

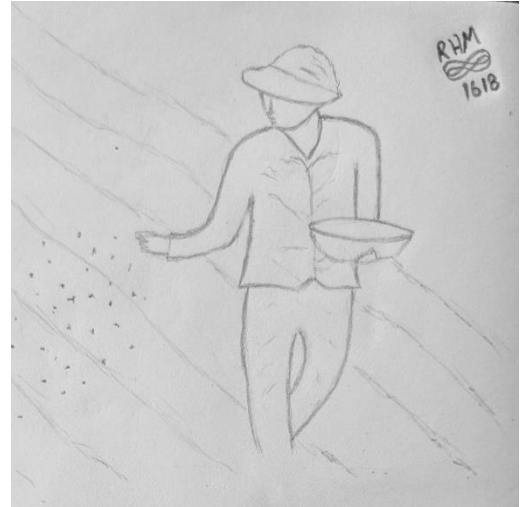
The Possibility of Hope

Sow Possibility

The Griegos

April 1618

San Juan de los Caballero, New Mexico



Juan Jr. looks to the sun which is already making its way down over the horizon. He watches as his father finishes preparing the last trench where they will plant this year's seeds. His father stands up, looks around and then whistles, as he does when he wants to gather everyone together. Juan Jr. has been part of this yearly ritual for many years now, so he knows what's coming.

Getting the ground prepared and planting has become one of his favorite times of the year. With the trees beginning to get green again and the sweet smell of wildflowers in the air, Spring seems to him as if it were a new beginning. The possibility of what will soon be sprouts everywhere.

His family joins him, and as if by previous agreement, position themselves according to their age and position in the household. First is his mother, Maria, who stands closest to his father, then himself, as the oldest sibling, followed by his sister, Sara, and then finally his little brother, Jose. They each hold out their hands as Juan Sr. carefully puts several seeds into each of their outstretched hands.

Juan Jr. has always likened this to taking communion at church. At 20 years old, he has gone to his fair share of church services. While he isn't completely convinced of all the teachings, he sees it as a chance for him and the rest of his family to be with others who have settled in the area. He considers all the times he has prayed for things, particularly as it relates to this very ritual they are going through right now. He is doubtful whether or not the prayers make any difference over the outcome, but continues to go through the motions, since he has known no other way for as long as he can remember. Besides, he knows from experience that if the seed isn't sown, the plant will not grow. He considers that maybe this might also be the case with prayers, so he continues to say them, despite his underlying doubts.

Both his mother and father are devout Catholics, as are the rest of the Spanish settlers in the valley. Religion, perhaps more than anything else binds them together through all the difficulty they undergo. Since just after he was born, his family made its way north from Santa Barbara into the Rio Grande Valley where they now live. He doesn't know all the history first hand, but he has grown up with the stories told time and again. While their main difficulties over the years have had to do primarily with the weather and the

elements, there have also been isolated raids over the years, particularly from the Apaches and the Navajos. By in large their overall relationship with the Pueblo Indians in the area has been positive. Nonetheless, he feels there is a lot of resentment for their presence in what has been tribal lands since long before they got there.

The Catholic priests and missionaries are intent on their efforts to convert the barbaric Indians into God fearing Christians, but even with their insistence, many of the Indians continue to worship their old gods and to value their relationship with this land, as they have since long before the arrival of the Spanish settlers. Of course, much good has come with the knowledge brought, but so too many bad things have come to the Indians lives as well.

There have been rumors of abuse, rape, and pillage, on the part of the Spanish Conquistadors over the years. It's one of those things most people imagine to be true, but prefer not to talk about, particularly since it continues to be a source of friction between the indigenous tribes and the Spanish settlers. The other main problem ravaging the indigenous people have been the diseases the Spanish settlers have brought with them, to which the Indians have no immunity. For the most part, and as a sort of compromise, the Pueblo Indians have set up their settlements in certain strategic areas agreed upon by the Spanish, with the tacit understanding that neither side will bother the other, but this isn't always the case, particularly as it comes to their conversion to Catholicism.

The attacks by the nomadic tribes are entirely different story, and they are a constant threat. But now, Juancito —as he has come to be known—, feels the seeds falling into his hands being given to him by his father and looks out over the fresh late Spring afternoon. It's hard for him to even imagine how any of all these things he has heard about can be true. He takes in a deep breath of fresh air. Though he is physically exhausted from all the work over the last several days, at the same time, he is exhilarated from the satisfaction of seeing the result of their efforts.

While everyone helps out on the communal farms, where much of the food is grown for the entire town, each family also has a plot of land with which they can do with as they please. Most use their individual parcels to grow fresh vegetables, and many have planted orchards around their homes. The abundant water from the river creates an oasis in the otherwise arid environment.

