Jackie, the Survivor

I, Jackie Stoker, was holding Gracie, my three month old baby sister in my Mamma’s old rocking chair. It creaked as it went back and forth. Mamma was cooking supper while Poppa and Samuel were in the fields. Sam is my older brother. He is very nice to me for a fifteen year-old man.

Junior ran up to me and gave me a big fat doggy kiss on the cheek.

“Momma, may I go outside with Gracie?” I asked.

“Yes.” She replied. “But go harvest the crops before playtime.”

“Yes Momma.” I replied. I ran outside and gathered the crops. I ran inside and dropped them in a bowl with warm water running over them. It was as if it were a miniature waterfall or hot springs as the steam rises up, up, up.

I gently picked up Gracie then I steadily walked back outside into the trees, being careful to support her nearly bald head. I set her down on a stool made of oak wood. I got my paintbrush made of oak and animal hairs.

I strolled over to a nearby bush carrying my cup-like piece of metal. The berries clanked against the bottom of the metal when I dropped them in. I smashed them up to make paint. Today I was going to paint our single horse, Candy.

I heard the heavy footsteps of Poppa and Sam comi’n home from the fields. I ran out and greeted them when Momma called me in to do my chores before supper. I had to milk the cows, Betsy, Sailor, Charles, and my favorite, Natalie. I also had to harvest the potatoes and feed Gracie.

Before I went into the barn, I took Gracie inside. Then I went into the barn and started on Sailor. “I love you guys.” I said.

“Moo Moo.” They replied.

I liked to talk to them while I worked… I moved on to Natalie. Natalie was special. There was just something about her… I don’t know… While I dozed off thinking about Natalie, the milk pail had overflowed.

“Oh dear!” I screeched. I cleaned up the mess and moved on to Betsy. It took me another seven minutes to milk Charles.

Momma called me in.

“Jackie honey, will you go help Mary Beth and Rose with the mid-day chores?”

“I’d be happy to! See you in an hour!” It seemed like a long mile as I hurried down the country road towards the neighbor’s cabin carrying two metal pails for milking and grain.

As I returned, I was about to walk over to the potato patch to harvest the potatoes, when poppa called me over to the opposite side of the cabin. He told me the terrible news. There was a storm coming!

“But we’ve only been here two years!”

“I know, bad timing. Now go gather your things.” He said that it might pass but we should be ready and pack just in case.

I walked out of the cabin immediately. I got a little satchel that I kept in the trees. I packed my paintbrush and my night gown. I packed my paint cup and my ragdoll. That just about filled up my satchel.

Still carrying it, I walked over to Sam. I told him about the storm.

“I know” He said. “Poppa told me. Have you packed your things yet?”

“Yes.” I replied. The rain started.

“C’mon. Let’s get inside.” Sam took my hand and led me inside the cabin.

I was going to turn eight in three months. I wanted to spend it here in Newbury in our one room cabin that Poppa and the neighbors built two years ago when we arrived in 1635. I wanted to spend it with the cows, chickens, and our one horse, Candy. I looked up at him. “I reckon we won’t be here for my birthday, right Sam?” I asked.

“You never do really know.” Sam replied. “Don’t worry ‘bout it.”

“Yeah, okay.” I was actually really worried.

Everything was grey and black. I could see my paintings dripping off the tree bark. Since Poppa and Sam didn’t hunt down any deer today, Momma and I cooked up the eggs that I collected from the chickens, corn, and potato strips. I had to feed Gracie her dinner, mashed up carrots and potato strips.

After supper, it was bedtime. It had already been a week, and the storm had not calmed down.

The next day, we woke up and the rain had stopped. There were a few flashes of lightning and roars of thunder here and there, but it was clearing up. Momma was up cooking breakfast. Ham and leftover eggs. Scrumptious!

“Good morrow Mamma.”

“Good morrow Jackie.” She replied.

“Is the storm over?” I blurted.

“I believe there is one more day, ask Poppa.” She answered.

I caught up with Poppa just in time. I asked him. He scratched his goatee.

“The worst is over. Another day of bad weather ahead.”

“Yes Poppa.” I replied. I went to milk the cows. When I entered the barn, Natalie was gone! Her stall door was open! I called to Junior. I always felt better with Junior around. He didn’t come! I called him again. He always came when I called him, but he didn’t! I got worried. I darted out of the barn, ignoring the fact that Poppa might get angry if I don’t milk the cows, into the cabin and asked Momma if she had seen Junior. No luck. I had sweat dripping from my face, and not because of running.

