

DARBY

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This book is dedicated with love to Betty, my wife and my friend, who spent countless hours reviewing, reading, and editing.

CHAPTER ONE

The sheriff didn't even get to say why he was there, before Myrtle Woodard was attacking. "If the sheriff wasn't a-standing in front of you, I'd blow you to kingdom come," she said, "I've a good notion to shoot you both." Pointing the gun toward Floyd, "It would be good enough for the man who kilt my husband."

"Now, Myrtle, Floyd came here seeking to put a stop to the troubles between your families," Sheriff Triplett said. "Your husband got killed ten years ago. I investigated the murder of your husband and I can tell you it wasn't Floyd."

"Who be it then, Sheriff?" she asked. "Who else was fretting with my husband?" Before the sheriff could respond to Myrtle's accusations, Virgil Woodard spoke up.

"I've a fix, Sheriff," Woodard said, dirty and unshaven, and looking cocky standing behind Myrtle, "I challenge this murdering coward to a duel."

"Now, Virgil, you know duels are illegal in North Carolina," Sheriff Triplett said. "I'll not allow a duel in Wilkes County, and it's been years since a duel was held anywhere in this state. We didn't come here looking for a fight."

"Duels are legal in Tennessee," Virgil stated, as he stepped off the porch into the yard and strolled over to Floyd, slapping him across the face with his cap as a challenge to a duel. "Floyd Caldwell, I challenge you to a duel to be held at twelve noon, New Year's Day, January 1st, 1904 in Mountain City, Tennessee. If you wish, as you have allowed today, that you want this feud ended, accept my challenge. If you're the coward I think you are then shet your mouth and run."

Upset at having his face slapped, and without thinking, Floyd accepted the challenge. "I accept your challenge and I choose pistols as the weapon," he said. "I've got a cousin, Jesse Caldwell, who has a farm near Mountain City, who I reckon will let us use his place for the duel. I'll contact him and get him to set things up."

"I don't know about holding no duel at one of your relatives," Virgil said. "I don't rightly know a Caldwell I would trust."

"Virgil, are you the one who's right much a coward? Are you trying to back out?" Floyd asked. "Since you challenged me, I'm allowed to choose the weapon and the site for the duel."

"Is that rightly so Sheriff?" Virgil asked.

"I know he chooses the weapons and I would think he chooses the site," Sheriff Triplett replied.

"Then I agree to both the weapon and the site. I will see you at twelve noon on January 1st, 1904," Virgil said. "If you don't show up, I'll hunt you down and use my knife on you, like you did on my brother, George." Virgil, with a cold hard look but still smiling, said, "Get ready to meet your maker."

"I'll be there, and I'll bring my son William as my second," Caldwell said. "Sheriff, is it OK for me to choose William as my second, him being just seventeen?"

“I’ll bring George’s son, Andrew, as my second,” Virgil replied as he glanced at Myrtle Woodard for her approval. “Andrew is also just seventeen, but a sight more of a man than William Caldwell will ever be. Andrew has given him a whipping more than once in school.”

As Sheriff Triplett and Floyd Caldwell left, Triplett said, “You may be worse off now than before you came. Hopefully, Virgil will change his mind, but he’s pretty stubborn. I’ve had him in jail several times, usually over moonshine; making it, selling it, and drinking it. He’s never cooperative, and he usually gets into fights with the other prisoners, and he never backs down. The judge will sentence him to thirty days for making moonshine, and then have to add more days for his fighting.”

“If I don’t get this settled, my family is going to have to leave Wilkes County,” Caldwell said, “I’ve been considering some land in Cherokee County, but I had rather stay here. I might just follow the path of Rufus Pipes and George Hendrix who moved their families to Cherokee County around 1900. I hear from both Rufus and George that some prime farming land is available there.”

Seemingly deep in thought, Floyd spoke up, “I think Virgil’s duel might be the only solution. You saw how hostile Myrtle acted, waving her shotgun around. We both know her children are hearing feud talk every day.” After a moment’s hesitation, he asked, “Sheriff, do you think the duel will settle the feud?”

“If you are killed, perhaps,” the sheriff answered, “but if Virgil is killed, perhaps not.”