This particular area was first spotted as they made their way north with the Oñate expedition, back in 1598. His family, along with many others, settled here, remaining close together for protection. Since then, others have moved south to Santa Fe, while they have remained. Juancito has heard stories about what their lives were like before migrating, but this is the only reality he has ever known.

When his little brother gets the seeds in his hands, he asks:

“What are we planting this year, father?”

They know that it is common for his father to choose something new to plant in this particular row, which he insists on preparing himself, while most of the rest of the tilling of the soil and planting, he leaves to his children.

“This year I got some peas which they say have grown well in this area, so we’ll see how we do with them.”

They each spread out along the freshly turned soil. They all look to him and when he nods slightly, giving them the signal, they spread the seeds in the small trench before them, bending down afterward, carefully covering the seeds with dirt. They finish their planting ritual with a prayer for abundant crop, and then walk toward their adobe house.

“I thought you would never finish,” Grandma Lorenza says, when they get there, rising out of her chair on the veranda, where she has been watching. “I’ve got a wonderful lamb stew which should be ready, along with some of the last of the corn from last year, potatoes and onions.”

They all go inside and get situated around a table which serves as the principal piece of furniture in their small but comfortable abode. Despite her advanced age, Lorenza helps to bring the food to the table from the stove where it has been keeping warm. Along with help from the everyone else, they have everything set to go in short order.

Juan Sr. stands at the head of the table and waits for everyone to get to their respective places, with each behind his or her chair, as is their custom before eating a meal. He pulls out his chair and sits down, with the rest following suit. Sitting to his right are Maria and Jose. Sara sits directly in front of her father, while Grandma Lorenza and Juancito are to his left.

As they are getting settled Juancito considers how this dynamic has taken place over the years. He can’t ever remember them sitting in any other way and sometimes wonders if the world might stop turning, if just for once they might sit differently. He laughs audibly and shakes his head, thinking of his incredulous thought.

“What’s so funny, son,” Juan Sr. asks him.

“I was just thinking. I don’t think we have ever sat down any other way than the way we are now. It’s always Mama on your right and Grandma Lorenza on your left.”

“What’s wrong, Juancito, you don’t like to sit next to me,” his grandmother asks, poking him in the side as she does and laughing heartily at her own joke.

“No, it’s not that Abuela, it’s just that sometimes we get so used to things, we don’t even ever consider changing them. We get so comfortable doing certain things, in a certain way, that we don’t even think about other possibilities.”

“Like what other possibilities,” Sara asks, curious as to where her brother’s line of thinking is taking him.

“For example, we have always lived here in this valley, and it’s a nice valley. But what if there were an even nicer one somewhere else? What if we are so comfortable here that we don’t even care to look beyond what we already know. What if there are some other places where our crops could grow even better and our animals could graze even better? What if that place is right up the road? What if just because we are too afraid to try something new, we miss it, even if it is right under our noses?”

“Well, I didn’t know you were going to get so philosophical, son, when I asked what you were snickering about, but I suppose it’s a valid point.”

“Many have explored North and they say this is still the best place in the area,” responds his mother. Then after further consideration, she adds, “Besides, out there all alone in the middle of nowhere, how could we protect ourselves from Indian attacks? At least here with others around, we can watch out for each other.”

“I’m not saying where we are isn’t nice, and surely there would be challenges no matter where we decide to live,” Juancito answers, shifting in his seat slightly as he does. “All I’m saying is that things don’t always have to be done in the same way. It seems to me many inventions have come about by changing the typical way we do them.”

From experience, they have learned that whenever it is time to eat, it is Juan Sr. who decides when it’s time to start and when it’s time to finish. It is not uncommon for him to want to talk with his family before saying grace and commencing the meal. Juancito sometimes imagines his father thinks all day about exactly what he will say before meal time and to whom. His father and mother have worked hard to encourage their children and to speak up for themselves. As is the case with all children, they have had varying success, with Jose, the youngest, being the least expressive of the three. On the other hand, both Juancito and Sara have learned to be very vocal, so this interchange of ideas between them isn’t at all out of the ordinary.

“So, what would you propose, son?” comes the inevitable question from his father.

“Well, what if just for today we change things up a little?” Juancito answers, after thinking about it for a moment.

His father looks at him questionably, particularly in light of the importance of this day to all of them, but nods for him to continue with his thought.

“How about if we all move one place to the right, just for today’s dinner?” Then poking back at his grandmother, he adds, “That way I will still be next to you, Abuelita.”

“Sure, why not?” replies his father, willing to go along with what his son suggests.

They all get up and move one place to the right before sitting down again. This puts Grandma Lorenza at the head of the table. Juancito, now faces his father, while Sarah faces her mother, and Jose faces his grandmother from the other end of the table.

