

The legend of Grimm's knob from page five

hiked to the top of a small wooded knob.

Granddad Marvin smiled and, as was his custom, winked before speaking. "This is a special place, boys," he said as he cast a gaze over the knob. He spread out his hands and raised them shoulder high. "There's a great treasure here, boys, great riches."

Eldred took that to mean the section of property he'd called home for the past six years. And now his damn brother was selling that treasure and those riches to mollify his greedy soon-to-be ex-wife and to extricate himself from a financial trap of his own making. Eldred tried again to appeal to Wyatt's sense of legacy and heritage, of leaving something to his kids, a teenage boy and girl.

Wyatt, however, was unmoved. "My kids have never – not ever – shown the slightest interest in visiting here. They're city kids. They love their iPhones and video games and the mall. The only one who cares about this place is you, Eldred. Just

you. And you care so much that the cabin looks like it's ready to cave in. The forest is overgrown. You probably haven't used the woodshop in years. Remember you told me you wanted to manufacture duck decoys? I'll bet you've sold a couple thousand, right?" Wyatt said sarcastically. "You're 57, and when you die who's going to carry on the precious family heritage? You don't have kids. It's going to sit here and rot, the forest too choked for anything to thrive but squirrels and birds. You're trying to tie up this place because you found a place where you like to fish. I could rot in jail just so you'd have your precious fishing hole. Nothing like brotherly love, huh?"

Wyatt slathered the guilt on thick, and Eldred knew that at the end of the day, Wyatt the go-getter would get what he wanted. He'd get his boatload of cash for the Grimm family land. He didn't care about heritage or birthright or the smell of autumn leaves. He cared

only about the smell of money.

"Do what you want," Eldred said coldly. "Now why don't you get the hell out of here. I'm sick of looking at you." Eldred turned and walked away.

Within a month's time, Wyatt had contracted local logger Clay Schmaltz to proceed with the timber harvest. Wyatt wanted Schmaltz to be aggressive: anything borderline should come down. He wanted to wring out every dollar in timber value.

The brothers were not speaking to one another, but Wyatt got word to Eldred that he could stay on the property until the timber harvest was complete. Soon thereafter, Wyatt would have papers drawn up for a sale.

Eldred moped about the cabin as he heard the logging equipment move in. The distant roar of chainsaws and the scream of the processor made him nauseous.

Meanwhile in Whitefish Bay, Wyatt was experiencing a similar sensation in the pit of his stomach. A letter from the IRS

arrived informing him that time had run out: he had seven days to fork over \$250,000 or face the music. Wyatt, who had sold the Escalade, a pair of jet skis and a few other belongings, had scraped together close to \$65,000. But he needed more, a lot more. He frantically called his Northwoods land buyer, a rich trout-fishing fanatic named Gill Bennett, to see if they could expedite the sale. Bennett, however, planned to be out of the country for another four weeks. There's no way he would rush through a sale without doing due diligence. He didn't operate that way, and he was more than a little peeved that Wyatt was putting the squeeze on him.

"Whoa there boy, you gotta back off. My priorities now are here in Norway. I told you we could do the deal when I got back. And frankly, I don't appreciate the hard sell, pal. Are you trying to pull something on me?"

"No! Gosh no! Wait a minute, Gill, hold on," Wyatt said as desperation leaked from his voice. His demeanor spooked Ben-

nett, who abruptly pulled the plug on the deal. "I think we're through with this, Wyatt."

"Wait Gill!"

"We're done!" Bennett snarled before hanging up.

Devastated, Wyatt glumly retreated to the sparse little apartment he now rented in north Milwaukee. He lowered himself into a stiff folding chair and blankly stared out the window. He was looking at seven years for filing a false return. By the time he got out, he'd be 66 and his kids, now ages 16 and 17, would be out of college – that's if they could afford to go. The government would seize the \$25,000 or so he got from his share of the timber sale. Upon his release, he'd be staring at back alimony and child support. He'd have no prospects, only those of an impoverished old man.

What the hell, he thought as he snapped open a Budweiser. Why not just let Eldred keep the land. At least Wyatt wouldn't have his brother hating him for the rest of his life. He called Ralph Moody.

"Ralph, this is Wyatt Grimm. Would you pass on a message to Eldred? Tell him the sale is off. He doesn't have to move."

Eldred greeted the news with jubilation, relief and bewilderment. Why had Wyatt, who was hell bent on liquidating the estate, suddenly reversed course? Had he finagled his way out of his predicament? As Eldred pondered the turn of events, he noticed that the cacophony of the logging operation had suddenly halted as the machines went strangely silent. Shoot, it was only mid-morning. He poked his head outside and heard men shouting from the direction of the knob, the one where granddad Marvin had taken him as a boy. Then he saw Clay Schmaltz running toward the cabin, his eyes the size of pancakes.

Wyatt rode with his estranged wife to the federal district courthouse in Milwaukee. They had with them their son, Ray, and daughter, Candi. After a long bout of soul-searching, Wyatt had come clean about his troubles and, to his surprise and utter delight, experienced a deep

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