

Laramie and the Mighty Yukon Rescue
by
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(5th of six installments of series entitled: *Laramie on the Lam*)

Chapter 1
Facing the Music

"No fair!"

"Is too fair!"

Laramie Wyoming was frustrated. "Mom! Dad! Can he just jump my man like that?" His dad hollered back from the driver's seat. "Like what, Laramie?"

"He says he can jump my man from any space on the board," Laramie said.

Prentiss Williams, Laramie's foster brother (and at the moment, checkers opponent) laughed and grabbed Laramie's checker.

"Well, he has to be on the square next to the man he's jumping, of course," Dad said, "and he has to jump diagonally."

"What's that mean?"

"Diagonally means sideways. He has to be next to your man and there has to be a spot open on the other side of your man for him to jump to."

Laramie made a fist and pumped his arm in victory. "Yes! Thanks, Dad." He wiggled his fingers. "Gimme my man, Prentiss. Hand him over."

Prentiss groaned, but handed over the checker. "Your rules are different than mine."

"Darned right, they are. They're *real*," Laramie said with a chuckle. "Admit it, you made up those rules, didn't you?"

Prentiss shrugged. "It always worked at school."

"Course it worked, dork. Everybody was scared to death of you. No one in his right mind was gonna get walloped over a checker."

Prentiss gave Laramie his trademark evil grin and rubbed his hands together. "Whatever works! Another game?"

"One more—and no cheating this time. Got that?"

Prentiss scooped up his checkers, then began placing them on the board. "No problem. I don't need to cheat to win."

Laramie reached across the table and gave Prentiss a light shove. "How would *you* know?"

"Very funny, Laramie. Very funny."

Laramie and Prentiss and the rest of the family were somewhere in Montana on their way to Alaska from Michigan. They'd spent the past month camping, swimming, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, and visiting both small and large Michigan towns and campgrounds. They clamored up sand dunes, traipsed through pinewoods, visited the Porcupine Mountains, and marveled at the Tahquamenon Falls. With Laramie's black lab, Maestro, at their side, the two boys spent hours exploring the shoreline of both Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, camped out in Laramie's tent, and last, but not least, fought off the bad guys—again.

The boys finally decided they had to confide in Laramie's parents. After all, three different sets of men had followed them all the way from Wyoming—first to Williamsburg, then Yorktown, and then again in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Only the first two, Lefty and Stinky, were arrested. The other four disappeared.

It wasn't easy to tell Laramie's parents what he and Prentiss had been keeping from them all that time. The family had just finished lunch and Cheyenne was taking her afternoon nap. The boys and Laramie's dad were still sitting at the table and his mom was cleaning up the kitchen.

That all came to a halt the minute Laramie mentioned the trouble. His mother was beyond angry. "What did you just say, Laramie Wyoming?" She turned off the water, dried her hands, and stood over him—arms crossed, foot tapping. Laramie thought if he looked hard enough he might see steam rising from the top of her head or her eyeballs pop out and roll down her face.

"Sorry, Mom, but we didn't want to worry you guys," Laramie said. "Besides, nothing happened."

"Nothing *happened*? Are you nuts, young man?"

Prentiss nodded his head and snorted. "Yep!"

Laramie elbowed him in the ribs. "Not funny, Prentiss." He turned back to his mom and dad. "Listen, I know we should've come to you earlier, but it always happened so fast and besides, Jeremiah showed up every time and, well... saved the day."

His dad finally spoke up. "Who's Jeremiah?"

Laramie glanced at Prentiss, who was trying his best to stay invisible by studying the hair on his left arm as if it held the secret to world peace—or in Prentiss's case, world domination. *No help from him.*

He looked back at his dad and sighed. "That's just it, Dad. We don't know."

Dad opened his mouth, then shut it again, and shifted his weight on the chair the way he always did when he was getting upset.

"Let me get this straight," he said. "After Lefty and Stinky, or whatever their names were, chased you all over Williamsburg, a *second* pair of men tried to get you on the Yorktown Battlefield?" He glared at Laramie until he admitted it with a nod. "Then *another* two men chased you all over the Upper Peninsula?"

Laramie nodded.

"Okay, then." Dad took a breath and glanced at Mom, who was turning redder by the second. "Why don't you sit down, dear? You look a little tired."

"*Tired?* I'm *furiosus*."

Dad nodded. "All right, then, you look a little furious. Have a seat, anyway." He motioned toward the couch and waited until she sat down. Then he turned his attention back to Laramie.

"All that happened, young man, and yet, instead of coming to us—your parents... remember us?—you relied on some mystery super-man, this Jeremiah fellow, to rescue you. Is that about right?"

Laramie thought about that. "Well, not really. I mean, yeah, Jeremiah rescued us, but it's not like we asked him... or her. They just showed up."

"What do you mean 'they'?"

Laramie looked over at Prentiss for help. Still studying that hair. Laramie whacked him on the back of the head. "I could use a little help here, Prentiss."

Prentiss looked up in surprise as if to say, "What? Is someone talking?"

Laramie glared at him. "Tell 'em."

"Tell 'em what? I don't *know* anything," Prentiss said. "I *never* know anything. You know that."

"Let's start with this Jeremiah person," Dad said. "Laramie, you first."

Laramie took a deep breath. "Okay, here goes. Jeremiah first showed up in the Governor's Palace. He was just a kid about our age and he was dressed in old-fashioned clothes. You know, like a lot of people in the Historic Area."

"So he worked there?"

"We thought he did. He said his dad was rich and he worked for him. He talked kinda funny, all formal-like, but we figured he had to pretend he was really livin' back then, you know, 'cause his job was to act like a merchant's kid." Laramie took a breath. "Trouble is, when we tried to find him later to thank him, we couldn't."

"What do you mean you couldn't find him? He'd gone home for the day?"

"No, it was just that nobody knew who we were talking about."

Dad thought about that and looked over at his wife. She still looked furious and Laramie was glad his dad didn't try to bring her into the conversation. No sense poking an angry dog (or a mom) with a stick.

Finally, his dad said, "Okay, that's the first time you met him. Tell me more."

Laramie shrugged. "We never saw that Jeremiah again."

"*That* Jeremiah? What's that supposed to mean? There were others?"

Laramie nodded. "Yep. The second one was at Yorktown. He came up behind me in the woods. Scared the daylights out of me, but then he told me what to do to get Jake and Prentiss away from the bad guys. Knew our names and everything. I did what he told me to do and it turned out just fine. He even walloped 'em on the backs of their legs with his cane. Pretty slick for an old guy."

Mom's mouth hung open. "Old guy? How old?"

Laramie shrugged and looked at Prentiss. "What do you think, Prentiss? About a hundred?" Prentiss had a blank look on his face, the same look—kind of dreamy-like—he got whenever he thought about someone getting beat up. *Thanks for the help, buddy.*

Laramie thought about it for a few seconds. "Well, maybe not that old. At least as old as Grandpa Wyoming, though. Maybe even older."

Dad did some more fidgeting. "How can it be the same Jeremiah?"

"Beats me, Dad, but how many Jeremiahs can there be who just happen to know our names and show up in the nick of time to save us from bad guys?"

Dad nodded. "Good point. Okay, let's hear about this last one."

"Remember Ranger Myer?"

"Yes, I do. Nice woman. Did she know Jeremiah?"

"Nope," Laramie said. "She *was* Jeremiah."