

Mountain man on celestine (working title)
a Celestine Chronicals Fan-Fic

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- 1) that you link to my work in the description for each part as it's posted.
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- 2) that you not seek to profit by this or any other fan fic set in my worlds in future.
- 3) have fun. :)

The First Day

"hey Bill." the breaded mountain man said as he walked in the hardware store
"hey Jeb, brought the usual?" the manager asked as the mountain man held up the first of several large pelts from the backpack he'd taken off as he walked in the door.

"yeah. Usual mix. Couple wolf, half dozen deer, buncha rabbits, and two black bear." he said as he pulled the pelts out of his pack and placed them on the counter.

"Why the wolves? Aren't they endangered?" the store manager asked

"because I was the one endangered, last winter was pretty cold and they decided I was lunch... well, I had to convince them otherwise." the man called Jeb responded with some annoyance in his voice.

the manager was still a bit huffy about it. "do you have tags for them at least, Jeb?"

"yeah." the man called Jeb answered, "registered them with DNR before walking all the way across town on my way here." not offer the tags he claimed to have.

"Aigh, for you, Jeb, I'll take your word on it." the manager nodded taking the pelts he'd sell online for ten times as much as he was paying for them. When he had the pelts behind the counter he went to the register to ring up the pay-out. "And the usual cash, Jeb." the manager said handing over a couple hundred bucks in small denominations.

"Thanks Bill." Jeb said as he tucked the money in his small belt pouch. "mind if I shop around a bit?" the manager smiled

"So you can leave as much of that money here in my store as possible? Sure! Feel free, Jeb!"

Jeb slung his pack back over his shoulders and wandered off to look around the store, it was the middle of the week so it was mostly empty. He grabbed a pound of salt, another of pepper, and a bunch of seeds for the garden he was trying to start again this year. Over in camping he grabbed a new flint and steel, some fish hooks, and a pack of bobbers.

He spent a few minutes looking through the sunglasses trying to find something cheap, but dark, gave up and snagged a pair of wrap-arounds that claimed they were polarized.

He ended up leaving \$40 with the cashier before walking out, tucking the flint and steel into the small belt pouch on his left side, and heading across the street to the grocery. He only came into town twice a year, and the walk took him the better part of a week each time. His biannual visit to the small town in rural Blue Lodge, Montana was also the only time Jeb slept in a bed not made of furs.

He took his time shopping, a frozen microwave pizza for dinner, two beers, vitamins, a bag of cough drops, and an ice cream sandwich that he opened before he was even out of the store. He turned left to head toward the Blue Lodge Motor Lodge, the local roach motel, cheapest place in town and his usual haunt while he was in town.

Jeb approached the corner and pushed the button for the crosswalk, taking another

bit of his Neapolitan and savoring the flavor. He knew from experience if he took too long it'd melt before he got to the check in. waiting on the light he looked around to his left and down the side street, too many things here reminded him of why he had retreated to the mountains after the divorce. Kids running around, beautiful woman that wanted nothing to do with him, noise, cars with radios up too loud.

'ah, small town America' he thought, looking forward to his one splurge meal tonight, and then the long walk back to his camp.

He heard the gloing of a rubber ball bouncing and it seemed to be getting closer. Jeb turned his head all the way to his right to see a small child running out into the street chasing a rubber ball at the same instant his ears caught the sound of the number 12 local transit bus, the one with the bad breaks that never seem to get fixed.

Jeb spun to his right, saw the bus, it was not slowing down. By the time Jeb thought he was already shoving the kid as hard as he could. He tried to follow, but the front of the bus crowded in on his right side and he could just see the kid clear the bus before Jeb himself got hit.

Everything went dark as the bus rolled over him, breaks squealing the entire time. PAIN.

Darkness.

Jeb Sat up in a cave, it was fairly dark, but he could see daylight filtering around a corner not that far away. He felt himself to see what all he had on him, and started to curse as he stood up.

His backpack was gone, his pistol missing as were the spare magazine, large bowie knife, and everything he'd just bought, including the flint and steel and the strike-anywhere matches he'd gotten in the grocery. All of his money was gone as well, even the change.

He had one small leather belt pouch on his left, a larger one on his right, his handmade leather boots, breaches, tunic, and belt that he'd made a couple years ago. The thermal underwear he'd gotten for last winter. The blackbear coat with bearskull still attached to the hood, and his bearpaw gloves he'd made just that spring.

"Fuck." he screamed as he kicked a rock that seemed to have been placed there just for him to kick, and it made a satisfying noise as it skittered down the cave towards the corner and the light.

Jeb huffed, and started working his way closer to the light cautiously.

He didn't know what was out there, and didn't want to rush. He got to the corner and slowly peeked his head just enough around the corner for one eye to see down towards the opening.

Nothing interesting, just a sandy floor and bright daylight outside. He worked his way around the corner, using his ears since his eyes were of no use. Wind... grass... that was it. He approached the opening slowly, stopping just out of direct daylight so his eyes could get used to the brightness and looked out on the world for the first time.

