

Dear Aunt Martha. It is with heavy heart and deep sorrow that I take pen to hand. On our last dispatch I had informed you of our near miss with our beloved Florissa and the wonderful event that was about to unfold in my life with the birth of my new son. We tracked her trail to the small village of Florance, where we determined the lady they had laid to rest although her name was Flower (Florissa) was not our Flower. As it was too late to continue with Jana being so far along we opted to settle down for a while until the baby was born and could resume our travel. Shortly after that Jana took extremely ill and we put up temporary roots until her total recovery. Yesterday morning as the sun was rising I held her in my arms to watch the beautiful site and while observing she succumbed and the Lord took her home. As he saw fit he also took my unborn son and pierced my heart ever more deeply. I sat there for hours just holding her and sobbing at the fact that my life had just crumbled before me. My first emotion was of sorrow mixed with questioning God why He'd do this to me. It quickly turned to a fierce rage and a lashing out at the unfairness of it all. The neighbors came by about noon and took charge to enable me to experience my grief. I sat there for the longest letting my mind spill out all that had occurred until I was just sitting there numb and without any thought at all. In time I came around and realized that God was actually being kind and loving by not prolonging her pain and spared me the burden of raising an invalid son although I'd gladly have done so. Now I have to get past the despair but other than writing to you I haven't released myself to the reality that she will no longer be with me and our son will never be. I told you in the past of the vision and the reassurance from God that we would foster a new generation but now I'm at a loss as to how that can come to pass. That's about all I have in me for now so I'll close hoping and praying that all is well at your end.

Jo-Eb, with the help from his neighbors managed to conduct a funeral service for his beloved wife and child on a crisp sparkling morning. The dew covered the fresh turned ground and a light snow started to fall. After that he returned to his cabin and just sat. He managed a meal or two over the next several days but for the most part just sat motionless without plan or cognitive process. On the morning of the eight day he was awoken by several loud bangs on his door. Someone was excited and desperately seeking help. Although he wasn't fully awake he opened the door to see what was happening. A young boy ran into his kitchen and begged for help. He could hardly speak through the sobs and stuttered furiously. He crawled up into a corner and placed himself into a ball as if to hide from whatever was chasing him. Jo-Eb gave no thought to his own safety but flung open the door to face whatever had frightened the young lad. Three half grown men stood on his steps demanding that he give the boy up. He didn't know what it was all about but he knew from experience that turning the boy over to them was the last thing that was going to happen. "If you have a grievance against the boy I'd be glad to discuss it, but I'm not going to turn him over to you without an explanation." "Not none of your damn business" came the reply from the man in the middle. "You give him to us or we'll take him after we beat you and burn your house." With that Jo-Eb waited no longer. He grabbed a stick of wood from the pile and slung it against the nearest head. The first one went down without so much as a whimper. As he continued his advance he grabbed a harness with his other hand and slung it at the biggest man who had made the reply. As he had experienced combat many times he easily dispatched the other two. They were brutes at best but scarcely trained to combat one with the experience and training that Jo-Eb had. In short order he had them hog tied and returned to the boy. He was still sobbing although he had settled down some.

Jo-Eb just sat there for a while and finally said “Well?” The boy just sat there for a while and then muttered something almost inaudible. “They told me to steal the apples from the store and I told them no.” The store owner has been good to me and I didn’t want to take advantage of him. His wife had helped me get cleaned up when we arrived and I just knew it was wrong to take it so I refused. That’s when they started beating on me again so I ran. Yours was the first place I found so I came here seeking help.” Jo-Eb just looked at the boy for a long while. He didn’t know if the story was true or not but from what he had seen he didn’t have any reason to disbelieve him. “Well we’ll just take them to town and see what we can do to straighten this mess out.” With that the boy recoiled and Jo-Eb knew he wasn’t telling all of the truth. “You can’t give me back to them; they’ll kill me this time.” He shrieked. “I won’t let that happen” Jo-Eb simply replied. He still didn’t know the entire truth of the situation but he had made up his mind that whatever was to happen he wouldn’t abandon the boy to the likes of them.

