

## **Fiddlesticks! Tales From A Country Ghetto**

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### **Prologue**

Bonner County in the skinny panhandle of Idaho is a place where people go to get away. A quality of life, a fresh start, a step back in time. It's beautiful country, with pristine lakes and untouched woods. Canada is just north. High-end summer homes ring the lake shores, million-dollar condos flank the ski resort hill. Small-town charm, where the sidewalks roll up at eight, neighbors wave, and doors aren't locked. People work their entire lives for a chance to retire in a place so idyllic.

But a closer peek through the looking glass reveals the other side. The claptrap plywood shacks wrapped in blue tarps to keep the rain out. The food bank shelves picked clean every Wednesday afternoon, dive bars full of patrons by noon, reform schools with waiting lists. The people who were born and bred here, some seemingly raised by wolves. Rough lives, with rough faces to match. Some don't know where they're going in life. Most are going nowhere.

Life has its ups and downs for all of us, and sometimes when one is down, one needs a new place to call home. In the Sandpoint area of the great state of Idaho, that place is the Mooney Family Farm.

Various and many people have come and gone down the long driveway of the Farm, and it's a fair guess that not one of them dreamt of living here as a child. They arrive only because life has brought them here. Most see it as a cave to ride out the storm, a place to regroup, to gain a threshold in the doorway toward their future. Some use it as a place to flop before they're kicked out and forced to drift down the road again. Others use it to get away from the modern world, only to find something much worse. And then there are those who see it as a place that will tolerate their oddities, quirks, and secrets – no questions asked and no money down.

These tales are about life on one old family farm and its potpourri of people, all taken in by a man with a heart of gold and a head full of rocks. There are intrigues and plots described that Shakespeare would jump at the chance to use in his next play. Creation and destruction, dreams come true, and living nightmares. There are tales of love and hatred. Lust and liquor, too. Debauchery and vice will be related so often that the reader will wonder if these same ills were what destroyed the Roman Empire. The microcosm of unrestrained mayhem offers any sociologist the chance for a Nobel Prize, provided they have the fortitude to last a week at George Mooney's backwoods boarding house.

There will be no morals to any of the stories related or the personalities described. No lessons learned. Like a curious act of nature, sometimes there just isn't a good explanation for what's happened or why something is. A wise man once noted that people generally are going to do what they are going to do and the best course of action is to simply stay the hell out of their way. The Mooney Family Farm is living proof of this.