

Chapter One - Denby Jullsen, Hughenden

The Hughenden Record, November 1935—Hardisty RCMP reported that the body of Denby Jullsen of Hughenden was discovered late on the afternoon of Sunday, November 24, in an abandoned vehicle south of Hughenden. The non-operational vehicle was located in a field off of Highway 13. The body was discovered by James W. Nillsen who had been hunting in the area. Mr. Nillsen became suspicious when he spotted several magpies flying in and out of the open windows of an abandoned car near where he was tracking deer.

Mr. Nillsen told the *Record*, “The birds caught my attention. When I walked toward the old car, I right away saw someone propped up in the backseat.” The body of Denby Jullsen was identified by a slip of paper in his jacket pocket that read *Denby Jullsen, Hughenden*. There was no other identification found on the body...

Chapter 1 – Remembering

A mile and a bit from where he walked lay those train tracks that ran on parallel into the future until they just disappeared. Every morning since he'd come back home Cully Jullsen had heard that whistle call out in the distance, moaning low. Often it spoke to his brothers and to some of the other desperate young men who'd lost sight of the future. Only on that particular morning did it invite him. He resisted and veered away from the Siren sound, left the dirt of the driveway and crunched his way over the dry brown grass towards those hills to the west.

Cully walked up one gentle slope and then down another. At the top of the next treeless knoll, he sat facing northwest. The ice was gone from the lake and the water was low. This damn drought was just settling in the year

he'd met her, same year King lost the election. Cully thought that with that election nothing had changed, that they might as well have voted in a scarecrow to take King's place. You could squeeze more money out of one than out of Bennett, Cully was sure of that.

He wasn't certain that he wanted to stay home when he returned in the spring of 1932, but thought he'd try to get some work where folks knew him. He'd wait out this slump they talked about then maybe buy some land after he'd saved up a bit. It was Ellie who finalized his decision to stay on.

He'd met her when he first arrived home and went to work for the Whitlocks. Before leaving the Hughenden area for the north he'd worked a bit for them—repairing fences and helping to harvest. When he returned, it made sense to approach Mr. Whitlock first about work. That was on a Saturday morning. He started work on the farm that same day. As Cully sat on the hillside, he remembered.

Cully rapped on the screen door through which he could hear bacon frying and the soft rattle of pots and pans. He was surprised when instead of Mrs. Whitlock a pretty young woman came to the door, wiping her hands on the faded apron she wore.

“Morning,” he greeted her. “Mr. or Mrs. Whitlock around?”

At the sight of him, Ellie Pedersen froze and all the moisture left her mouth. For an instant not long enough to kill her, her heart stopped beating. Even in his work clothes, hat in hand and standing on the back stoop, Cully Jullsen was the most handsome man she'd ever seen. About six feet tall with sharp blue eyes and dark hair cut short, for the moment, all his attention was on her. Held in place by shyness, Ellie felt the heat of his gaze and the warmth of his words.

“He’s...he’s out checking on the cows. They’re calving.” The words sounded stupid to her. Of course, Cully would know that. He’s a farmhand, after all, but Cully just smiled and stood patiently on the other side of the closed screen door waiting to be invited in or sent out to the pasture to join Mr. Whitlock.

Finally Ellie pushed open the door and stepped back. “Where are my manners? Please, come in. Mr. Whitlock should be in any minute.” Without asking, she reached out, took Cully’s hat and hung it from a hook mounted on the wall by the door. She motioned to the set table and its four empty chairs. “Have a seat. Would you like some coffee?”

“Sure. That’d be good.” Cully slid a chair out and sat down. His eyes stayed on her, slightly crinkled at the corners from sun and wind, and he continued to smile. “What’s your name?”

Heavy steps on the back stoop made both Ellie and Cully turn. When Edward Whitlock spotted Cully Jullsen in his kitchen he greeted him with an extended hand and a hearty pat on the back. “Cully! How have you been?”

Cully stood up from his chair and shook Mr. Whitlock’s hand, telling him, “I’ve been just fine, sir. Came back here looking for some work. Of course, I thought of you first.”

Cully sat back down at the table and Edward Whitlock shrugged off his coat and hung it from a hook next to Cully’s hat. At the table, he pulled out one of the heavy chairs and settled into it with a bit of a groan.