Though it is a small change, it feels different for all of them. Juancito feels proud of himself for having made the suggestion, and everyone else seems to enjoy the slight

adjustment. Juan Sr. asks Jose to say grace, which he does. After finishing, they serve themselves and begin eating.

During the course of the meal, his father asks Juancito how he came up with the idea of switching places, to which he responds that he has been thinking about it since the last church service they attended. The main thrust of the sermon was that we can often see things in a different light if we change our perspective. He further explains that normally, his father, who was at the head of the table, is the one who directs the conversation. By switching one place to the right, now they can give their grandmother that place of honor, and perhaps give her a chance to talk about whatever she has on her mind.

His father agrees to this additional suggestion, and for most of the meal his grandmother talks about the old days, but primarily about the trip bringing them north, from Zacatecas, just after Juancito was born. She relates how their resolve and endurance were tested to their limits and recalls how many people didn't make it to the end of the journey for a variety of different reasons perishing along the way.

They finish eating and clear the table. Juan Sr. grabs a bottle of wine he has been saving for the occasion and places it in the middle of table. At first, several of them are unsure of where to sit. He indicates they should stay in the same positions they were for the meal, with Grandma Lorenza still at the head of the table. He fills all of their glasses with wine and Sara, who is inquisitive by nature, asks her grandmother about her life before coming to New Spain.

Lorenza has aged well, though no one knows her exact age, because she is always evasive whenever the subject is brought up. They all imagine her to be in her early to mid-70's, though the reality is that she is close to her 82nd birthday. She has some short-term memory lapse, and is often looking for things "she just had in her hand," but her long-term memory is surprisingly good. She is able to remember minute details about many things which happened ages ago.

The older woman considers her granddaughter's question and is about to give the standard response as to her time living in Spain, since as long as she can remember, but she looks closely at each of them before doing so. Juancito, though they call him "Little Juan" and he still has some boyish features, has grown strong and broad in the shoulders with his work. He is already taller and stockier than his father. Sara has become a beautiful, mature young lady and Jose is starting to become surer of himself little by little, as he gets older.

Lorenza looks at Juan Sr. as she prepares to tell a story they will not soon forget. She knows from experience that her son might either be relieved for them knowing what she is about to tell them, or very angry for having brought it up.

"I think that before I continue, I need some wine," Grandma Lorenza says.

They are all surprised as she grabs her glass, drinks the entire amount in one gulp, reaches for the bottle in front of Juan Sr., and then refills her glass again before placing the bottle

down in front of her. They all watch her in amazement. They have seen their grandmother drink wine before, but have never seen her down an entire glass at one time. They all edge forward in their chairs ever so slightly in anticipation, feeling something important is about to happen, save for Juan Sr., who moves back slightly in his chair, correctly imagining, in part, what is about to come.

Grandma Lorenza answers Sara's question by telling them a tale taking them back to Spain, to before the time when they crossed over the ocean to New Spain, and to a time about which none of them have any first-hand knowledge. Juan Sr. has an idea about what his mother is going to say, but not even he knows the full extent of what she is about to reveal.

"If you will recall, your Uncle Lucas, was the first one to come over to New Spain. Your Grandfather Pedro and I came later, along with your father," she says, as she looks at each of her three grandchildren. "What you may not know is all the particular circumstances regarding our travel."

She goes on to carefully explain that their "Uncle" Lucas is actually Juan's biological father, and that she and her husband are his aunt and uncle. When Lucas left for the new land, they took on the responsibility of caring for young Juan, who was still very small at the time. They assured Lucas, they would join him on his quest as soon as possible, after he got settled in the new land. She explains to them their trouble leaving Spain, with Juan as their nephew, as well as how obtained a document indicating he was their son. She then briefly tells them about the voyage itself. Both Juan Sr. and Maria are fully aware of all she is saying, so they primarily watch for their children's reactions to what their grandmother is telling them.

They all take it all in stride, with no adverse reactions. Juancito comments about his father's physical similarity to their Uncle Lucas, who died several years earlier, and Sara nods slightly as she considers what her grandmother is telling them. Surprisingly, Jose, who is normally the quietest of the group, is the only one who asks anything. He is curious to know why Grandma Lorenza is telling this to them now.

Without answering her grandson directly, Lorenza looks at Juan Sr. and asks him whether she should explain what happened when he found out about his true relationship with Lucas, or if her son prefers to tell the story. He decides he should be the one to express how he felt.

Juan Sr. leans forward and begins to convey the anger he felt toward Lucas when he first found out what happened. Without going into every single detail, he lets them know he was very disappointed in everybody for not telling him the truth from the beginning. He then goes on to explain how he eventually came to forgive Lucas. This story is new to his children.

He goes on to explain how the only man he has ever considered to be his father, their Grandfather Pedro, urged him to forgive Lucas and accept him into his life despite what

happened. After he finishes his story, they are all silent momentarily as they take in all they've learned.

