



PROLOGUE



The monstrous cannon belched fiery spheres of death from their gaping maws with a deafening roar of thunder and a great cloud of blinding smoke. Their cannonballs screamed through the air, temporarily illuminating the predawn sky and then crashing into the Alamo's walls, sending shards of mortar flying twenty feet in all directions. Dimly, through the clouds of smoke, I could see the pinpoint pricks of light that were rifles firing and hear the screams and yells of men caught up in the deadly madness of battle.

“Sam,” Danny yelled, “I need that rifle now!”

It seemed as though I was moving in slow motion as my hands shook and my heart pounded wildly. I tried to concentrate on loading his spare rifle. Powder...ball in patch...ram it home... powder in firing pan. I threw the rifle to him and grabbed the one he had just fired. I briefly peered over the palisade wall and saw hundreds of Mexican soldiers running to breach this little pile of logs that we were trying to defend. Powder...ball in patch...ram it home...powder in the firing pan...hand the rifle to Danny.

Suddenly, above the din of the battle, I heard Gregorio Esparza cry out, “Pared norte!”

I turned just in time to see Santa Anna's Army pouring over every wall of the Alamo using their makeshift ladders. Danny

handed me a rifle. Powder...ball in patch...ram it home... powder in the firing pan.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the Alamo Chapel. Several Mexican soldiers entered the chapel, and then I heard rapid rifle and pistol fire and knew that they had found Colonel Bowie lying on his sickbed. To the right of us, I saw Uncle Micajah crumble under the enemy's fire, and Colonel Crockett valiantly clubbing the enemy with his rifle before finally succumbing to the overwhelming numbers of Mexican soldados.

"Samantha!" Danny demanded impatiently. Blinded by tears, I resumed loading his rifles. Powder...ball in patch... ram it home... powder in firing pan. Just then, my most feared, awful, unthinkable nightmare became reality. A Mexican soldier, looming out of the smoky darkness, his dark brown eyes glowing with hatred and the flames from the weapons firing around him, shot my Danny in the head and he fell back into my arms. Everything seemed to move in slow motion as I stared up at him in fear and horror. As I raised the rifle Danny had just given me to load to shoot the soldado, the back of my head exploded with pain, then everything went black.