“My hips aren’t what they used to be. Arthritis.” Ellie set a mug down in front of him and he poured cream into his coffee, skipping the sugar, and stirred it slowly. He took a deep drink before setting his cup down and asking Cully, “You able to start today?”

“That’s what I planned on doing.” Cully went on to explain, “Just got back from working at a tie camp up north, pulling logs out of the bush for the CNR.”

Edward Whitlock smiled appreciatively. “Hard work. How’s your mom keeping? She still living in town? Sorry to hear about your dad. That was sudden.” He shook his head and took another good drink of coffee. “It’s been a bad year here. Birdie’ll be glad to have you around.”

As the two men drank their coffee, Whitlock organized things in his head and Ellie cracked eggs into a hot cast iron skillet. As Ellie slid two eggs onto each of their plates, Edward Whitlock spoke. “There’re two things I need done right off. I want you to come with me and check on the cows out in the pasture, see if any are close to calving. Seems they’re all coming at once this spring. And then I’ll need you to feed the ones I already got in the corral and barn. Most in there are calved-out and the rest are mighty close so check on that first, before feeding.”

Ellie set a bowl of fried potatoes and a plate of bacon on the table between them. “Will Mrs. Whitlock be joining us for breakfast?” she asked.

“She’s got a headache this morning, Ellie. She’ll be down in a while,” answered Mr. Whitlock. He looked at Cully and added, “You can see the missus at lunchtime. She’ll be glad to lay eyes on you again.”

“It’ll be good to see her, too.” During breakfast, Cully thought about how he wanted to get to know the cattle he’d be working with right off. Cully wanted to get a feel for the girls, their breed, their temperament, whether they were easy or tough calvers. But he thought more about how he wanted to get to know this Ellie girl.

After breakfast the two men walked out into the pasture. About thirty cows stood in the dust and straw outside, eight more in the barn stalls. Mr.

Whitlock was over a quarter ways through calving out his herd of a hundred and fifty. He had Herefords and that was fine by Cully. He'd worked a lot with Herefords. Not the easiest calvers but for sure not the worst, either.

The grass crunched beneath their boots as they walked under a cloud-free sky. The wind had finally let up that day, and it felt good to be out. Something in wind sucks the energy right out of prairie people. That was one thing Cully hadn't minded about working in the bush. There was no wind. It was dark, lonely and cold, but still, no air running past your ears to nowhere, drying out the land and making you edgy.

"Dry," Cully commented.

"Yep. Sure is."

While they walked, Cully glanced over at the hills to the north covered in scrawny, struggling trees but bright green with new growth. He wondered what the tent caterpillars would be like this year. It wasn't unusual for them to strip the branches bare by June. "You been on this land a long time, haven't you?" Cully asked Mr. Whitlock. He knew, but Cully liked the way Edward Whitlock told the story and so he listened again.

"This place belonged to my father. He bought it in 1900 and moved up from Idaho in oh-two to farm it." Mr. Whitlock chuckled disbelievingly. "That's more'n thirty years ago already. Hard to believe. Seems like only yesterday that I helped him plow that first field. I was young so it felt like an adventure. But it didn't to my father. He would've been forty-five or so years old then. Helluva time in your life to consider building up another farm in another country." Edward Whitlock took off his hat and wiped his brow with his sleeve. To Cully the morning air still felt cool.

“Ellie worked here for a while?” Cully already knew the answer to this, as well. She’d told him back at the house, but it seemed like a good question to get the conversation steered in the girl’s direction.

“You know her from before? She’s from Hughenden,” Mr. Whitlock told him.

“No. Just met her today for the first time.” The young farmhand stooped down to pick a long, dry piece of grass and broke it apart as they walked, letting the pieces fall onto the ground.

“Nice girl,” Edward Whitlock added. “Yeah, she’s been with us for almost two years now, I think. Pedersen family. Good people. Came up from Idaho, too.”

“She’s probably spoken for?” Cully felt really obvious asking this question, but it was what he really wanted to know. The older man didn’t seem to think anything of the question and simply answered it.

“Nope. Free as a bird, far’s I know.” Mr. Whitlock shielded his eyes from the sun and pointed straight ahead to the herd of red and white cows, indicating one on the very edge off by herself. “See that one. I think she’ll be next. The wife and me call her Dora. Real gentle and a good mother. We’ll bring her in as soon as we’re done checking.”