They all know that shortly after Juan Sr. and Maria went north with Juancito and Lucas, their grandfather died, so his helping to mend the relationship between his son and Lucas is particularly significant in the big scope of things. Finally, it is Sara who breaks the silence:

"But your glad you finally forgave him, right father?"

He answers that, yes, he is glad they were able to make amends and further explains how their relationship developed after what happened.

After he is done talking, Grandma Lorenza finishes what is left in her glass, and to the surprise once again of everyone, who have never seen her serve herself wine before in this way, fills her glass once again and sets it down in front of her deliberately, lifting her gaze and saying, "There's more you should know."

Now it is Juan Sr. and Maria who look questioningly toward Lorenza who takes another drink of her wine, now sipping it, rather than downing it completely.

"I believe it is time that you know about your mother, Juan, I don't believe we've ever given you too many details about her," she says to her son. She is obviously somewhat ashamed at her confession, looking down at her hands, before raising her gaze once again to meet his.

Juan Sr. scratches his head, doing his best to recall what he does know about her, which isn't much. "From what I remember, she died young, shortly before Lucas came to the new land, but I can't recall how she died, I think maybe from some kind of sickness that took many others as well at the time?"

"Yes, that is right, Juan, and that is what we led you to believe." Lorenza takes another sip of her wine, fueling herself with courage for what she is about to tell her son for the first time. "I really don't know how to soften this, but the truth of the matter is that she was burned at the stake, as a heretic, and as a witch."

They are all flabbergasted, each looking at Grandma Lorenza, wondering if at any moment she might smile and say it's all a joke, but she remains serious. Juan looks confused, and then angry.

"I'm sorry, son, to say we misled you regarding your mother, and how she died."

Jose asks his grandmother once again, why she is telling all of them this now, after so many years. She explains to them she is not getting any younger and that secrets tend to fester, like a wound in a dark place with no air. Once they get out in the air, they tend to go away or be cured.

"Though I have no reason to believe anyone would ever tell any of you this, I do believe it is important for all of you to know the truth about who she was, and what she stood for."

Lorenza looks around the table. She grabs her son's hand, who is to her right and Juancito's hand, who is to her left. The rest of them spontaneously do the same, so they are all holding hands around the table, as she continues to speak. "I have thought many times about telling all of this, but could never really find the right time or place to do it. I suppose Juancito's idea of changing things up, and moving me to the head of the table gave me the courage and the opportunity to talk to you about this difficult subject. While I hope to live much longer, the fact is that I don't know how much longer. We all live by the grace of God, so we never know how much time any of us have left."

"Could you tell us more about our blood grandmother?" Sara is particularly interested in hearing more about her.

"Yes, I will tell you all that you want to know, but first I want to let you know that even though I am not your blood mother," she says glancing at Juan, now with tears welling up in her eyes, "or your blood grandmother," she says looking at those who have known her to be so their entire lives, "I do feel very much a part of you, and—"

Tears begin streaming down her cheeks now and she finds it difficult to continue talking. She feels an intense emotion build up inside of her. It's a combination of fear and anxiety, which springs forth from within her. When they see their grandmother crying, the rest too become tearful. They get up from where they are sitting and stand around her, hugging her from all sides to show how much she means to them.

"It's just, that—," she wipes the tears from her cheek and then continues, "I don't know what I would do without all of you. You are my life and I can't tell you how terrible I feel about not having told all of you this before. Ever since Sara was born, there has been a nagging feeling, something deep in my being telling me I should tell you the truth, but I could never find the right time, or the courage to do so."

She looks at all of them, as they surround her, and thanks them for being so caring about her, then urges them to sit down again, which they do. Now, looking directly at her granddaughter, she says:

"Sara, you have no idea of how much you remind me of her. I first met Lucas' wife when she was about your age, before they got married. While her hair was darker than yours and her facial features were a bit different, there is something in your mannerisms, and in the way that you carry yourself which is very similar."

Lorenza embarks on a story which speaks of her brother Lucas' love for this fascinating woman by the name of, Maria Isabel de Garcia, who was two years his senior. Ever since he first saw her, he told her that one day he was going to make her his wife. At first, she thought he was kidding and shrugged it off as a boyhood crush. Good to his word, and when he had established himself in his business, he asked for her hand in marriage and she accepted. A little more than a year after they were wed, Juan was born. It was around this time when she began having several women over for coffee in the afternoon once or twice a week.

One of the women attending the meetings was shunned by their group for being obnoxious and nosy, so they stopped inviting her. Enraged by their actions, she convinced her husband to talk to the authorities, alleging the meetings were subversive, and had to do with witchcraft.