“It’s a chance I’ll have to take,” Floyd lamented. “Getting killed is a hard way to settle a feud.” Floyd said as he smiled sadly. “Virgil may well be a might hard to duel. He has grown up tough.” As the sheriff dropped him off at home he thought, How am I going to tell Florence?

The rumor was that in 1895, George Woodard, Andrew’s father, was found bleeding profusely standing in the middle of Elk Creek, in the Darby Community of Wilkesboro, North Carolina. Floyd Caldwell, William’s father discovered him.

“Floyd, I’m stobbed and stobbed bad,” George Woodard said.

“But before I could get him to the creek bank and get help, he died,” Caldwell told the family. Even though an investigation by Wilkes County Sheriff, Dixon Triplett, cleared Floyd Caldwell, the Woodard family believed he had killed George Woodard over a land deal gone sour. They thought the sheriff sided with the Caldwells because they had money. The rumor grew until it developed into a full-blown feud, and over the next few years what was in the beginning a rumor developed into a fact, Floyd Caldwell killed George Woodard.

Due to the animosity over the death of George Woodard, there was bad blood between family members. Several times, fights developed between the children. More than once, as young boys, William Caldwell and Andrew Woodard fought at school. William and Andrew were both handsome young men, but very different. William was quiet and studious while Andrew was outspoken and, though smart, was not academically inclined. In their fights, Andrew usually got the best of William.

Once William asked Deborah Woodard, Andrew’s sister, if he could call on her. When Andrew heard about it, he exploded, threatening William’s life. “If you ever even look at my sister again, I’ll kill you,” he swore.

In addition to fights at school, the Caldwell's house mysteriously caught fire, and one back corner was severely burned. While no one was ever arrested, it was generally thought one of the Woodard boys set the fire. The Caldwell's cattle being shot, their hogs poisoned and dogs killed caused the Caldwell's much grief. The sheriff investigated, questioned Andrew and Cecil Woodard, but could never get even enough evidence to link them in the slightest. Had it not been for the bad blood, the Woodard boys would not have even been suspected.

After several years of having been put through enough, Floyd Caldwell asked Sheriff Triplett to accompany him to visit the Woodards in an effort to reach a resolution to the feud.

When the sheriff and Caldwell arrived, George's widow, Myrtle, accompanied by her brother-in-law, Virgil Woodard, came onto the porch holding a shotgun.

George Woodard was a farmer, a big rough man who wasn't afraid of hard work. He owned a small farm where he barely eked out a living. It was a tough life, but one not uncommon in Appalachia in 1895. George wasn't a drunk, but was a dram drinker, a nipper. On the day he was murdered, Sheriff Triplett stated, "he had been drinking."

George and his wife Myrtle had four children, two sons, Andrew and Cecil, and two daughters, Deborah and Sarah. In addition to these four children, three children died during childbirth. Myrtle was a small but feisty woman who worked alongside her husband trying to dig out their living.

Floyd Caldwell and his wife Florence had three daughters and four sons, the youngest son named Barry and oldest son named William. In the middle were Weldon and Marvin, and daughters Carrie, Jessie and Martha.

In that era, when children reached school age, they attended the two room schoolhouse in Darby. Most of the time at least one or both the Caldwell's and Woodards were in attendance.

Floyd and Florence owned a farm in the Beaver Creek Community. Floyd was a relatively small man, but he was used to hard work. He practiced advanced farming methods, at least advanced for that time. Taking advantage of the mountain streams, he developed a waterwheel tailored to grind grain, wood turning, and saw and plane lumber. He built a blacksmith shop, and was adept at iron working, including horseshoeing. All this ingenuity made him possibly the most prosperous and influential farmer in Wilkes County. His wife Florence was a pretty but a slightly heavy woman, her weight probably brought on by birthing seven children.

Word of the duel spread like wildfire, especially around Darby. Many neighbors and relatives chose sides. Virgil Woodard, who was usually known as a bum, a drunk and a bully, suddenly had people speaking to him, patting him on the back, and listening to his bragging. People grilled the children for answers, and in school even teachers subtly asked the children regarding the goings-on. On bets, odds were three to two in favor of Virgil Woodard. People might have reasoned Virgil was the tougher of the two. After all, they might have thought, Floyd, with all his modern conveniences, led a softer life.