Right then and there, Cully knew he was going to ask that Ellie girl out—the sooner the better. She had good legs and a soft voice, and there was something about her that was different. Refined, perhaps, but not quite there yet. Ellie would be. She seemed to want something better for herself. So different than the girls Cully Jullsen had known both up north and down south in those camps and towns along the way, girls with dirty fingernails and rough talk. They were easy to get and hard to keep—not that Cully had intentions of keeping any. They were company, that’s all. Mostly just a beer-

blurred jumble of strong perfume, skin and that kind of loving that feels only a bit better than lonely and that makes the lonely sharper when it's done.

Except for Darlene. Now her Cully remembered.

Darlene Sinclair worked in the tie camp just outside of Hinton where Cully had spent two winters—the years he was twenty-one and twenty-two. Her dad was a foreman in a different camp, one a little further east and north. That's how she got on cooking in that creaky shack for the crew of teamsters, sometimes a dozen, sometimes six. The work was cold and hard, and lots of guys didn't last. They were mostly young, fifteen or sixteen years old, most of them strong as horses themselves but lacking staying power. Always looking for easier work, better pay. Cully was that way at first but he quickly learned that there isn't such a thing. Most times, work was what you made it. You put your back into it and the days went faster and the work got easier. If you were lucky, more money would come from the work you put in but not usually. Not in those days, anyway.

The first time Cully met her was a day late in February, warmer than the rest of the month had been—including January. The guy who had been cooking for the crew got burned badly. Bare-handed, he'd grabbed the handle of an iron skillet that had been in the hot oven. Maybe he was in a hurry, or just not thinking. It was Roy who heard him scream, and it was Roy who smeared a glob of lard over that blistering skin, wrapping the cook's right hand tight in a clean tea towel. That cook had some kind of a French name. Cully had only been in the camp a couple of weeks before the cook's accident—the accident that brought Darlene Sinclair into the camp.

She was a little out of place in that rough camp. When Cully first saw her, Darlene wore jeans, like a man, a heavy plaid jacket and boots, and she was chopping wood. Her hair and skin reflected the sunlight in a gentle sort

of way as she swung that axe. The blade struck the log she'd set upright dead in its centre. The log split into two neat halves, each falling into the deep snow on either side of the chopping block. Right then, Cully's heart should've known its own fate.

“Good aim.”

Darlene Sinclair turned to look at Cully, still holding the axe in her left hand, fresh snow from the night before up past her boots. The cook's replacement smiled, eyebrows arching. “Thanks. You get good with practice.”

“Stan brought you in?” Cully asked her.

She kept on smiling. “Yeah, this morning. He's my dad, did you know that?”

Cully nodded. Roy said Stan was going to ask his daughter if she could fill in. She laid her axe over top the wide stump she used as her chopping block and held out her hand.

“I'm Darlene.”

The skin on her face looked smooth and young, feminine, but her hand was like Cully's: rough and calloused. Strong, too.

“Cully,” he told her. “Good to meet you. We were getting hungry out here in the woods. What's for supper?”

“Bread dough's rising now—thought we'd have beef stew. Not many vegetables besides potatoes and onions. Got a few carrots. Should be all right.”

“All right? Frenchy never made bread and we ate more'n our fill of bacon and eggs for breakfast and supper. Sometimes fried egg sandwiches for lunch, too. I'd just about marry you for a thick piece of bread spread with butter and jam,” Cully teased her.

She laughed softly, like the snow falling down from high in the treetops. Like that. Cully could barely hear it, but he thought it was the prettiest sound.

Darlene did up the top two buttons on her coat and told him, “I gotta go see if that bread’s risen.” She gave him a sideways look and grinned, “Especially if it might mean a marriage proposal.” And off she trudged back down where the path, now obscured by the latest snowfall, still lay tramped down and out of view beneath the snow. Between the woodpile and the cook shack, her feet left two sets of prints, one coming, one going, both shadowy blue in the tumbling sun’s glow. Cully’s eyes stayed focused on her until she reached the shack. Then he looked at Darlene’s axe lying there across the stump and thought about her perfect aim.

They used to do it in back of the cookhouse sometimes, Cully Jullsen and Darlene Sinclair, when Cully could sneak away and Darlene wasn’t busy preparing meals. He’d unbutton her pants and she’d kick off one boot so that she could get a leg free. Cully would sit her on the countertop between two piles of dishes, one washed, one dirty, and she’d hang on tight around his neck, so tight that when she got close, his air was cut off for a moment. He thought it was worth it, though. If Cully was going to die, her choking him and moaning deep in her throat was a good way to go. The thought of getting caught never crossed their minds. Probably, they didn’t care. Why would they? They were just kids.