Lorenza had gone to some of the meetings, and they were nothing of the sort, rather it was a support group, where the women who attended provided a network they could depend on in the time of need. Some of the women had been battered physically by their husbands, while others had been emotionally beaten by life in general. Some had even considered taking their own lives due to their hardship.

The woman who was banned from the group was ousted because she was talking to others about certain things which were meant to be private. Regardless of the good the group was doing for many of the women who attended, she continued her campaign to destroy your grandmother, labeling her as sorceress, as a witch, and as a heretic. The truth of the matter is that Maria Isabel was the most devout Catholic of them all, using many of the anecdotes she read from the bible to try and help those who came to her weekly meetings.

She continues her story explaining how one day the authorities came and hauled Maria Isabel away. They never saw her again until she was tried, convicted and burned at the stake in a public spectacle, all in the matter of a very short period of time.

After Lorenza finishes speaking, they are all quiet momentarily, each of them soaking in the information they've just received about someone they previously knew nothing about. With each of them still deep in thought, Lorenza continues:

"Sometimes there never seems the right time to do certain things, but if there is one thing I have learned in life, now is the only time we really ever have. I remember living through this very terrible time with my sister-in-law and brother. At the time, it seemed like it enveloped our existence. No matter where we turned, the harsh reality of what happened to her was a constant reminder of a tarnished spot on our family."

"Was this the reason why you decided to leave Spain?" Sara asks, moving forward in her seat, anxious to know more.

"In great part, yes, it was the reason. Everything that happened was particularly difficult on Lucas. Afterward, no one wanted to hire him for fear of being associated with his wife, and most of his friends turned their backs on him as well. It was a very tough time for my brother and for our entire family. Though we were affected, not nearly to the extent that it affected him. This is why since the time of this incident, Juan," she says looking at him, "you have been our son, and though you are not my natural born son, you are the best son I could ever hope for."

Juan Sr. is teary eyed, as are others at the table, hearing their grandmother express her love for her son, while at the same time revealing a secret which shocks them and they are still processing.

“I will never think of you as anything other than my mother,” he says to his mother, taking her hands in his. “I now more fully understand the circumstances, and probably would have done exactly the same thing you and my father did.”

He becomes silent, choked up with emotion, taking several moments before regaining his voice. “Mother, you more than anyone else know how hurt I was when I originally found out that Lucas was my father.”

Lorenza remembers very well how anguished Juan was with the discovery, recalling in her mind’s eye each detail of how he reacted, and what happened afterward. She closes her eyes slightly and assents that she does indeed remember well how he reacted.

“Though at the time I thought it was the end of the world. As you have all just learned,” he continues, now addressing his children, “I began talking to my father again just before we moved North, in fact, it was the same day you were born, son,” he says addressing Juancito, “and I am so glad that I did. Lucas may not have been an angel, but the little devil inside him sure kept us all guessing about what he was going to do next.” He smiles with the memory and continues. “He was quite a character, and in time, I came to know him better and I feel very fortunate for having been able to do so. If it would have been up to me, I would have never have talked to him again, and that would have been a shame. For this I have to thank my father, Pedro.” With a laugh he says, “The best part is that I ended up with two ‘fathers’ in the bargain after it was all was said and done.”

“In great part, this is why I am telling all of you this right now.” Lorenza says when her son is done talking. She takes a deep breath and sits up as straight as she possibly can. “Be proud of who you are, no matter what else happens in life. We all have secrets. Some are insignificant, while others can be pretty dark, like the one I’ve just told you about.”

Additional weight and significance seem to be given with Lorenza sitting at the head of the table. Each of them remembers different things about her, but with one overriding characteristic. She has always believed in hope for a better tomorrow. Whenever any of them has come to her with some kind of difficulty, she has always been willing to listen, and she generally does so without interrupting them. When they finish telling her what they have had on their mind, she typically moves forward, puts her hand on their shoulder and tells them that today will be forgotten when the sun rises tomorrow, bringing hope for a better day.

True to form, she says, “As I was watching all of you work out in the fields today, I thought about the hope that each new seed that we plant brings. Sometimes it works out as we plan it, others it does not. But if we don’t first plant the seed, nothing else will come to be.”

Each of them is off in their own world. Juan Sr. is thinking about what he has just found out about his birth mother. Juancito is thinking of the seeds they just sowed for this year’s crop. Sara is wondering about her similarities with her newly found grandmother. José is thinking about his own feeling of self-doubt which often predominate his thoughts,

while Maria is concerned about how her husband will react about finding out that his birth mother was burned at the stake as a witch.

“Difficulties will come, and they will go,” Grandma Lorenza says after a brief pause. “That’s part of life and there’s nothing we can do about it. I know you always think I’m crazy to say that today will be erased by the hope of tomorrow, but that’s the only truth we have in life. Once we lose hope, we lose everything. Even during the worst of times with Maria Isabel, we never lost hope.

