



# Friends of the Family (The Colter Saga Book 1)

*Joel Baker*

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Grandpa Jesse was a hard man. Some people say he was a stone cold killer. Others say he did what he had to do; doing what was necessary to protect the family. It was a time when dying was easy and living was hard. One thing everybody can agree on is that Jesse Colter loved his wife Sarah. He loved her, their kids, and those big awful dogs.

I doubt if any of you actually lived during the go-back. That's what we call the time when Jesse's story begins. It was a strange time. It was a time of cars, and trains and televisions. Lights came on when you turned a switch. People could fly in aero planes anywhere they wanted. Nobody had to chop wood or many of the things we do every day. Horses were a hobby for rich folk and not for plowing or getting from one place to another.

Everybody went to school. They bought food at big stores and never had to turn a spade of earth. Those stores had racks of clothes you could walk right in and buy. Everybody wore shoes that were made of canvas and just threw them away when they got worn or dirty. Hard to believe; but the old people all said it was true.

Nobody seems to really know what happened to cause the go-back. They say it was sudden. The oil they used for all this stuff ran out or something. Banks failed. So did everything else. All we do know for sure is that in a few weeks things just stopped working. Then they had riots. It wasn't long before they were killing each other for one reason or another. Then they started killing for no reason at all.

It was worse up north than here in southeast Tennessee. In the rural part of the south we weren't as far from the land. People used to make fun of us. They called us hicks and red necks. Now we're here and they're gone. It was like everyone forgot which end of a shovel to use. They kept waiting around for the government or someone to come take care of them. Nobody came. That was true all over, just less so here.

I first heard the story of Jesse and Sarah when I was a little boy. I heard it many times since. People still came to Jesse for advice back then. His stories were sought after, in spite of his somewhat rambling style. Whenever it stormed or snowed, or the children just got bored, the cry would go up.

"Tell us the story, Grandpa Jesse. Tell us the story!"

Jesse would always protest and grumble, muttering under his breath. "There's too much work to do to be fooling around with all this nonsense." But the gleam in his eye would give it all away. He would wait for all us children to gather in front of the fire, quiet and still, with our legs drawn up to our chests and eyes wide with the waiting.

Jesse would look at each of us and begin the story always in the same way.

"It seems just like yesterday.... "

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