Long green flowing grasslands falling away from him down hill for several miles, a copse of trees off to the left, off to the right he thought he saw evidence of a stream leading further up the hill.

"well old man, this isn't Blue Lodge." he said to himself softly as he ran a hand through his long beard. He stayed on his heels and waited for another 15 minutes or so just getting a feel for the place. Watching the wind roll through the grass, listening for far off birds, but otherwise not seeing or hearing anything.

He stuck his head out of the cave turning his head to take it all in, getting a wider look at this new world he found himself in. it didn't look right, or at least it didn't look like the mountainous parts of Montana, and that was as close to 'wrong' as he could put his finger on. It smelled different, the sky felt weird, the horizon was nothing he remembered.

He backed up into the shadows again, and using the tip of his finger drew a line at the edge of the shadow. Then sat back, closed his eyes and counting his heartbeats, an old trick he'd taught himself to help calm down and pass a set amount of time.

Once he was sure he was calmed, he started counting. When he hit 900 he opened his eyes and looked to see which way the shadow had moved. Then stepped out of the cave just far enough to see where the sun was. His compass had been on a thong around his neck, that was missing now as well. Taking directions from the sun wasn't a very good way to tell direction, but it was better than nothing. Turning right out of the cave would turn him west and up hill towards the stream, he'd be needing water since his canteens were now gone, as was his Nalgene bottle and the beers he'd bought.

He was going to miss those beers.

He took another moment to look around at the world from the mouth of the cave, still nothing moving save the wind in the grass. He stepped out fully into the light, turning west or so he hoped, and started up the hill in the direction of the stream. The grass rapidly came up to his waist and he paused, looking left and right for the flow of the air through the grass, looking for breaks or disturbances.

Nothing. He crouched slightly so only his head was above the grass level, looked about again, and leaned down to put his hand in the dirt, he had to pull off the bearpaw glove to do that. Wasn't too damp so it had not rained recently, and not packed down, so it didn't get a lot of traffic, if any at all. He pulled his glove back on, poked his head back above the grass level to look around for a long moment. Still nothing, he moved out, first at a crouch again, but after a few minutes he stood up as the grass got taller, covering him to above his belly. The day was a bit warm for mid spring, but the breeze was pleasant, the sky was mostly clear and few clouds. He would have enjoyed the walk if he hadn't lost everything, and if he only knew where he was.

After an hour or so of walking he started to hear the sounds of running water, he slowed and lowered himself into the grass again, crouching as he closed in on the sound.

Approaching with caution he slowly came out of the grass, all but crawling as the height of the grass lowered, till he could see the stream. He waited, slowly turning his head from left, down hill, to right and uphill. All he could hear was running water and the occasional breeze. He came out of the grass, and looked down into the stream bed, a yard across and at least a foot deep, fast running, and clear. His eyes locked on a long branch, long bleached by the sun laying just out of the stream a few feet away.

He moved to it and picked it up, dragging it back to where he had come out of the grass. There were a couple of smaller branches off of it, but no leaves, and about 7 feet in length. He decided that if he broke the smaller branches off it'd make a passable walking stick, or fighting staff. As quietly as he could he used his gloved hands to break the smaller branches off, and tucked the broken pieces into the larger belt pouch for kindling. Once that was down, keep his new-found walking staff in his left hand, he worked his way back to the stream and lowered himself down, pulling his right glove off to palm up some water to taste it. As he'd thought the water was ice cold and tasted just like water. He drank his fill, one handful at a time, in between drinks he scanned the around, looking and listening for minutes on end. Once he'd filled his stomach he grabbed one of the flatter rocks from the bottom of the stream that were a bit larger than the palm of his hand and irregularly oblong, pointed slightly at one end, and tucked that in the large belt pouch as well. He'd fashion it into an stone ax later. He considered a few more stones in the river, tossing a couple further down stream till he found one with a crack in it. He then grabbed a larger rock from the edge of the stream to use as a base, and smacked the smaller stone on it with the crack vertical.

He stopped, turned his head to look and listen. He scanned all the way around him as best he could, but nothing seemed to have changed. He smacked the rocks together again, and paused to look and listen. Sound could carry a very long distance, and his ears were filled with the sound of running water, and he couldn't see far with as tall as the grass was... he bashed the rocks together as hard as he could one last time causing the smaller rock to split in half leaving a jagged edge. He tucked the larger part of that one in the small belt pouch as he retreated to the

cover of the grass and his stick. He sat with his back to the stream, stick across his knees, and using the rocks edge he rubbed the stick where the branches had been to smooth out the breaks and knock the splinters off, most of the bark was already missing, he scrapped the rest of it off as well.

Task done, he turned up hill, paralleling the stream as best he could from a few feet into the grass, he started walking again, using the stick he'd fashioned to help with the climb. Further up the slope was more trees, and the stream seemed to have flown through them as the ground leveled out a bit more.