“Hope is what drove Lucas to come to this new land so many years ago that now, it seems but a distant dream. Hope is what gave my husband, Pedro, and I the courage to follow him here with you, son,” she says, looking at Juan Sr., knowing she probably should have told him long ago about what she just revealed. Nevertheless, it never seemed as important as it does right now in this moment. She feels relieved, somehow knowing this conversation is more significant for her grandchildren, than even for her son or her daughter-in-law.

“You will get over this, Juan,” Lorenza tells her son, her voice firm and strong, “and you will become a better person for it once you realize all the implications.” Then turning to her grandchildren, she adds, “For each of you, I want nothing more for you to remember than that no matter how dark things may sometimes seem in life, as long as you keep planting good seeds, there is always hope for a better tomorrow.”

Destroy Hope

The McKees

August 1618

County Antrim, Ireland

Samuel comes over the top of the hill and is relieved to see his secret hiding place seems to be undisturbed. He rides closer to the entrance which is cleverly disguised in the hillside. He whistles a unique set of tones, sounding very much like a local bird, and in short order, a similar whistle comes in response. He looks carefully around him. Though he made sure no one followed him, he realizes anyone could be hiding in the bushes or behind a tree, so he slowly checks the entire area.

This is an exercise he has taught his family for years. He has warned them never to go into this safe place without first making sure there are no curious onlookers lurking in the shadows. When he is satisfied no one is around, he ties his horse in the shade of a tree on the other side of the creek, and then walks briskly toward the entrance, jumping over the creek on the way. He moves a lever he designed to move a large rock ever so slightly, allowing him just enough room to gain entrance through a small crack leading into a natural cave which Samuel discovered years ago with his siblings. From the outside there appears to be no access, but once inside, it opens up into a fairly large space, which he has accommodated over the years for just this purpose.

Inside he greets his wife and his children who fortunately are all safe and sound. He already knows the English have identified him as one of the main agitators creating guerrilla warfare, making life difficult for them and the Scottish settlers who have moved into the area to populate the Ulster Plantation over the last several years. While most in the area have already succumbed to the King of England's wishes, Samuel along with several others prefer to hold onto their Gaelic ways which have been woven into their spirit over centuries in this same area.

Samuel has been one of the most vocal in their opposition of England converting the Irish to their way of life, particularly as it relates to their religious faith. In addition, he sees the offer being made as little more than a license to steal lands which have belonged to their forefathers since as long as anyone can remember. His wife, Lydia, often tells him that he is just looking for trouble, and that they will all have to pay for his indiscretions. Though she's probably right, he can't help but fight for what he believes is rightfully theirs.

By Gaelic law, they are entitled to farm the land they inhabit. In truth, the land Samuel and his family occupy has been in their family for a relatively short time. It came as a result of his father, Captain Hugh McKee's heroism some 20 years ago. Hugh O'Neill, one of the area's most powerful clansman, was good to his word to Captain McKee's family,

giving them this plot of land after he died in the Battle of Yellow Ford, killing O'Neill's arch enemy in the process.

Nevertheless, ever since O'Neill fled the country years ago, all true hope of the Irish repelling the English seems to be futile as they seem to be making their way slowly into every nook and cranny of Ireland. In protest, Samuel, along with several others, dedicate their free time in making life miserable for the new settlers. But he also knows it is just a matter of time until all of them are ousted from their lands. Even before Hugh O'Neill left the country, most of the wealthy man's holdings had already been transferred to the Crown. As it is, it's a minor miracle Samuel and his family has been able to hold onto their homes and land for as long as they have.

He asks his wife about the details regarding how they got out of their house and to the cave. She explains that from early that morning they had seen the bonfires in the distance and knew they had to get to their safe place. They gathered their things and made their way to the cave, making sure no one saw them, just as Samuel had instructed them. They had been there since.

Samuel brings all of them together in a group hug. He asks each of them how they feel. As is typical, their youngest son, William, is the one who speaks first. "You would have been proud of us Daddy, we didn't make a sound, and we when we heard them riding around outside later on, hooping and a hollerin', we didn't almost even breathe."

Samuel smiles at his son and musses up his hair. Though he is only eight, so far, he has by far been the most precocious of his three children. Samuel Jr., the oldest at twelve, is more reserved, given more to contemplation than expression. He says nothing, instead simply shrugs his shoulders and nods. His daughter, Ruth, who is just a year younger than her older brother, is very observant and not much gets passed her. Instead of answering, she asks, "Daddy, there's blood on your shirt, are you hurt?"

He looks down to his shirt and sees where it is bloodied. "No sweetheart, I'm fine. I was trying to help John O' Reilly, who took a beating from the English when they got a hold of him. I got there after they had already gone. I'm not sure if he's going to make it. He got beat up pretty bad."

