

SAMUEL FOX'S GRANDDAUGHTER



Two big men rode into Buffalo, Wyoming that warm spring day. Spring was just beginning, and the earth smelled fresh and clean. The men were impressive—big and strong. The first one was six-foot-five inches of pure muscle. His hair was to his collar and the color of chocolate, with eyes that were clear and brown, soulful eyes, but if you thought this man had any soul left, you were sadly mistaken. His horse was a huge buckskin. His name was Louis or big Lou.

The second man, while not so big, was still impressive. At six-foot-three inches, also solid muscle, his hair was black like a raven, and his eyes were ice blue and cold. He rode next to big Lou on a pure black stallion. His name was Gabriel.

Both men appeared to be in their late thirties, with special holsters attached to their saddles, so their rifles were within easy reach. A six-shooter was strapped to each of their sides.

Gabriel and Lou were looking for the sheriff's office, their eyes always moving, looking at everything, never missing a movement.

Big Lou pointed to the office in question and they led their horses to the hitching rail outside. They entered quietly with stealth

and confidence. Inside was a very dear friend of theirs, and they had come after communicating with him over the winter months.

Samuel Fox sat facing the door next to the sheriff. He stood as the men entered, his hand outstretched, a welcoming smile on his face.

“Welcome, my old friends. Let me introduce you to our sheriff, James Colton. Sheriff, these are the Pinkertons, whom I have spoken so highly of.”

The sheriff rose and held out his hand in welcome, also. “Happy to meet you boys. I hear you are looking to start a detective agency and retire from the government. I’m glad to hear that you want to settle down in our town.”

Samuel said, “These men saved my daughter, Summer. Her uncle hired men to kill her, so he could get her money. She was just a child at the time. They killed her parents, and our friend, Hawk, raised her for the first years of her life, as you know. These men are experts in their line of work, excellent disguise artists and masters in languages. Lou has a photographic memory, and Gabriel is an expert on human behavior. Both are expert trackers and deadly in a fight. Come on, boys, let me show you to your rooms and then, this afternoon, I will show you to the building I thought you might like to use as an office.”

Both men agreed that it had been a long journey and they were ready for a bath and some decent food.

On the way to the hotel, Samuel met his son-in-law and daughter, Jarod and Autumn. He introduced the men and promised to bring them around the next morning for a proper introduction. He asked Autumn to invite Summer and Mark to attend breakfast, also, as he only wanted to make one introduction tomorrow, and he wanted Summer to meet the men who saved her life so long ago.

After looking over their room, they went to Kayla’s restaurant. Kayla was Samuel’s sister-in-law. Kayla’s husband, Tom, was a

lawyer and Samuel's wife Suzie's brother. Mark, Summer's husband was another lawyer and worked in Tom's office.

Both Summer and Autumn lived within a mile of each other and both had children. Summer had a son, Storm, and a two-year-old daughter, Lilly. Autumn was the mother of a daughter, Wynter, a petite little girl. Both of the older children were five-years-old, born within months of each other. They were so close that the children fed on their aunt's breasts, as well as their mother's, when the need arose. Samuel's other adopted daughter and son, Spring and Brenden, lived on a large ranch adjacent to Samuel's. They had a son, Caleb. All of Samuel and Suzie's children were adopted except the one son they finally were blessed with, Shaun. He was taking over more and more of the ranching as Samuel became older.

Hawk and Little Bird would be arriving soon, also. They didn't do much for the round up anymore. They caught a few wild mustangs to sell, but the army didn't buy many these days, because they used the railroad. Hawk and Samuel had very exclusive customers—very rich and not afraid to spend their money. Hawk and Little Bird had a cabin near the Black Tooth mountains, a couple of days' ride from Samuel, and they came every spring and fall to visit with Summer, Mark, and the children. Samuel had a surprise for them this time, but now was not the time to think about that.

Samuel introduced the men to Kayla and they all enjoyed a delicious meal, after which Samuel took the men across the street to a vacant but well-tended building. It was right across from the sheriff's office, which pleased both men. Just down the street was the telegraph office. They also liked this. It was a two story, with rooms upstairs for the men to live in. Downstairs, was a very big office and a waiting room.

"This looks just like what we are looking for, Samuel," Gabriel stated.

“Yep, we need room for two big desks. I mean big, not any small furniture for us.” Lou laughed.

“Great! I will meet you in the morning for breakfast at Autumn’s home, just down the block.” He pointed to a very nice one-story ranch house just down from the doctor’s office and surgery. “Eight sharp and we can go to the bank and get the business end done right after. You can hang your shingle.”

The men walked back to the hotel, where Samuel left them to their rooms and he went to his. He would spend the night at the hotel and get the men settled in their office before heading home to the ranch and his sweet Suzy.



THE NEXT MORNING, Wynter awoke to the hum of low voices. At five-years-old, she was very curious. Putting on her fur lined slippers, she crept to the door of her room to peek outside.

“Grandpa,” came a squeal of delight as a small child threw herself at her grandfather. Samuel smiled as he bent down to scoop the child up onto his lap and give her a kiss on the cheek.

“My little Wynter. Gentlemen, this is my granddaughter, Wynter. She is a handful of trouble, but we love her to death.”

“Oh, Grandfather.” She shook her little finger at him. “I have a present for you if you will let me down a moment.” She sounded way too grown up to be five. As Samuel let her down, she scrambled to her room.

Her mother, Autumn, smiled with pride. “You won’t believe what she has for you, Papa.”