He lashed the three together and egged them on towards the community. It wasn’t long before they met with a couple of men who were looking for them. “These brutes stole things from my store and beat my dog half to death.” Jo-Eb recognized the proprietor as he had dealings with him at the store in the past. The other man didn’t say anything but was carrying a large stick and looked like he was well versed in its use. The community didn’t have a jail house so they locked them in the blacksmiths barn and tied them tightly with ropes. Jo-Eb could see that this was a familiar process as they completed their task swiftly and effectively. Jo-Eb was not much of a gregarious individual but he was always pleasant and respectful so he knew many of the inhabitants more by disposition than name. Several of them had come out to his place after Jana died and just checked in on him to see if they could help. “We’ll take care of these three.” The man with the stick said. “Don’t know about that yungun though, we really don’t have a place for him. I guess we can ask the widow Iren if she’d take him in. She’s been ailing though lately and might not be up to it.” Without hesitation Jo-Eb spoke up. “He can stay with me. I’ve been waiting on the Lord to present me with a new goal in life and this will be good for the both of us.” The men looked relieved at that and nodded in affirmation. The boy clung tightly to Jo-Ebs’ leg and kept quite. “Well then that’s settled, we’ll be headed back to the cabin now. I’m planning on leaving in a couple of days to complete a mission that I started out on a long time ago. If you would, look after the cabin and give it to the next group that might want to settle down here.” With that he waved goodbye and turned back to the house.

As they walked back Jo-Eb asked the boy his name. “Abraham” he replied but said nothing more. “Well Abraham, tell me, where did you come from, do you have any kin folks, and where are you headed?” Abraham just walked on quietly for a short while then he responded “Don’t know where we came from, been on the road as long as I can remember. The only kin folks I had died about a year back and these three used me as their mule and as to where I’m going, that’s up to you.” That last part he said with a big grin on his face and Jo-Eb knew they were developing a trusting relationship. Once again the boy fell silent and just walked as closely as he could to Jo-Eb. When they got to the cabin Jo-Eb told him about him losing his wife just last week and how he was at a loss as what to do next but he knew he had to continue on with his original mission to find his cousin. “I’d like that.” Abraham replied. “I know how to get berries and trap rabbits and, and, and...” he continued on for a long while trying so hard to impress Jo-Eb that he could be an asset to him. “Well it sounds like you’re just the person I need to help me

get where I'm going. You'll have to leave the fighting to me though as you're still quite young and would get hurt easily." "Oh, no" the boy objected, I can fling a rock twenty yards and hit a turkey in the eye. I'll help when the time comes." His manner was so emphatic that Jo-Eb felt the boy was actually telling the truth as he knew it. "Ok then, we'll get a good night's rest and in the morning we'll head west.

The next morning he passed by the grave site and just sat for a minute telling Jana that he had to go on now but he'd be back one day to visit. His chest swelled up and he had tightness in his throat with water in his eyes. Young Abraham stood silently and respectfully behind, but not too far behind. Jo-Eb felt that he had received a commission from God to take care of the young lad and determined to do the best he could to see to it he was brought up right. As they started their journey he asked "Did you ever hear of the Bible?" "Yes sir" he replied, that's where I got my name. Abraham was the father of a great nation, one that was so big that they numbered as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach." I never gave it much thought before but after I heard you tell your wife that you were going to miss her so much and you didn't know how you'd fulfill God's promise, I knew why I was sent to you."

