

Klondike, December, 24 1898

Two women were kneeling behind a bar on the floor of a makeshift tent saloon trying to help a wounded man while others fired their guns in the darkness. The mining camp was surrounded by a gang of claim jumper's looting and killing the gold diggers along the Klondike River.

Klondike Marie, pressed her shawl on the open wound to stop the bleeding but knew it wouldn't help. Soupy was dying. Of all the miners she met during her singing career in the camps, he was the best. They had first met on the Canadian side of the Klondike shortly after she ran away from her life as a New York socialite, and a marriage arranged by her father. Her name at that time was Marie Adele. Soupy told her, names and titles didn't matter in the gold county. Salvador Stevens was Soupy's real name. Marie knew the Latin name for Salvador meant savior.

Marie pulled Kate's head down when glass bottles behind the bar shattered from flying bullets. Kate swore running to the other side of the bar with her pistol to get a better shot at the shooter.

At that moment, Marie decided the Canadian side of the Klondike was more civilized than Alaska.

Canada had the Mounties to keep law and order. Here in the lawless camps, it was miners' committees, that consisted of drinking and arguing; mostly, a form of entertainment for the diggers. However, the men were unorganized when it came to protecting the camp. The claim jumpers knew this, especially Mallory, their leader.

Marie felt a tug on her sleeve. It was Soupy looking up at her trying to speak. She bent closer to listen.

"That damn kid shot me, can't reason with him. You're my new partner Marie, take care of my family, especially my little sister.

In my pocket, my claims are inside my Journal, he said coughing. Write what I tell you.”

With a shaky hand and tears in her eyes, Marie did as she was told. Soupy might look like any other miner, but in his other life, he was a lawyer from San Francisco, originally from England. His law firm was Stevens & McLerie’s. Marie knew this after a drinking bout with him in Dawson where they exchanged life stories. After that, he became a mentor helping her to continue singing keeping her away from prostitution. The pay from the diggers throwing nuggets on the stage far exceeded what the whores made.

“My Journal, take it with you give it to my partner Barry McLerie in San Francisco, he coughed harder his face twisted in pain before continuing. His brother Steve is a mining engineer, your new partners. Hidden inside the cover is a stamp. Show these papers along with the stamp to Barry, it proves your partnership. Do what he says, he’ll make you very rich. I love you girl. My horse is out back behind your wagon, Run!” He coughed one last time, Marie held him closer as the blood dribble from his mouth across her arm.

More swearing from Kate brought her back to reality. A man was laughing while Kate yelled at him before his gun went off. Marie stood up with the bar shotgun in her hands. Mallory turned facing both barrels daring her to shoot. At that same moment, he was hit from behind thrown hard to the floor by Soupy’s lead sled dog, Moon.