Virgil Woodard moved in on Myrtle after George Woodard, his brother, was murdered. No one knows of him ever having a permanent job. Before Myrtle, he lived as a squatter in a dilapidated shack on Dugger Creek. He kept a few fighting roosters for gambling, and at times he made and sold a

little moonshine, but his principal source of income was stealing. Sheriff Triplett had locked him up more than once. The sheriff learned if something was missing in or around Darby – see Virgil Woodard.

After George was murdered, Virgil, faking sympathy for the family, visited Myrtle and the children and ended up staying under the pretense of helping out. Myrtle probably couldn't tell anyone how it all happened, but once he moved in there was no moving him out.

William Caldwell and Andrew Woodard, being seconds in the duel, suddenly became popular. Even Deborah Woodard flirted with William at school. If Andrew heard of it or even noticed the flirting, he kept quiet. Perhaps he was too preoccupied with his thoughts of the duel and getting even with the Caldwells that he didn't notice. Or maybe he was thinking he would soon have a chance to really get even. He was often heard bragging to his friends that, "Floyd Caldwell could bid this world a fare thee well. I've a notion to challenge William once this duel is over."

Reverend Richard Denny, pastor of the Rock Spring Baptist Church of Darby visited Floyd Caldwell, who was one of his church members, and encouraged him not to go through with the duel. "Thou shalt not kill," he said, quoting one of the Ten Commandments. After their talk, he then prayed that the Lord would keep Floyd Caldwell safe.

Virgil Woodard had never been known to enter a church door, so the minister might have thought to himself I'll let the devil take care of Virgil. Virgil probably wouldn't appreciate my prayers on his behalf anyway.

Floyd Caldwell dug out his thirty-eight caliber pistol, purchased a couple of boxes of shells and went behind his barn for shooting practice. Setting up tin cans, he practiced for hours until he could consistently hit five out of six cans. Virgil Woodard, likewise, was practicing, but as was his offhand nature, he was throwing the cans into the air and shooting at them, and practicing his fast draw. Most days he could be found hanging around the general store letting people buy him a soda or snack. Full of himself, he told his neighbors, "I never miss." This boasting raised the odds in his favor to two to one. Floyd and William, hearing of this boasting and the improved odds, became increasingly worried.

Sheriff Triplett visited both men separately and suggested a compromise. As an example, he told them of Andrew Jackson and Waightstill Avery, who fought a duel on a hill on the south side of Jonesboro, Tennessee, but only after it was arranged that both men would fire into the air.

"I'm not right sure I could trust Virgil to keep his word," Floyd said. "Otherwise, I would do it."

"I might fire into the air as I celebrate the New Year, and the killing of the sorry murderer of my brother," Virgil said. "I'll only take part in a duel whar one of us is killed. The sheriff is trying to get Caldwell out of the duel, but it's a ruckus whar he's a fixing to die."

Jesse Caldwell sent word to both parties. "A dueling field has been cleared on my property," he said. "It is one hundred feet long, and has ample space for the duelers, seconds, surgeons, and onlookers. Johnson County's sheriff, Aaron Alexander, has agreed to be present to help keep peace and make sure the duel is conducted orderly. Several men have examined the field and declared it fit."

George Walker, a Wilkes County teacher, contacted both William Caldwell and Andrew Woodard to ask if they knew the duties of the seconds. Being an educator, he felt two seventeen-year-old boys should not be involved in a duel.

Neither of the boys knew anything about being a second..

“In case my uncle is kilt, do I take his place?” Andrew asked.

“Aren’t we to make sure everything is conducted fairly and interfere if it becomes necessary?” William countered.

“You are both wrong.” Walker said. “Why don’t you let Sheriff Triplett serve as the second to see that things are carried out correctly? I’ve talked with the sheriff, and he is willing to perform the duty. Both of you can stand with him, one on each side, but he will do the counting and proclaim the winner. One person will probably be killed, and as a second you would have to declare the other person the winner.”

Both Andrew and William agreed to the compromise, but Andrew added with a sneer, and looking at William said, “If I see anything one-sided I’ll take over. I don’t nary bit trust the sheriff.”

“Since we’ll be in Johnson County, I’ll make sure it is agreeable with Sheriff Alexander for me to serve as a second for this duel,” Sheriff Triplett later added.