Once again Jo-Eb choked up as he listened to Abraham. Without a doubt God had placed them together to complete a mission. The more they talked the more Jo-Eb knew the boy had been schooled in the bible before he was put into the hands of those last three. Apparently his mom had read from the bible and discussed its meaning quite often. "I've got a bible in my pack" he mentioned, you can read it whenever you'd like." "Nope," the boy replied, I can't read but I listen well." "We'll just have to teach you to read so you can learn on your own when I'm not available and I can help you while you learn." Abraham smiled a great big smile and skipped on ahead. "Wow" he yelled, "I'm going to learn to read." He would run ahead, check the road way, and come back and report on what he found. Lefty was always to his front on the left side and the two of them were like ducks and water. That went on all day until at last he came back dragging somewhat. "We'll camp here for the night" Jo-Eb said, "We've had a long day and I don't know about you but I'm tired." Abraham puffed up his chest and responded "I'm not tired." Jo-Eb looked at him for a long moment and then responded, "Its one thing to know what's in the bible but it's another to live it." Abraham exhaled and said "Yes sir, I'm really beat to." As they bedded down for the night Jo-Eb noticed some birds were flying around young Abraham. They seemed to take a liking to him and he talked to them as if they were old friends. "It seems you've taken a shine to the birds." He mentioned."Yes sir, I've always had a way with animals, birds especially. Sometimes they talk to me. I didn't have anyone to talk with since my mom died so I looked for ways to see what I could learn. The birds seemed to like you to." Well, Jana really had a way with them. She'd talk with them just as you do and they had protected her on many occasions."

Jo-Eb pulled out his bible and asked Abraham where he'd like to start. He selected Genesis Chapter 23 which surprised Jacob as he had thought that the lad with so much life in front of him would have selected a passage that would depict youth and strength. So he opened the bible and started reading.

"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.

² And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

³ And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

⁴ I *am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

⁵ And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

⁶ Hear us, my lord: thou *art* a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. He choked and wiped back his tears. Abraham continued on “And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, *even* to the children of Heth. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, . . .” And he continued on through the entire chapter. After that they just sat there for a while and looked at the fire. Jo-Eb wept quietly while Abraham sat close to his side with Lefty sitting on his lap. After a time Jo-Eb mentioned that he was proud to be associated with one who knew so much of the verses and that it was the appropriate scripture to help him get over the sorrow so that he could carry on. When he looked over he saw that Abraham was fast asleep.

He had a dream that night about his vision, his hopes, and his intentions for the future. Most of it was jumbled as is the way in most dreams. His main problem was that his heart was heavy and he couldn't get rid of the lump in his throat. It was still too soon to move on as every time he turned or twisted the loss would creep in and he'd tumble into despair. He woke up suddenly with a violent shake. “Wake up” It was Abraham's voice and it had a screech of anxiety and fear. He sprang to his feet as he grabbed his sword and positioned himself away from the fire so as to minimize a target for an aggressor. As his head cleared and his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light he realized that whatever was wrong didn't require immediate action. The dog was sitting by the fire wagging his tail with a look of inquiry on his face. There were birds in the immediate area and in the trees but they were silently watching from their branches. “What's the matter?” He inquired. “What did you see?” The boy just stood there silently with his mouth open pointing toward the trees. Jo-Eb gently reached over and pulled him to himself. He wasn't sure what had happened but he was sure that whatever it was had taken place in the boy's mind.

He sat down and drew the boy to him and held him tightly. After a few minutes he spoke. “Sometimes we see things in our dreams that look and feel so real that it's hard to distinguish it from reality. When it's a fearful event that makes it even worse. The good news is though you can wake up from a dream and if you have someone to talk to the fear soon passes and you can rest knowing that the next time it happens you will deal with it better.” Abraham just sat there shivering and held on tightly. Jo-Eb whispered “Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you. Deuteronomy 3:22.” Although Jo-Eb was well versed in the bible from his mother's teachings he was amazed that he should remember so many of them. He had always tried to live a good life and to help others, but he hadn't quoted scripture, except for his songs to Jana, in a long time. Abraham just snuggled up and drifted back to sleep.