Samuel looks at his wife, Lydia. Though she is obviously shaken, her eyes show resolve and determination. After giving him a big hug and a kiss, as their children squeeze in where they can, she asks him, "What do you want us to do, Samuel?"

"Stay here for a while until I make sure the coast is clear." His voice is clear and confident, assuring them that everything will work itself out.

Samuel holds them all tightly one last time, and then slips out of the cave, looking around, as he usually does. After making his way back to his horse, he works his way slowly up the creek. He rises up around the bend, and as he approaches their home, the smell of burning wood fills his nostrils. As he expected, he sees their crops have been

ruined and their home has been burned. All that remains is the stone fireplace in the middle of the structure.

He looks out over the path of destruction, and while he has no reason to expect any less based on the latest pronouncements received from the Crown, before today he had a ray of hope that maybe they were just idle threats. The English made clear the consequences for those involved in attacking the new settlements. In the center of his being, Samuel feels his rage gradually building up inside him before it finally makes its way out in a scream of anguish. He swears that if it's the last thing he does he will make the bastards pay for what they have done.

The house can be rebuilt in the same place or someplace else, but the prospect of not ever being able to live here again and the humiliation of having their lands taken from them is more painful. Knowing there is nothing else he can do in the moment to save anything that hasn't already be destroyed, he takes the road leading to homes of his siblings and his mother to make sure they are safe.

He thinks back to how the day started. Since the previous evening, he was in a neighboring county, and as usual, causing trouble. They heard a caravan of several families was on its way to one of the newer settlements, so Samuel and his cohorts decided to give them a message. Just as the sun began to disappear over the horizon, they swooped in, threatening them and taking some of their supplies. Then they disappeared into the woods, only to come back and do it again a short time later.

After they were done with their little game, they got a couple of hours of sleep and then began to make their way home, still in the dark of the night. As daylight broke, they saw the first bonfires. From as long as Samuel can remember, this has been their way of communicating with each other. He knew by the size of the bonfires and their locations, that this message was clear: the English were coming. King James' proclamation said people either had to agree to their terms or risk having their properties destroyed to make way for others loyal to the Crown.

They all knew this day would likely come, they just didn't know when. By the time Samuel and his group got to John O' Reilly's place, they knew this was the day they had been dreading. His was the first of many homes they saw burned to the ground, as crops and everything else was destroyed in the process. Unfortunately, the English got to O'Reilly before he could escape and they made a spectacle of the ordeal. As they carried out their orders, they tied John to a post, making him and his family watch as they obliterated everything in sight. Afterward, they gave him a sound beating while he was still tied, stopping only when his wife was able to free herself from their grasp and put herself between her husband and the blows. Fortunately, the English hadn't caused any physical harm to John's family, but from the look in their eyes, Samuel was sure the emotional scars of what they had witnessed would last for quite some time.

John was actually going to join Samuel and the others on their overnight expedition, but at the end didn't go because he wasn't feeling well. Samuel consoled John's wife as

much as he could. She was grief stricken. Even in her state, she had the wherewithal to warn Samuel that they were looking for him and the others as well. She said the English had named each of those in Samuel's small group, along with several others they all knew, saying they were next on the list. She feared for their safety especially after seeing what they did to her husband.

Despite Samuel's desire to go and make sure his own family was safe, he knew that if he came across the English soldiers, he would put not only his life at risk, but also the lives of the others with him. Besides, he was sure his wife would have seen the bonfires and would have taken appropriate action.

Instead, together and from a distance Samuel and his group moved cautiously, following the wake of destruction the English created, watching from afar. They knew they were vastly outnumbered in men and weapons. There was no way of to stop them from carrying out their orders.

The soldiers arrived to Samuel's property early in the afternoon. From a distant hilltop, Samuel watched as they decimated everything he had built. Watching it was one of the most difficult things he had ever had to experience, but he had no choice. He could only watch, as he had already done with others in his group, as they watched their places being torched in a similar fashion. Samuel knew today was a lost cause but that they would be back another day to avenge the atrocities they witnessed.

Judging by the amount of smoke and where it was coming from at the time, Samuel imagines the homes of his brothers and sister have also been destroyed. As he comes up over the rise, the worst of his fears are confirmed. The English laid waste to their entire property, burning every structure and uprooting the crops, as well as obliterating anything else in their path.

His mother sees Samuel as he becomes visible and begins walking toward him. When they reach each other, he dismounts, takes her in his arms, and says, "I'm sorry momma, I know this is all my fault. I never thought they would make all of you suffer the consequences for what I've been doing."

His mother admonishes him, telling him they had all warned him time and again this was exactly what was going to happen, but he had refused to listen. When the English came, they were ordered out of their houses, and then instructed to watch as they carried out their mission. Samuel asks her how the rest of the community has fared.