It was obvious that Andrew had questions, but his Uncle Virgil reassured him by telling him, “Don’t fret. Floyd Caldwell will meet his maker regardless of Sheriff Triplett.” Both certain Virgil was going to kill Floyd Caldwell.

January first was fast approaching. Floyd hired a surgeon and attended a church prayer meeting asking for prayers. Floyd and Florence prayed in their nightly devotions, not that Virgil would be killed, but that God’s will be done.

Virgil Woodard, hearing this, laughed at Floyd Caldwell and said, “He’ll need their prayers and the doctor won’t be able to save him after I shoot him betwixt the eyes. As for me, I might just get drunk.”

“My wife will not be accompanying me. She will be home with the children, except for William, who’ll be by the side of Sheriff Triplett,” Caldwell said. “I hope to be home with my family by morning. My sons, Marvin and Weldon, have bid to come, but I told them I needed them at home with their mother and Barry and their sisters.”

“My sister-in-law and my brother’s children will be there,” Woodard said. “I want them to see the man die who murdered their daddy.” William, looking at Deborah and Sarah, could tell they would rather be at home. Deborah looked at William and seemed to want to speak, but then she looked down.

On the fateful day, the dueling parties gathered, along with a couple of hundred spectators, on the site prepared by Jesse Caldwell. Some had come from as far away as Wilkesboro. However, most onlookers came from Darby or Mountain City. George’s widow, along with her children, stood at the front of the crowd where they could see the proceedings clearly. A reporter from the Wilkesboro

News was busy getting quotes, and Edmond Blackburn, a congressman who represented all of Wilkes County, was soliciting votes.

One man said, “I’m near about sixty and I have never seen a duel. I bet three dollars on Virgil – I look to collect six.”

A lady told the reporter, “I think this duel is a sin. It is God that punishes, not man.”

The reporter asked her, “Have you placed a bet on the outcome?” The lady answered with a “moan” and she walked away with her nose in the air.

Vendors hawked their wares. One man was selling a strong drink he called “homebrew,” and a lady was selling jars of jelly with a free biscuit for twenty cents.

A carnival-like atmosphere prevailed. “I hain’t seen this much excitement since ole Tom Dooley was hanged in Statesville nearly forty years ago,” said a man who was seemingly pretty intoxicated and having a good time.

The duel was set to begin at noon, but it was three in the afternoon before the duel began taking shape. The many people in attendance made the delays unavoidable. Sheriff Triplett, accompanied by Sheriff Alexander, finally called for the two duelers, and their seconds, to come to the dueling field. Triplett took the duelers’ pistols, making sure the loading was proper, and read them the instructions in a clear and distinct voice.

Sheriff Triplett cautioned: “The two combatants, Virgil Woodard and Floyd Caldwell, standing back to back with pistols loaded, will each take ten full paces, counted out by me. On the tenth step, each man will turn and fire. The duel will end only when one man is dead or wounded, or when one or both call for a halt. Each man may fire more than once, but neither man may leave the dueling field. In the event either man turns around early, I’ll fire on him.”

“I’ll make sure no one interferes,” Sheriff Alexander said. “Once in another county a man ran onto the dueling field and was killed.”

“Virgil, you won the coin toss so you get to choose the position and direction you will pace,” Sheriff Triplett said.

“It don’t matter none to me Sheriff,” Virgil said. “That murdering fool will be dead either way. I aim to kill him afore he can git off a shot.”

“Floyd, then you select the position,” Sheriff Triplett said.

“I’ll pace west, and when I turn to fire I’ll be allowed to face east,” Floyd answered.

“Then, let’s begin,” Sheriff Triplett shouted. “Virgil Woodard and Floyd Caldwell, station yourselves. Seconds Andrew Woodard and William Caldwell stand on either side of me.”

Sheriff Triplett, with seconds Andrew and William standing on either side of him, and Virgil and Floyd standing back to back, began counting off the paces.

“One... two... three...”

As he counted Floyd and Virgil began stepping off the paces. The crowd grew ghastly quiet. The dueling field was clear for at least one hundred feet on either side. Anxiety could be felt everywhere.