Wynter came out of her room, carefully holding a piece of her drawing paper. She handed it to her grandfather with care.

Samuel took the paper with the reverence it deserved. It was a beautiful and perfect likeness of Autumn. Samuel was amazed at the child’s talent.

“Child, this is beautiful. I will treasure it always and put it in a frame for the cabin. That way, Suzy will never miss her daughters.”

“I will draw a picture of Aunt Spring and Aunt Summer, too, Grandfather.”

Samuel reached down as he passed the picture around to the other amazed men and put her back on his lap. “Thank you so much, I would love that very much, and so would your grandmother.”

Just then, the door opened with a shout of “hello”. It was Mark and Summer. Following behind was Storm. Storm was very large for his age. He would grow to be big, just like his father. At five years, he looked to be more like eight or nine. His bright blue eyes missed very little and his mind was always full of questions. He was a very smart boy. He ran to his grandfather’s side, but Wynter sniffed and put up her little nose, not giving up her spot on her grandpa’s lap. Samuel just laughed and reached his other arm around Storm.

“Good morning, Storm, are you ready to come to the ranch for the summer?”

Storm nodded excitedly. “As soon as school is out, Mama said I may come and help out.”

Samuel nodded in agreement. “I will be waiting for you, young man. Maybe we can go camping in the mountains for a couple of days. I will show you how to tell the different animal tracks.”

Wynter was not one to be ignored. “Mama said I can come and help Grandmother, also.”

“That would be lovely; I would like that, too. Now, why don’t you children go and eat your breakfast, so you can start to school?” It was all Samuel and the others could do to keep the smiles from their faces. As the children ate and Summer fed Lilly, Samuel introduced the two men.

“Summer, this is Gabriel and Lou. These are the men who trapped your aunt and uncle into spilling the beans about your

parents. They went to court and got them sentenced to hang for it.”

Summer looked up at the two men who were watching her carefully. “It is very nice to meet you, sirs. I want to thank you for protecting me. This is Lilly and my husband, Mark. We live just down the road a piece. Maybe you could come for supper sometime.”

“We plan on going to Samuel’s this Sunday, for dinner with your family, so we can meet them all, but as you can see, we both eat a good amount,” Lou joked.

Gabriel spoke up next. “We are buying the building across from the sheriff’s office and starting a detective agency. So maybe some time during the week, we would be available.”

Summer clapped her hands. “My husband is a lawyer, so if you need legal advice, he would be your man.” Summer put Lilly in the crib in the corner and went to sit on Mark’s lap. His arm went around her waist protectively. Storm came around to his parents to kiss them goodbye as he and Wynter headed for the door.

Wynter stopped at her father’s side and gave him a kiss. Turning toward Summer, she asked, “Remember, Aunt Summer, you were going to sit for me, so I can draw you for Grandpa’s picture.”

Summer nodded that she remembered. “I will be here after school, Wynter, but I must not stay too long. I have supper to prepare for my family. How about I sit for you a couple of separate times?”

Wynter sighed a long-suffering sigh. “I suppose that would work, Aunt Summer.” She turned to Mark as she was leaving. “She is just like Storm; she likes to fidget.” She shook her head in disgust as she left with Storm for school. As soon as she was out the door, the whole table broke out in laughter.

“She is just adorable,” said Summer. Everyone agreed that, for such a sprite, she was a dynamo.

“She is so small, I worry about her sometimes, but I know

Storm takes care of her, whether she likes it or not," Autumn said quietly.

Jarod came around the table, giving her a peck on the cheek. "Don't worry so, wife; she is safe with Storm. I must get to the clinic, before Willow gets there. She will have a fit at the mess I left last night."

The two girls and three men remaining had coffee and a good chat after that, with Autumn and Summer observing the big men. They moved agilely for their size. They also could see that there was a true friendship between them and Samuel.

"Hawk and Little Bird will be coming for their annual visit in a couple of weeks. I can't wait to surprise Hawk with the two of you. It's been years since we have worked together. You young whippersnappers were green yet when we worked with the government. You have grown into fine young men. Hawk will be proud of you, just as I am. You did us a great favor by taking care of that nasty uncle and aunt of Summer's. We owe you a lot," Samuel said.

"We owe you two for teaching us all you knew, Samuel. You gave us a great head start on our careers. Now, we just want to settle down and work for ourselves." Gabriel was always the quiet one, but when he spoke, it was from the heart.

All three men rose, and the girls both got a shiver of apprehension. These men were dangerous, and it was best to remember that—not to them, but to anyone who crossed them or the ones they cared for.

Summer and Autumn both came around Samuel and gave him a hug goodbye. "Please tell Mama we will see her this Sunday. Steven should be back from Boston by then; maybe he can keep Wynter under control." Stephen was the little girl's other doting grandfather. Autumn sighed good naturedly. Summer smiled as she and Mark turned to leave.

"Summer, these men will be in to see you and Dave about

options for buying the Wilder building and for investing some of their money, if you have a few minutes, in an hour or so.”

“Papa, I always have time for you and your friends. I can see you as soon as I get to the office. Give me an hour, and I will be ready. I will let David know, also.” She waved as both she and Mark left to get ready for work.

Samuel picked up his picture and gave it to Autumn. “Please see if Lori has a picture frame for this before I take it home. I would hate to have it get wrinkled. That child is a delight. I cannot believe her talent.”

Autumn agreed to do as he asked that very morning.