

In the dining hall all fifteen miners fell in to eat a nice meal after a hard day's work. Randi and Brittany talked to Pappy and Will about what they explored.

Brittany wasn't too enthusiastic about the woods, but she loved the view and scenery in the distance and the creek.

Randi spoke of doing a little fishing one day.

Brittany was going to pass on that. She didn't like the fish or the bait. Anything that was smelly or slimy turned her off. It was totally gross!

Several big explosions came from outside, interrupting the dinnertime chatter. They were so loud and booming that they shook the windows of the dining hall and the foundation.

"What was that?" asked Brittany with here blue eyes wide in fright.

The huge gears, springs, and shaker from the derocker crashed through the roof and landed on one of the tables and brought with it wood and tin from the roof. Several people were hit with the fallen debris. Other people shielded themselves with their arms and herded toward the exit. The injured were wallowing on the ground and moaning in pain.

Everyone was in a panic and confused.

What was going on? What was all that racket outside?

People checked on and helped the injured. Nothing was serious, but they were going to need first aid. After a few moments, everyone ran outside to investigate what was going on and what the noise was.

Orange light from flames illuminated the night sky and the emerald-green foliage of the surrounding forest. Everyone gathered around and looked in horror at the mining equipment. It was engulfed in flames and completely ruined. Someone had sabotaged and completely destroyed everything.

Men were horrified beyond disbelief and completely lost on what to do next.

Pappy was furious. He took his hat off and slammed it on the ground. "Goshdarn it! I'm gonna blast the fur of'n the person's hide, if I ever see 'em!" he spat indignantly. When Pappy got angry, people related him to an old, cotton-haired Yosemite Sam.

Will ran into the cabin where the safe was without telling anyone.

"Dad, where are ya goin'?" asked Randi as she followed him.

Brittany brought up the rear behind them.

When the trio got there to the cabin, they saw the door had been kicked open. All three of them had that sinking feeling as their eyes went toward the safe. The safe was smashed and pried open. Everything from inside was gone.

Will was so overcome with so many emotions that he silently wept. He had high hopes that this mining year was going to make a serious difference for a better life for him and his daughter, since his wife had died about five years ago. Now because of someone's thoughtless actions, everything he had worked and hoped for was now in jeopardy.

Brittany offered to give her shoulder for Randi to cry on. She knew Will and Randi's sad story all too well. She shed her own tears for them and for her own grief.

No one slept a wink that night. They were going to wait till morning to survey the damage and decide what to do next. That wasn't the extent of the bad news. The buyer was coming tomorrow and now there was no gold to sell to gather needed supplies or split among the men. That was going to kill the morale of the group and possibly turn everything for the worst.

As Randi wiped her eyes, she saw a folded piece of paper in front of the ruined safe. She picked up and unfolded the paper. This short message was sloppily scribbled on the paper:

*All of you are going to die tomorrow night.*

Randi showed it to her father and her friend. They were clearly appalled by the letter. They had to show this to everyone else.

It was definitely going to be a sleepless night tonight after discovering such a ghastly letter.