One afternoon, when they’d just finished making love and with Darlene still sitting on the counter and Cully still standing between her knees, he asked her, “You like this tough work? These tough guys? Doesn’t really seem to suit you.” Cully lifted his hand to brush away the hair that was stuck there on her flushed cheek.

“Could be worse. I like being outside and Stan...Dad can always get me jobs. So I never have to look for one myself, which is nice.” She smiled and Cully felt warmth fill him.

“What does your mom think of you being all the way out here in the bush like this? She must worry that someone will take advantage of you. Someone like me.” Cully teased her and stepped in closer, nudging the bare insides of her thighs with his own. She looked away.

“Mom died.” Darlene swallowed hard so that Cully could see a lump of emotion move down the length of her throat.

“Sorry to hear...”

She cut him off and he could tell immediately that she didn't want his sympathy. Cully thought that sympathy seemed to sting her almost worse than grief. Darlene told him, “Stan takes care of me and so I take care of him. I owe him that much.”

“I don't know that you owe anyone anything. Especially your parent for taking care of you,” Cully said.

“Without him, I'd die.”

Tired of Darlene not looking at him, Cully reached out and cupped her jaw. He turned her face to his and repeated slowly, “You don't owe him anything.” As soon as Cully dropped his hand from her face, Darlene looked away again. Just like that, she was gone from him.

Cully wasn't the only one in that camp who'd been involved with Darlene Sinclair. Cully felt he should've known this by their conversation that day. Unfortunately, he didn't understand until he caught them himself. Cully was not a man who regretted many decisions or actions, but remembering this, he tasted the copper flavour of self-loathing fill his mouth. Each time he remembered, he thought about how he still hated

himself for failing her. Cully assumed that even if he couldn't have saved her, he'd feel a lot better now if he'd at least tried then.

Darlene and Cully hadn't planned to meet that day. Neither of them thought they'd have time. The crew was supposed to head up to the road with a load of logs and they were all ready to spend overnight at the top if necessary. The crew members had tied their bedrolls to the sweaty backs of the draft horses and Darlene had packed them plenty of food to take along—sandwiches, oatmeal cake and cold tea. The men would be well-fed. There was a cabin up top, built by the CNR just for the tie gang, for when they needed shelter for the night, which happened often enough.

At first, things were going so smoothly that Roy thought the guys might not even have to stay overnight, that they might make it back down to sleep, but Cully knew that was pushing it. It could be the easiest haul ever but that didn't change the fact that it was a mighty long one.

They trudged along through wet snow clear up to their knees still, and it was already April. The land of Eternal Winter. Cully led Shank that day. He was a good work horse but a mean one. He'd nip your thigh soon as look at you. You could tell he liked to pull, though, like he needed the work, like it gave him a reason to be. Cully had met a few horses like that since him, but Shank was by far the most determined. Down through the years, Cully thought he had met more lazy horses than hard-working ones. He considered that horses were kind of like people that way. Some were really ambitious with an aim in life, and most just did what they needed to in order to survive.

The group was moving toward the steepest hill when Cully heard from somewhere behind him the unmistakable shattering, splintering crack of a runner splitting then breaking apart followed by “Oh, shit!”

“Whoa, Shank! Whoa.” Cully planted his palm in the middle of Shank’s chest and planted his feet, too, before the horse would stop. “What’s going on? Runner gone?” Cully yelled to the back toward the origin of the racket.

Roy yelled back from the rear. “Damned if we didn’t lose ’em both—nearly. But the right one’s gone for sure. Left’s cracked pretty good, but it might hold together! Shit!”

Cully stood there pressing hard against Shank, now with his shoulder, running the risk that Shank may succeed in somehow biting the top of Cully’s head. The horse didn’t, but Cully sensed clear as anything that he wanted to, felt Shank’s impatient breath coming in hot bursts against his ear. Finally, Roy told the men what they needed to do. Cully knew already, but it was Roy’s job to tell the crew, a job Cully judged he did well.

“Well, boys, guess we’d better unload the whole damn lot.” Then, one more time, for good measure, “Shit!”