A woman in the crowd passed out, but no one bothered to help her. Virgil was smiling, a half smirk, looking at the sheriff, seemingly playing to the crowd, and nodding to his family confident that he was going to kill his opponent. Floyd seemed awfully tense, looking straight ahead, and holding his pistol firmly. With white knuckles, he looked at William, and seemed to be saying a prayer.

“Four... five... six...” Sheriff Triplett counted.

William appeared to be crying, but no one except Andrew seemed to notice.

Andrew was smiling, seemingly confident that Virgil would kill Floyd, even giving a subtle wave to Virgil.

“After Virgil kills your daddy, I’ll be coming after you,” Andrew said, glancing at William behind the sheriff’s back. When William didn’t acknowledge him, “I’m coming after you,” he repeated. William, though he heard the remarks, kept his eyes fixed on his father.

The sheriff seemingly didn’t hear Andrew and continued counting,

“Seven... eight... nine...”

Some in the crowd shuffled for positions where they could have a better view. By now it was close to four o’clock, and the sun was setting slightly in the west. What that morning had been close to zero weather was now in the mid-forties. The dueling field, which had been sparkling with the morning frost, was now dry.

“Ten,” the sheriff called out.

For a brief second, everything seemed to stand still. Both men turned and pointed their pistols. Virgil fired first, and missed. Less than a second later, Floyd fired hitting Virgil in the chest. He died instantly with a surprised and pained look on his face.

A shout arose from the crowd. Some ran to Virgil, others to Floyd. Most people, having expected Virgil to be triumphant, just stood in disbelief for several minutes before settling their bets and heading home. Several in the crowd who thought they would return home with money in their pockets, had instead lost to those who had been fortunate enough to bet on the underdog.

“How could Floyd outshoot Virgil?” a man who had bet on Virgil sighed. “Virgil did shoot first, but missed. I can’t believe it. Virgil told us, ‘I never miss.’”

William ran to his father and hugged him. Floyd, looking pale and exhausted, ignoring those around them, “William, let’s go home to Darby.” William, still holding on to his father, just nodded.

Both Andrew and Cecil ran to their uncle who was lying on the ground. Myrtle and her daughters stood stunned, not moving. Sarah, only twelve years old, was crying, while Deborah stood with her head bowed. Suddenly Andrew grabbed Virgil’s pistol and started toward Floyd and William who leaving the field did not notice him. Sheriff Triplett, who had expected something like this to happen, grabbed him by the arm and took the gun. Sheriff Alexander also moved to intercept Andrew.

“Andrew, the duel is over,” Triplett said. “Virgil challenged Floyd to this duel, and Floyd won fair and square. Take your mother and the rest of the family and go on home. Let’s let this feud end.”

Andrew was cursing and swearing revenge. “The Caldwells will never make it back to Darby. I’ll not rest until the whole pack is dead.”

Sheriff Triplett approached Sheriff Alexander. “Would you lock Andrew Woodard up for the night until he cools down, and could you find a place for Mrs. Woodard and her children tonight? Andrew can accompany them back to Darby in the morning. I think Floyd and William and most of those from Wilkes County will head home this evening.”

“I heard his ranting and raving – I think that would be a good move,” Sheriff Alexander said. “I’ll lock Andrew up until morning, and I know a family who will allow Mrs. Woodard and her children to stay with them.”

Darby was a small rural community, located in the Southeast corner of Wilkes County, North Carolina. It was named for Darby Hendrix, one of the first settlers there.

Darby had a population of approximately two hundred. There was no electricity until around 1937, but an eight-party line telephone service was available beginning around 1920. A railroad from Darby to Wilkesboro was built around 1913. This railroad was a blessing because the roads, especially during the winter, became almost impassable. During this era, the road from Darby to Caldwell County was said to ford the creek 99 times.

The area around Darby was sometimes, in a belittling way, called Hog Elk, but mostly it was used in a good and proud way. Demeaning sayings such as, ‘What could you expect from someone from Hog Elk?’ Darby was, to a large extent, a farming community made up of good God-fearing people, though many made their living moonshining.