Similar to their own case, the homes of those known to be actively involved in the raids, along with those of their close family members, have been devastated. On the other hand, those who had agreed to the Crown's imposition were spared.

Before going back to get his family, Samuel asks his two brothers, his sister, and his mother to all come together with him. Their respective spouses, as well as his nephews

and nieces, are on the periphery. He puts himself in the middle, and as he speaks, he turns slowly, talking to each of them in turn:

“I know this all happened because of me and because of what I’ve been doing. Right now, I’m not sure how I will do it, but somehow, I will make it all up to you. I’m so very sorry everything came to this, but I must follow my heart and it tells me to oppose the English at all cost. We can’t just let them do as they please.”

Though his brothers John and Andrew are both older, as is his sister Sarah, they all know that Samuel has been the most proactive in their being able to stay on the property as long as they have. They rest have been content to farm the land given to them and to raise their families the best they can. Meanwhile, Samuel has done that, and much more.

From the first time the English came, giving them notice they would need to vacate and move to one of the nearby Plantations, it was Samuel who stood up and said they had no reason to leave, and that they should fight for their rights.

It was Samuel who went to the secret meetings held late at night to upset the English and do their best to drive them out of the lands which had been theirs for hundreds of years. Had it not been for his efforts, they would have had to leave long ago. Nevertheless, the weight of what has happened to his entire family weighs now heavily on his shoulders.

They all realize this and instead of blaming him for what has happened, they simply acknowledge he has done the best he can. It was inevitable they would ultimately have to leave. For several outcast rebels in the area to hold off the English for as long as they have is a lot, so they accept their fate. Yet they are concerned about what will now happen to them.

They instinctively turn to Samuel for direction, and he doesn’t disappoint them. He has already been thinking of families in the area who might be willing to help them. After sharing his thoughts with them, he rides back to where he left his wife and children.

He goes through the same routine, making sure no one sees him enter their hideaway. As he is about to push the lever and move the rock, he is suddenly overcome with the emotion of the entire day. He begins weeping. Lydia hears him and goes to the opening, activating the lever and bringing him inside.

Each of Samuel’s children look at him. None of them can remember ever having seen him cry as he is now doing. They instinctively all go to him to console him in his anguish. His chest becomes tight and his sobs are short and gasping, as if he is trying to get more air into his lungs. After several minutes pass, he is finally able to get a hold of his emotions. Sobs continue to come forth, now and again, as he tells them what has happened to their family and to others in the county.

Samuel decides it would be best for them to stay where they are for the rest of the night. They are equipped to be able to stay in the cave for several days if necessary. While it isn’t absolutely necessary, he chooses to take this time to be close to his family, which is most important to him.

His mood swings over the next several hours come in waves which sweep over him. After his initial grief, he becomes calm and is grateful, considering it a blessing that no one was killed, and knowing fortunately they are all healthy. After their kids go to sleep, he is alone talking with Lydia. His emotions again turn to rage, feeling helpless at having been unable to do anything to stop the English soldiers from destroying everything they have worked so hard to build. Finally, his anger turns once again to grief, and tears once again flow from his eyes. His wife comforts him, urging him to hold on to his faith in God, knowing everything will resolve itself, one way or another.

Samuel's faith has been strong, and it is one of the biggest reasons he and others have opposed the English. Besides wanting the Irish to live in their pagan ways, they also are adamant about the Irish adopting the Church of England, which to them is paramount to sacrilege. Lydia cites several biblical stories to Samuel, doing her best to lift his spirits and give him hope. Though he understands her intent and appreciates what she is trying to do, when she is finished, he simply replies:

"I'm sorry, Lydia, but right now, I don't know what to think. I know God must exist, but right now he doesn't seem to be paying any attention to us, and if He is, how could He possibly let this happen?"

The Griegos ~ 1618

| Generation | Name | Sunrise ~ Sunset | Spouse | Sunrise ~ Sunset | Children |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| o | Samuel | (1518 ~ 1564) | Virginia de la Vega | (1520 ~ 1584) | Lorenza, Carlos, Lucas |
| I | Lucas / Lorenza | (1540 ~ 1614) | Maria Isabel de Garcia | (1542 ~ 1566) | Juan |
| II | Juan | (1564 ~) | Maria Romero | (1576 ~) | Juan II, Sara, Jose |
| III | Juan II | (1598 ~) | | | |

The McKees ~ 1618

| Generation | Name | | Spouse | | Children |
|------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| I | Hugh | (1560 ~ 1598) | Mary MacDonnell | (1564 ~) | John, Sarah, Andrew, Samuel |
| II | Samuel | (1588 ~) | Lydia McVie | (1590 ~) | Samuel II, Ruth, William |
| III | William | (1610 ~) | | | |