They arrived back at camp late that afternoon having eaten Darlene’s oatmeal cake on the return trip. The men had left Roy with the sleigh while they headed on up the hill to let someone know that the load had been lost, that they’d bring it up maybe tomorrow but probably not until the next day.

Back at the camp when the other guys invited Cully for a pre-supper game of cards in the bunkhouse, he told them “later” and made his way to the cookhouse. He half-expected to hear Darlene chopping wood but, as Cully got closer, he didn’t hear her axe cutting the air or splitting wood. He strode around to the front of the kitchen and pushed open the door, looking forward to the expression on her face when she saw him, back early and unexpected.

Darlene was surprised all right, and so was Stan. He pulled himself out of his daughter from where she was bent over the countertop and jerked back quick, tripping over the big bucket of melted snow water behind him. Darlene didn't look at Cully. Instead, the girl just buried her face in her hands, and the water sloshed out of that bucket, spreading slow across the floor. Cully turned around as if he hadn't seen a thing.

So it was that Cully joined the bunkhouse card game after all, skipped breakfast and lunch the next day, and helped to repair the sled's runners, working fast so that they were able to head back out by one o'clock that afternoon. The crew stayed that night at the top. For Cully, the night was sleepless, made restless by the cold weight of his guilt and anger. The gang unloaded in the morning but Cully didn't return to the camp with the rest of the crew. On the prairies, spring was setting in and he knew he could find work on a farm some place a little farther south, a little closer to home.

It was for sure Ellie's softness that caused Cully to like her right off. Both her face *and* hands were so soft. He wouldn't know how soft the rest of her was until their wedding night, like it should be. It wasn't just her skin, either, but also the way she talked and moved that seemed so gentle. Cully remembered wanting to move into that soft gentleness, settle in, sink in, and never come out.

It wasn't hard for Cully to ask Ellie out. He succeeded in doing this just one week after they'd met. She was leaving work, walking down the driveway and he was just coming in from the field.

"Hey, Ellie." Cully sped his pace to catch up to her. "Going home?"

She nodded and squinted at him against the bright sunlight that her hat brim didn't quite block.

"Mind if I walk you part way?"

“You’ll be late for supper.” Was she trying to get rid of him? He persisted anyway.

“Doesn’t matter this once.” Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright.

“It’s up to you.” He could read people pretty well and it seemed that Ellie wanted his company but didn’t want to seem too eager. Cully trusted his instincts.

“Then I will. Can I take that for you?” He gestured to the cotton sack she carried that held her good shoes, and Ellie willingly handed it over to him.

“Thanks.”

“Hot out again, eh?”

“It wasn’t bad in the house. You’re dusty.” She pointed beneath her own nose to show him where the dust was under his. Cully swiped at it with the back of his hand. He’d been snorting dust all day long cultivating that desert. Tomorrow, he’d suggest to Whitlock that he let the rest of that field go to grass.

Cully grinned at her, eyes flashing blue. “I’m going into town this Saturday night. If you’re not busy, would you want to come along?”

She looked at him and then at the ground before replying, “Can I let you know Friday?”

“Sure can,” he told her amiably. “I’m going either way, but I’d like to have your company.”

When each Monday arrived, he’d ask her again and she’d put him off until Friday and then say “yes.” It was a game she played and he didn’t mind because he picked Ellie up every Saturday night that year in Whitlock’s wagon. (Except that week in February she was down with that bout of the

flu, but they were engaged by then anyway.) By the time spring rolled around, he was staying for supper at her mom and dad's each Saturday evening before going into town, and sometimes he'd get invited to Sunday dinner, too.

Cully sat there amid the rustling grasses and in the increasing wind thinking about those nights spent sipping Coke floats at the drugstore and walking up and down those boards, looking into the shop windows. He was always careful to be a gentleman, understood that Ellie needed him to be that. Just before Christmas he'd tried holding her hand in the wagon on the way home and she'd let him. It was a triumph, that kind of closeness.

He'd watched his mom for years yearn for that kind of respect from her husband, the kind that Cully was now intentionally giving to Ellie. He'd seen that treating women better made them better women. Not that there was anything wrong with his mom, Birdie. Ask anybody and they'd tell you that she was kind and generous. She gave to her church and to her neighbours and friends.