CHAPTER TWO

Floyd Caldwell and his son William, along with the crowd of people coming from the duel, were traveling toward Darby making their way back home. The woman William remembered as the lady who passed out during Sheriff Triplett's pace count started singing. Her song was a ballad sang to the tune of The Ballad of Tom Dooley written in 1845. Tom Dooley was from Wilkes County so everyone knew the ballad. The words of her ballad were:

*Hang your head, Floyd Caldwell
Hang your head and cry;
You kilt poor Virgil Woodard,
And you know you're bound to die.*

*You left him in the dueling field,
A lead ball through his chest;
Your fate is forever sealed,
For on ten you gave him rest.*

*Hang your head, Floyd Caldwell,
Hang your head and cry;
You kilt poor Virgil Woodard,
And you know you're bound to die.*

*The Woodards they never forgive,
Nary a forgiveness will they grant;
They'll find you if you hide,
Finding safety you just caint.*

*Hang your head, Floyd Caldwell,
Hang your head and cry;
You kilt poor Virgil Woodard,
And you know you're bound to die.*

*You kilt him with a single shot
On a dueling field in Tennessee;
The Woodards will hatch a plot,
Tomorrow, reckon where you'll be?*

*Hang your head, Floyd Caldwell,
Hang your head and cry;
You kilt poor Virgil Woodard,
And you know you're bound to die.*

Floyd and William, already troubled, tried to get away from her, but her song could, in the cool, still mountain air and with her piercing voice, be heard for miles. Others soon started singing with her. Floyd and William finally tuned everyone out. After a few miles, most got too tired to sing. The quiet was a welcome sound to Floyd and William.

Florence and the children, seeing Floyd and William coming up the road, ran to meet them. Florence and their daughters, crying and hugging their father, glad to see him still alive, while Barry, Marvin, and Weldon gathered around questioning William. Proud of their daddy, they wanted to hear every detail of the duel.

For the next few weeks, the Caldwells stayed close to their farm. The neighbors said little about the duel, and they heard no word from the Woodard family. Farmers continued to bring their grain to be ground, and lumber to be planed, and said little except an occasional, "Good to have you home."

Some of the neighboring women visited Florence bringing a dish of food and offering their thoughts and support.

Pastor Denny came by one evening and prayed with Floyd and his family. "Come back to church real soon," he said.

Andrew didn't return to school when the others came back after Christmas vacation. Deborah returned, but for a while she avoided William, as he did her. Other students, feeling the seriousness of the matter, kept quiet. For the first time in more than a long while, no fights between the Caldwells and the Woodards took place.

The Wilkesboro News printed the following story in their weekly newspaper.

At approximately four p.m. on January 1, 1904, a duel was held in Mountain City, Tennessee, between Virgil Woodard and Floyd Caldwell, both residents of Wilkes County. The duel was the result of a feud similar to the West Virginia-Kentucky Hatfield-McCoy feud of the late 1800s.

Virgil Woodard proposed the duel as a way to settle the feud, expecting to win, but since Floyd Caldwell killed Virgil Woodard, authorities anticipate that the feud may be far from over. Rumors are that Andrew Woodard, the seventeen year old son of George Woodard, has sworn to get even. Andrew had been a second in his uncle's duel and made numerous threats after his uncle was killed.

According to longtime Wilkes County Sheriff, Dixon Triplett, the feud stems from Virgil's brother, George Woodard, being murdered in 1895 by someone the Woodard family believed to be Floyd Caldwell.

"I thoroughly investigated the murder of George Woodard, and while I did not find the murderer of Mr. Woodard, I'm certain it was not Floyd Caldwell," Sheriff Triplett told the Wilkesboro News. "However, the Woodard family is just as certain it was Floyd Caldwell. Until the murderer is found and convicted the feud will most likely continue."

It seems Floyd Caldwell had, for one hundred dollars, purchased from George Woodard, 40 acres of farmland straddling Elk Creek. Several months after the sale, Mr. Woodard said the sale did not include the 10 acres on the north side of Elk Creek. Mr. Caldwell sued and won, thus began the Woodard-Caldwell feud. George Woodard accused the court of being biased because as he said, "the court was against the Woodards."

Sheriff Triplett visited both the Woodard and Caldwell families. He urged both families stating, "The duel is over and hopefully, the feud. Virgil offered the duel as a fix for the bad blood between your families. I know there will continue to be hard feelings, but I hope we can all now live in harmony." The sheriff later told Floyd Caldwell. "I was a fer piece from settling the feud."