Poppa saw me running through the field and into the road. He started to run after me.

“JACKIE!” He called.

I almost slipped on a patch of mud. Poppa arrived just in time to catch me.

“Young lady?” He asked in his gruff voice. He was fuming. ‘’What do you think you’re doing?”

I was panting. “Junior…” I managed to get a few words out. “Lost…catching breath.”

Somehow, Poppa understood.

‘’Okay.’’ Poppa said. ‘’Let’s go find him.’’ There was a big sigh and a big surprise. I stared at him in amazement. I quickly turned away. Poppa had never really come around to Junior.

We had been out searching for over an hour, when it started to rain. “Okay” Poppa hollered. “We’re missing supper.” Multiple tears rolled down my cheek. “Don’t cry, we shall keep searching tomorrow.”

“Yes Poppa.” I answered. I wiped my tears away. We jogged into the cabin. Momma was feeding Gracie her supper at the table. Sam was lying on the chair in the corner sleeping. Momma’s sparkling blue eyes were now red. Momma led Poppa over to the oak table. They sat down and started whispering. Momma started to cry. Her tears plopped on the oak table. Drip drop, drip drop. Poppa’s face fell into his hands. Sam sleeping on the chair, Momma crying, whispering, I knew something was wrong.

“Momma, Poppa, is everything all right?”

“Sit down dear.”

I sat down on a matching oak stool. I figured what’s coming is not going to be good.

“Sam… Sam is…” Momma attempted to say but started crying. Poppa finished for her.

“Sam is sick with a rare disease.” His voice sounded weak, which is unusual.

How did I miss that? I asked myself.

I was speechless. I didn’t know that I was crying until my tears flooded my filthy, now wet apron one after the other.

The dirt kicked up behind me as I Stomped along the dusty dirt path. The pond appeared bigger and bigger as I got closer and closer. Ker plunk! Sand trailed several seconds behind the heavy gray rock. As all of the other rocks were adhered to the soil, I picked up my diary.

Dear Diary, Sept. 14, 1637

Matt is sick with some sort of disease! I am sitting down at the pond miserably, just hoping. Though I know that something good will come out of this catastrophe. Oh lord, Please help me! Throwing rocks into the pond always makes me feel better.

Hugs and kisses,

Jackie.S.

A tear drop fell to the parchment. Two more followed. My tears. They had already disappeared into my diary. Thinking about Matt made me sad. It all happened so suddenly. I shut the brown leather cover and trotted gloomily back to the cabin after a few more splashes and Ker plunks, listening to my name being called repeatedly for chores.

The days passed by slowly, TJ on the chair motionless, Momma and Poppa taking off work to care for him. No sign of Natalie or junior, though we have searched many times. We needed a miracle. Nothing was getting better. If anything was changing, it was only getting worse.

Poppa had to stop and pick up herbs at the apothecary for Sam’s medicine. He marched out of the barn with a hand on Candy’s silky white back. He saddled her up, swung a leg over, waved goodbye and set off.

Just then, I heard a bark. I followed my instincts and it led me to another cabin hidden behind the trees. As far as I knew, we didn’t have any neighbors for at least a mile down. I heard a yelp like someone was hurting the dog. I hoped with all of my might that it was Junior. I needed him back. I heard a deep voice. “Be quiet!” It told the dog.

I knew that I had to be careful. I snuck around the cabin and looked through the foggy window. I had practiced sneaking around while playing hide and go seek with TJ last year. My heart was beating one thousand times faster than usual. I looked inside the widow, and here’s what I saw:

One bed

One chamber pot

One table

Two chairs

Pots

Then I saw it. A big red barn out back. I got curious so I tiptoed back there. I opened the wide red barn door. It took a lot of strength but I managed. I rushed over to a cow. I would recognize those spots anywhere. It was Natalie! I was so excited that I let out a scream by mistake.

“Oh dear!” I yelped. I did it again!

I clapped my hand over my mouth. It was too late. The strange man came out. I tried to hide, but I tripped on a long string hanging off of my apron then I tripped on a hay bail and landed in a bucket full of milk. My silky red hair was now wet and dripping. I stayed in an uncomfterable position on the wood floor and hoped that the man didn’t hear the ruckus.

“Who’s there?” The voice boomed.

I stayed quiet. When he saw me, he helped me up. “Who are you?” He asked. I was frozen with fear, so it took me a minute to get my words out.

