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**LEDGER SHEET 1**



**MY NAME IS P.K. PINKERTON AND BEFORE THIS**  
day is over I will be dead.

I am trapped down the deepest shaft of a Comstock  
silver mine with three desperados closing in on me.

Until they find me, I have my pencil & these ledger  
sheets and a couple of candles. If I write small & fast,  
I might be able to write an account of how I came to  
be here. Then whoever finds my body will know the  
unhappy events that led to my demise.

And they will also know who done it.

This is what I would like my tombstone to say:

**P.K. PINKERTON**

**BORN IN HARD LUCK, SEPTEMBER 26, 1850**

**DIED IN VIRGINIA CITY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1862**

**'YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS' GALATIANS 3:28**

**R.I.P.**

My foster ma Evangeline used to say that when God gives you a Gift he always gives you a Thorn in your side to keep you humble.

My Gift is that I am real smart about certain things.

I can read & write and do any sum in my head. I can speak American & Lakota and also some Chinese & Spanish. I can shoot a gun & I can ride a pony with or without a saddle. I can track & shoot & skin any game and then cook it over a self-sparked fire. I know how to cure a headache with a handful of weeds.

I can hear a baby quail in the sage-brush or a mouse in the pantry.

I can tell what a horse has been eating just by the smell of his manure.

I can see every leaf on a cottonwood tree.

But here is my Problem: I cannot tell if a person's smile is genuine or false. I can only spot three emotions: happiness, fear & anger. And sometimes I even mix those up.

Also, sometimes I do not recognize someone I have met before. If they have grown a beard or their hair is different then I get confused.

That is my Thorn: people confound me.

And now my Thorn has got me killed.



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## LEDGER SHEET 2



**IT ALL STARTED THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, ON** September 26<sup>th</sup>. I came home from school & walked into our one-room cabin to the smell of scalded milk & the sight of things thrown everywhere. I closed the door behind me & stepped forward. It was only then that I saw my foster parents lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

They had both been scalped & they appeared to be dead.

I ran to ma first. She was holding the big iron skillet and it had some hair & blood on it so I guessed she had put up a fight.

As I stood there looking down, her eyelids fluttered and she opened her eyes and said 'Pinky?' Pinky was her nickname for me. It is short for Pinkerton.

I crouched down beside her. 'I'm here, Ma.'

She said, 'Is Emmet alive?'

I looked over at pa. He was not breathing. His eyes

were closed & he had a peaceful smile on his face. He also had a hatchet buried in his chest. I swallowed hard.

‘No, Ma,’ I said.

‘He was a good man,’ she said. ‘I will see him walking the Streets of Glory before too long.’

‘Don’t talk that way, Ma. I will fetch Doc Finley from Dayton.’

‘No.’ Her voice was faint. ‘There is no time. I’m dying. Your medicine bag. The one your other ma gave you.’

‘I do not think my medicine bag can help you now, Ma.’

‘No. I mean ... that’s what they were after.’ She gave a kind of sigh and I thought she had gone. But then her eyes opened & she gripped my hand tight. ‘It holds your Destiny. Pinky, do you remember my special hiding place?’

‘Loose floorboard behind the stove?’

She nodded. ‘You’re smart, Pinky. You’ll figure out what to do. Take that medicine bag and get out fast. Before they come back.’

I did not understand what she meant at first. Then I did. ‘The Indians who did this might come back?’ I said.

‘They weren’t Indians.’ Her voice was real faint now & her skin was a terrible white. She said, ‘One of them had blue eyes. And he smelled like Bay Rum Hair Tonic. Indians do not wear Hair Tonic.’

I sniffed the air. Ma Evangeline was right. Above the smell of blood, scalded milk & fresh-baked cake, I could detect the sweet scent of cloves: Bay Rum Hair Tonic. I

also picked up a tang of sweaty armpits.

The men who did this had left a few minutes ago & could return any moment. My instinct was to run, but I did not want to leave my dying ma.

‘Go, Pinky,’ she said. ‘Take your medicine bag and get out of here before they come back.’

I stood up & looked down at her. She would be dead in a minute. I clenched my fists.

‘I will find those men,’ I said. ‘And I will avenge you, Ma.’

‘No,’ she said. And then she said, ‘Pinky?’

I could barely hear her so I squatted down beside her again. ‘Yes, Ma?’

‘Promise me you that you will never take another life. Not even those who killed me. You must forgive. That is what our Lord teaches.’

‘I can’t promise that, Ma,’ I said. My vision was blurry. I blinked & it got clearer.

‘It is my dying wish,’ she said. ‘You have to.’

‘Then I promise,’ I said.

She closed her eyes & whispered, ‘And promise you will not gamble nor drink hard liquor.’

‘I promise.’

But this time she did not hear me.

I stood & looked down at the bodies of my foster ma & pa. They lay next to each other and the pool of mingled blood was still spreading.

I went over to the stove, carefully picking my way around the things that had been thrown down. A tin

canister of flour had been emptied onto the floor. I made sure I stepped around it. Flour would make me leave footprints as sure as blood.

I took the burning milk off the hotplate. Then I knelt down beside the stove & felt for the floorboard with the little knothole. I got my fingertip in there & pulled it up. I found my medicine bag & took it out. I hung it around my neck. I also found a gold coin worth \$20 that ma kept for emergencies. She would not need it now, so I took that, too. I put it in my medicine bag with the other things. Then I put the board back in its place.

Outside I heard men speaking in hushed tones. One of the porch stairs creaked.

I knew it was them. The killers were coming back.

I looked around the house. There were not a lot of places in that one-roomed cabin that I could hide.

It seemed to me there was only one.