But when Cully was a kid, he'd heard her tears too many times late into the night and seen too often the black rings of worry and sleeplessness under her eyes. She'd made it work, his mother, held that family together with every fibre of her being and despite the antics of her husband which threatened to rip them apart. The life they had wasn't what his father wanted, and it wasn't something he could manage, a wife and a family. So he didn't even try. Instead, he left Birdie to somehow pull them all through.

He went out and drank all the time when they were kids. They didn't know anything different. Lots of times, his late evenings allowed them late evenings, too. With Birdie busy and their father gone, often the three boys would head outside to the backyard or venture even further. Sometimes

they'd go down to the slough on the outskirts of town where they'd launch their homemade raft long after their schoolmates were tucked in and sound asleep.

The night Cully recalled now, their father had come home very late—well after they'd all gone to bed. Sometimes he didn't come home at all and sometimes he passed out quietly. Then it wasn't so bad. But that night, Norrie Jullsen did come home and did not tumble into a safe, drunken sleep. Instead, he raged. It was probably a whiskey drunk. They heard harsh words between he and their mother, voices breaking like glass, sharp edges piercing, slashing at the thin membrane of peace that surrounded the house in which they lived one block west of Main Street.

Alice dove under her bed, a cot in the corner of the room farthest from the double bed shared by her three brothers. The boys didn't hide, didn't even pull the covers up over their heads, but all three pretended to be sleeping, slowing their breathing and closing their eyes. When Norrie Jullsen flung the door open, that's how he'd found them. He didn't seem to notice that Alice wasn't in her bed.

“Wake up, you little bastards!” He tore back the covers leaving the boys lying exposed in the pajamas Birdie had sewn for them the Christmas before. “Your old man wants to talk to you!” He plopped down onto the edge of the bed. “Must be nice to have someone lookin' after you all the time without havin' to do nothin'. I coulda done so much with my life if it weren't for you and your mother. Coulda been anythin'. Stead, I'm tied to here.” He jabbed his finger at the mattress. “Y'know, you wouldn't have any place to live if it wasn't for me. You wouldn't have this bed or food on the table. You'd have nothin'. You'd be nothin'.” Norrie Jullsen shoved that same tobacco-yellowed finger into Cully's face. “You *are* nothin'.”

Norward sat up from where he lay between his older brothers and stated angrily, “That ain’t true. Cully *is* something.”

Norrie Jullsen’s burning eyes focused on his youngest son, the one named after him. “You talkin’ back?” Without warning, the back of his large hand caught Norward across the bridge of his nose and droplets of his blood spattered across the front of Denby’s pajama top. Leaping up from the bed, Norrie Jullsen clenched his fists and screamed at them all, “Don’t you talk back to your provider—ever!”

The next day, while her husband slept it off, Birdie walked Norward to Doctor Stromquist’s office, telling him that her youngest son had taken a tumble out of a tree. Harold Stromquist, decked out in his white coat, pushed the bone painfully back into place, taped up Norward’s nose and pretended to believe Birdie’s story. The middle-aged Harold Stromquist thought he saw the truth in the little boy’s eyes, dull in the purple-black rings that surrounded them but the doctor didn’t say so. Instead, he gave the five-year-old a lollipop that swirled with colour. The previous spring, the doctor’s own brother had gotten two ribs broken in a tousel with Norrie Jullsen. The fight was most likely as much his brother’s fault as Norrie’s, but the doctor thought that Jullsen did have an unreasonable temper.

As he sat, Cully’s ears began to ache from the unrelenting wind on that low hill, and he considered the possibility that his younger brother may have really hit that grain elevator operator with a baseball bat. Did Norward have it in him to murder someone? Next, Cully wondered how much kids were like their parents, how many parental traits offspring could escape and how many were unavoidable. He felt that he’d outrun his father’s legacy or at least had inherited some of his more positive attributes. For example, Norrie Jullsen had an unaccountable patience with animals that he clearly

lacked with people. Perhaps it was because animals couldn't talk back, as Norward had done all those years ago. Norrie Jullsen had been an excellent stockman, and folks would often hire him to help effectively and gently break their horses. Cully had that same talent.

Cully's father had also been good with his hands and could build nearly anything out of wood. That tiny house in Hughenden had only one bedroom when he'd purchased it in 1919, and right away, he'd built the second bedroom, the one his kids shared. It was horse breaking and those temporary carpentry jobs that helped to keep Norrie Jullsen's family's head above water—if barely. Some of Cully's abilities resembled his father's, and every day he hoped to God that that was where the comparison ended.