowned at his sudden revelation.

But James was done and moved. He walked to the large stagecoach waiting for him. And right at the stagecoach's door was a gorgeous woman waiting for him, with brown hair, beautiful green eyes, and freckles. A girl he was damn sure he'd fallen for.

He was almost certain he would marry her. But first, he wanted to try honest dating so both of them could understand each other properly.

"Ready to see New York, Mary-Beth?"

Mary-Beth smiled softly, a pretty blush rising to her cheeks as she let go of the hem of her fine new skirt. "I can't wait, James. I always dreamed of goin' there. And now I'm gonna be a real writer. I... I can't thank the Lord enough for lettin' me meet you."

James warmly smiled and offered her a hand so she could enter the coach. "My dear Mary-Beth, you are going to love New York City, at least for the first ten days."

"Why only ten days?"

James crinkled his nose.

"Oh, you will understand soon, Mary."

_____ Quick Epilogue _____

Only a few months later, James received a series of letters. Some he accepted, and some he refused.

Arthur Morgan didn't survive, but he didn't die alone either. The man killed Micah before dying. As for Dutch, the man had run away into hiding somewhere.

The end of the gang wasn't as violent as he remembered. Susan Grimshaw didn't die and went on to work as a barmaid. Javier Escuella, however, did escape to Mexico after he refused to help. Bill Williamson died at Arthur Morgan's hands for standing with Micah.

Sean Macguire also died the same way. Lenny survived as well. Hosea died taking a stand against Dutch and Micah.

The letters he received were from the surviving gang members asking him what they should do next. He helped whom he could. He took Charles Smith into his bodyguard and detective agency. Same for Lenny.

Karen Jones got a job as a barmaid in a high society club at his recommendation. Molly O'Shea's whereabouts were unknown. Tilly Jackson was working as Mary-Beth's assistant now.

James made Sadie Adler his personal bodyguard. Since his time at the camp, they had great chemistry, and on a few occasions recently, that developed into secret flings as she worked for him. Both kept it a secret.

She was a charming woman. But in Sadie's own words, she didn't want to settle down, nor sought a relationship. She was happy where she was.

That left Abigail. John finally accepted the offer and became a bodyguard and detective in his company. He helped Abigail settle in the city, in the better part. Helped her get Jack into a good school. They never crossed the line, however.

Besides, that line had been crossed and destroyed long ago. Abigail had delivered another son recently. He didn't ask about it, nor did she talk about it.

He ignored letters from some members, however. And he had no regrets.

Besides, he had better things to worry about. Like changing Mary-Beth Gaskill's name to Mary-Beth Carlson in a few months.

Life was still boring for James. But he was no longer alone.