He thought while he walked. He had a couple rocks, a bundle of dried sticks, a walking stick, and water... well a stream. What did he need? First and foremost, he needed a way to make fire, then someplace he could use that fire. Food would be nice, but he had a couple days before that became an issue. Moving closer to the stream he picked up a few smaller branches and a couple of sticks, gathering them under his left arm, moving the walking stick there 'just in case' he needed a weapon.

As he got closer to the shadow of the trees he slowed again, taking longer and longer to scan beneath them. There was plenty of light, the trees were not that thick. He moved into their shadows feeling the cool of the shade on his shoulders and the breeze as still in his face. Jeb moved in a couple of ranks of trees before finding a nice sheltered bow to use, the dirt was soft, and the roots bulging out of the ground on the uphill side made a nice wind break.

Setting the bundle of wood down on one side, he dug into his larger belt pouch for the big flat rock, taking it out, and then got all the smalls and tinder he'd collected and making piles of them as well.

Taking up the rock he held it in both hands and began digging a Dakota Fire Hole right next to the roots of his wind break. He wouldn't need to go deep, but he would need to poke a hole from the other side for the draft to access the bottom of the hole, giving the eventual fire the air it needed to burn hot, thus without smoke.

He took his time, stopping occasionally to look around and listen. The only noise he heard was the wind in the trees and the stream not that far away. When the hole was as deep as he wanted, and the dirt piled up around the hole and packed down he moved to the other side of the roots with a stick about as long as his arm. He estimated where the bottom of the hole was, and angled in at about a 45 degree angle to windward. This hole didn't need to be big, only large enough he could get his arm down it to get the dirt out of it, but it had to be in the general direction that the wind was coming from, fortunately the wind hadn't shifted much or often.

He Dug till he thought he was deep enough, stopping to look and listen, then reach into the hole to pull the loose dirt out of it, spreading the dirt around so it didn't look deliberate.

After a while he thought he was deep enough so he stuck the stick back in the hole, and stepped back to consider. Tilting his head to one side he gazed on his efforts. "Ah, ok." the second hole stopped short of the larger hole by about 4 inches. He was close, and that was good enough. He removed the stick and went back around to the other side of the roots. Reaching down to the bottom of the main hole he started digging with his hands toward he figured the second hole was, and wasn't that far off when he found it. Cleaning up the joining hole he packed the dirt in the main chamber best he could.

He then stripped a couple of the branches he'd picked up of their bark, working the fibrous inner layer off and rubbing them between his hands into a birds nest.

His head came up, eye wide, and looked around slowly. Nothing. He relaxed just a bit, then scanned around again, looking for a dead tree he could loot of fatwood. He picked up the 'ax' stone, stood and walked a few dozen yards away from the stream to a half fallen tree. It's boughs were tangled up with a few other trees in a formation called a 'widow maker' that could fall any time. Not walking under it he walked along side it to a lower branch within easy reach, using the stone ax he hit the branch on the underside right where it joined the trunk. After a couple thwacks it broke, he inspected it. Nice rich dark orange color and thick sent of

turpentine.

Prefect. He broke a couple feet off the new branch and went back to his 'camp'. Lacking a knife and a good rope or strong string, he wasn't going to be making a bow drill tonight... so fire plow or hand drill? Both required a base board hearth, which had to be cut, so he worked on that. It'd take a while with his improvised rock tools.

It took him a couple of hours to get everything the way he wanted it, so he paused to get another drink, and go an equal distance the opposite direction from the stream to relieve himself, keeping perpendicular to the wind so the smell wouldn't come back on him. As he got back to camp he compared the height of the sun from what he could see of the horizon and he estimated he only had an hour of daylight left, he needed to get the fire going and soon.

The fire plow had a trough leading to a V-notch at the far end, you had to take a pointed stick and putting a lot of pressure on it rub it back and forth toward the v-notch very quickly for quite a long time to get enough friction to get an ember. It was a lousy way to make fire, but he hadn't don't it in a long time... after 15 minutes of furiously rubbing the stick back and forth he remembered why, but at least he'd gotten an ember.

He lifted the hearth and tapped it with the stick to make sure all of the ember landed in the residual black dust created by the plowing motion. He let it sit for a couple minutes as the ember glowed, then carefully transferred it into the birds nest with the fatwood scrapes, holding the bundle up so the wind was coming from behind him to feed the fire, he steadily and gently blew into it as the ember glowed brightly and the bundle began to smoke. Blowing harder and harder till the birds nest caught fire, he then turned the nest over so it was upside down.

Fire Loves Chaos and always wants to climb. He set the burning birds nest into the Dakota Fire Hole and added the smallest twigs and sticks in on top of the growing fire. As soon as the fire was above that fuel source he added the medium sticks, then took a walk around never straying more than 50 feet away to grab up other fallen branches and brought them back, breaking them over his knee in time to feed the first the next bunch of branches.

Ever few minutes he'd gather up more wood till he had a decent sized pile just the other side of the fire hole from where he was laying along side another root, head closest to the trunk.

"I'm going to miss that wool blanket... I hadn't even taken the tag off yet." Jeb muttered to himself and he settled down to what he hoped wasn't that cold of a night, wherever he was.