During their final year in high school, Deborah and William often talked and shared their plans and dreams for the future. They shared future plans with both aiming high. It was these talks and the small classes that brought them closer together. Since Andrew was no longer in school, William and Deborah joined in discussions in the classes they shared, and they eventually became good friends. While Myrtle would not let William call on Deborah, they spent a lot of time together at school.

Deborah told William that Andrew was working in Wilkesboro. William didn't say so but was happy to hear he was living away. William remembered the threats Andrew made after the duel.

"Does he ever come home?" William cautiously asked. "I don't mean to be nosy, but I haven't seen him since that day in January."

"He was home in April for a couple of days," Deborah said. "He was drinking a lot and hateful, so I was glad when he left. He is so preoccupied with daddy and Virgil being killed that he can no longer reason. He talked continuously about getting even."

"Did he ask about me?"

"Yes, but I can't repeat what he called you. He told me to stay away from you, that you, being a no good Caldwell didn't deserve me. I told him I would as there was no use getting him any more riled up."

Things moved smoothly for several months, and the Caldwells, while cautious, hoped things would remain calmed down. School was out for the summer, and William Caldwell and Deborah Woodard were two of four from Darby who graduated from High School. William planned to attend Berea College and major in science. His goal was to become a doctor. Deborah also planned to attend Berea College and major in education, and become a teacher. Looking forward to attending college together, Deborah and William could not have been happier.

Berea College, located in Berea, Kentucky, founded in 1855, admits primarily students from Appalachia. At the time William and Deborah enrolled, the school had primary, intermediate, and academic levels, and a teachers' course. The college awarded their first bachelor's degree in 1873. They charged no tuition, but all students work to pay college expenses. This was a big break for both William and Deborah for money was in short supply.

While the Caldwells seemed more affluent than the Woodard family, William still had three brothers and three sisters at home, and Deborah had two brothers and a sister still at home. College would have been impossible for either of them without Berea. Most of their classmates faced the same condition financially, so they didn't feel deprived.

"You know we'll be attending college together in the fall," William said. "Perhaps we can ride together on the train. We can talk and share our concerns. My daddy says he'll try to get me home at least for Christmas, and I hope you'll ride home with us."

"We'll have to see," Deborah said. "Mama is still very much on the outs with you and your father. If Andrew hears about me even talking to you he will go berserk. You remember that time you ask me if you could call on me? It would be worse now since Virgil was killed in the duel."

In no time, it was off to college for Deborah and William, the first time either had been away from home for any length of time. Both being from Darby and knowing each other drew them together. In addition, as freshmen, they took a lot of classes together and saw each other daily. They often ate together in the dining hall, and sometimes he would take her to social or educational events on campus. Not a day passed when they did not see and talk with one another.

“Deborah, let’s go hear Professor Kemper’s lecture titled, ‘Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,’” William said. “Our English Literature professor said he would give us extra credit for attending. We can discuss it afterwards. I imagine our professor will ask questions.”

“It won’t hurt that Dr. William Goodell Kemper is the president of Berea College,” Deborah added. “We need to meet him because he also teaches courses. I think we’ll have him for Latin next session.”

These opportunities gave them the occasion to see each other. Thus they gradually grew to love one another.

“Mama’s gonna kill me if she finds out about us,” Deborah said smiling playfully. “And for sure Andrew will kill you.”

“We’ll not tell your mama until we finish college,” William answered. “By then, hopefully, she’ll change her opinion of me. Even Andrew might mellow by then.”

“Don’t count on Andrew mellowing. He seems to hate more day by day.”

It was getting close to Christmas break, and college was going great for both Deborah and William. Deborah received a letter from her mother stating that Andrew had been arrested for murder in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. It seems Andrew had stabbed a man to death in a bar fight. “I don’t rightly know the particulars,” Myrtle wrote. “It seems they both might have been a-drinking.”

“I left the children with your Aunt Vesey, and rode a wagon to Wilkesboro for the trial where I visited Andrew in jail. I stayed in Wilkesboro until they held his trial. I didn’t much understand the trial as it was mainly schooled folks a-talkin’. I do know Andrew was found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to ten years in the Central Prison at Raleigh. It was a trying two weeks, but I’m home now and will fill you in on everything when you come home for Christmas. You wrote that you might ride home with William Caldwell and his daddy. I would say ‘no,’ but I’m a-wantin’ to see you.”