“Jackie.” I mumbled. It all poured out. “Jackie Stoker. I live in the cabin next door.” Oh no! Why did I tell him? “Who are you?” I asked.

“Nigel Thompson.” He said with an accent.

“Where did you come from?”

“I have lived here for two years.” He sounded confused.

“Impossible!” I was starting to grow impatient.

“But I have”

I cut him off. “Where is Junior?” I tried to stay calm.

“I... I’m afraid I don’t know what you are talking about Miss Jackie.”

“Yes you do! That dog that you have been being mean to, He’s mine!” I tried to keep my cool.

“What? He’s yours? I’m so sorry!” He exclaimed. “I had no idea!”

“Then why were you telling him to be quiet?” I questioned.

“My daughter is sick and she needs her rest. When she woke up I was going to surprise her with the puppy.”

“Then why did I hear a yelp?” I questioned again.

“Because there was a rat scurrying around.”

“Oh… well... um…” I stuttered.

“It’s all right. I understand. I presume that is your cow then too?” Said Mr. Thompson.

“Yes, tis. May I ask how you got them?”

“Oh, yes, I found them wandering around all alone after the storm. I assumed that they didn’t belong to anyone. It seems that those two have a fear of thunder.” He answered. “I am so sorry to worry you.”

“That is quite alright.” I lied, because it really scared me, but I forgave him.

“I will go get your puppy.” Said Mr. Thompson.

“Thank you.”

I was standing out there all alone for about five minutes. It was then that I saw a little girl peeking out through the dirty window. She looked no more than four years younger than me. It must have been Mr. Thompson’s sick daughter. Her face was pale white. I felt guilty to take Junior back because I know how Mr. Thompson feels. Family getting sick is a hard situation to go through. But I needed Junior to comfort me.

I was startled when I heard a door slam. Out came Mr. Thompson with Junior in his arms, his daughter trailing behind. Junior leaped out of his hands and into mine. He kissed me many times the way that dogs do. Mr. Thompson stood there staring back at his cabin awkwardly.

“Thank you Mr. Thompson.” I said. “I’m just glad that nothing happened to them.” Two short minutes went by before I had Junior in my arms and Natalie by my side. “Thanks again Mr. Thompson!” I called over my shoulder as walked out of the forest. Just then the little girl ran up to me.

“Wait!” she called. “Can I pet him?” She asked.

“Of course!” I replied.

“What’s his name?”

“Junior. What’s yours?”

“Sylvia.’’ She replied.

“That’s a pretty name.”

“Where did you find him?” The sound of her voice was pitchy, yet deep. It was beautiful. Something that I could not explain. It seemed to make everything better. Sylvia was a perfectly favorable child. Though sick, she seemed positive and cheery.

“He came to me, in Cape Anne, where the ship first landed.”

After we finished our conversation, including lots more questions, I continued up the hill and headed home.

I must say, it was a most splendid adventure. I hoped to have another soon.

I scarfed down my delicious venison before bedtime. Gracie started to cry. Junior had bit her when she had tried to touch his whiskers.

Days passed, then weeks, then a month. I was in the trees re-painting all of my pictures that were washed off the tree bark during the storm. The storm was all you heard about these days, “My crops were wiped out by the storm.” Or “My cattle were killed by the storm!” Which, I had just come back from re-planting the second half of the crops that were wiped out by the storm. I ran out of paint, so I picked up my top and started spinning.

This was my favorite game. All right! Two minutes! I was about to spin when I heard a voice behind me. “Nice spin.” I jumped and my top flew into a tree branch. I looked back with the corner of my eye. Could it really be? “Sam!” I cried.

“I didn’t mean to startle you.”

“Why are you outside when you are so sick?”

Well I’ve been getting better for the past few weeks, and now I’m almost normal. Though I still need to take it easy.” He answered. “Now, got an extra top?”

A grin spread across my face. It truly was a miracle. I felt perfectly joyous. It was brilliant! I must admit Sam has always been great at tops. I guessed that it was because I had been so busy with the chores, Natalie, and Junior that I hadn’t notice TJ get better. We played tops for over an hour. We also did our chores together. The day just getting better from there, which seems impossible.

We made extra venison and vegetables and hosted the Thompson’s for supper. It was extraordinary! I even got to teach Sylvia how to paint.

Everyone was happy again and everyone was fine, until the rain started. But that, well, that is another story.