Deborah was saddened, but neither she nor William was surprised. Andrew was always up for a fight.

“Andrew has always been hot tempered and bullheaded,” Deborah said. “But, I can ride home with you Christmas if I’m still invited. At least we won’t have to put up with Andrew. Cecil has calmed down and Sarah was young when daddy was killed so they don’t so much blame you or your daddy. I’m sure Mama talks about it right much, but probably not so much since Virgil was killed. We all closed our eyes when Sheriff Triplett counted to ten. Sarah and I begged mama to let us stay home, but Virgil wanted us all to go. Cecil was supportive at first, but he gradually changed. He often talks about how you and your daddy hugged and cried after the duel. I think he wished to have those same feelings between him and Daddy.”

Christmas break came and William's father came to Berea to pick up William. William showed his daddy around the college, introduced him to some of his professors, especially the college president, Dr. Kemper, and lastly walked him over to where Deborah was waiting.

"Daddy, can Deborah be allowed to ride home with us?" William asked. "She has her mama's permission, and we have become right much good friends these last few months. Andrew is in prison so he ought not to be a problem. If you feel comfortable with her riding with us, I would greatly appreciate it."

"Any notion that I wouldn't do the Christian thing would be spiteful," Floyd Caldwell said. "Tell her she is plumb welcome. Your mama packed more than enough food for us and Deborah. I remember you always thought of Deborah as pretty to look at. Your letters home talked a right much about her. I knew from your letters that you wished for Deborah to ride with us. Your mother said before I left, 'Deborah is a nice young lady'."

William and Deborah decided it would be better not to anger her family by trying to see each other during their Christmas break. William spent Christmas getting caught up on goings-on with his brother and sisters. They all, except Barry, wanted to know about college life. "I ain't going to college," Barry said. "I don't like school,"

When it came time to return to college, Floyd and William picked Deborah up at her house. Deborah's mama wasn't overly friendly, but this time she didn't come to the door waving a shotgun. In fact, she thanked them for giving Deborah a ride.

"I baked some sweetbread for Deborah to share with you on the ride back to college," Mrs. Woodard said. "Deborah allowed you treated her truly nice."

"You're more than welcome," Floyd said. "Thank you for the sweetbread. It has been right much a pleasure having Deborah along."

Deborah and William didn't speak, but their looks showed how glad each was to see the other. Only a blind person wouldn't have seen their love for one another. The touch of Deborah's hand caused William's heart to skip and William's smile melted Deborah's heart.

On the way back to Berea College, Deborah and William caught up on events, most of the time both talking at once. Mr. Caldwell listened and smiled, perhaps remembering his youth.

"Mama sent you this quilt for Christmas, and I carved you this cat," William said, as he presented them to Deborah. "My carving is not the best, but I tried. Tell me about your Christmas – did you see or hear from Andrew?"

"We all went to see Andrew in Raleigh," Deborah said. "I guess he is doing as well as can be expected, but he is as difficult and hostile as ever. He blames you and your daddy for everything, even his being in prison. I'm afraid he has become so obsessed with you and your daddy that no amount of reasoning with him will help. I'm still glad mama got to see him."

"Did he mention me?" William asked.

"He asked me if I was fooling around with you at college," Deborah said. "I told him we saw each other right much, but that I wasn't fooling around with you or anybody else. He said it wouldn't be

fitting for me to neighbor with the son of the man who killed our daddy. I was afraid mama might say something, but she didn't. I know she realizes we're in love, but she kept it to herself."

College classes started back full force on January 8, 1906. Both Deborah and William, taking a full load of courses, found spare time didn't exist. One of their classes was Latin taught by the President Kemper. "I have been dreading Latin," William said. "However, it is important in the study of medicine so I'll have to give it an extra effort."

"If you recollect," Deborah answered. "We had Latin in high school."

"And it was hard then," William said. "I'll still have to give an extra effort in order to pass. I wish I had listened when Miss Piques tried to get me to study."

He paused, then jokingly said, "With all these classes, I declare, we don't even have time to fool around."

"We sure enough don't," Deborah teased. "But it wouldn't be fittin' if we didn't fool around just a little. We'll work it into our schedule but don't tell Andrew."