

My Terribly Written Historical Fanfiction About Catherine Schubert:

Thud, thud, thud.

The pattering footsteps of over a hundred men, accompanied with their horses and camels, haunted Catherine O'Hare Schubert's journey for months on end. The Red River carts, of which carried the belongings *squeaked* and groaned, an infinitely irritating sound.

In each hand laid the palms of her three young children, Gus, Mary Jane, and Jimmy; who were each merely toddlers, or even younger. They travelled from Fort Garry with the Overlanders, a group of approximately 150 men, who wished to prospect for gold in the west. Unfortunately for Catherine, her husband, Augustus, was one of such men.

However, these men typically didn't bring their pregnant wives along with their children of whom were not yet of school age. Never mind the fact that Augustus hadn't even discovered she was pregnant, until more recently, further along the journey.

Walking across the endless plains and Rocky Mountains, all the way from the east, with an empty stomach was no easy task. A vast majority of the gold prospectors who had travelled with them had traded away tools initially meant for collecting gold – such as pans or shovels – in order to obtain food, given its scarcity. Nonetheless, Catherine knew that the emptiness in her belly, and her sunken cheeks would have no difference if the family had stayed in their home, given the depression that had struck their town. Desperate times call for desperate measures it seems, as many of the other prospectors travelling with the family were travelling west for similar poverty related reasons.

A small tugging on her skirt distracted Catherine from her own thoughts. It was one of the rare occasions in which she would allow her children to walk alongside her, rather than being strapped to her back. Gus, the eldest of the three, with a face bearing all the impatience a child could muster – which was in fact, quite a lot – cried out, "Mama, I'm tired! Can you carry me? Please?"

Catherine was tired, too. It was not easy trekking across a continent, eight months pregnant, while also tending to her very young children.

Even so, she wordlessly lifted him, holding them close, allowing him to fall asleep in her arms. After all, being unable to say no to her loved ones is what got her into this mess in the first place.

Augustus approached her, along with their other two children clutched in his arms. He held out a small amount of brilliant red salmonberries – which were named after their similar appearance to salmon roe, offering them to her.

"Cath, I was talkin' to some of the other men, and they say we'll be nearing the Thomson River soon enough. Though, we've oughta be careful. Don't let the children out of yer sight. The natives here 'ave shown us where to find food, such as these fine berries, though I've 'eard rumours of 'em betraying and murdering innocent people once the sun goes down."

Catherine wasn't entirely sure if that was accurate, nor whether it was the whole story, but opted not to push the matter. She was a housewife in the late 1800s, and knew how to choose her battles.

As the sun moved further along in the sky, so did the Overlanders. Mud caked the boots of those who did not travel upon animals, feet sore from long stretches of walking. Eventually, the endless rumbling sound of the Thomson River's currents drowned out any idle chatter, waking up Gus and Mary Jane. That's where everything went horribly wrong.

"You Schuberts ought to board the raft here, don't you think? The Thomson River is far safer to travel down than the Fraser River," said Thomas McMicking, the man who had led the journey all the

way from Fort Garry. He glanced down at Catherine's round stomach, and the abruptly woken up children in her arms, concern evident on his face.

Catherine smiled tensely. She hated it when people went out of their way to help her, as she could never discern exactly *why*, whether it be pity or an ulterior motive. "You have my thanks."

"Anything for your family," he responded.

Catherine remembered the day she had first heard of Thomas. It was the day that had changed everything.

In early spring of 1862, hundreds of men arrived in Fort Garry. Arriving from various corners of the world, some were from Canada West, or Canada East. Others joined from the United States, the United Kingdom, and even Australia.

That day, Augustus had arrived home early from his work as a carpenter. "Cath, 'ave you heard? Dozens of men, a whole lot of them, lined up in Fort Garry! They plan to travel west, towards the Cariboo Gold Rush. Can't you see? This is the opportunity we 'ave been waiting for. We can strike it rich, and never 'ave to worry about not having enough food for yer children, yet alone ourselves. The man leading them, they call him Thomas McMicking."

Catherine was less than enthused. "You want to leave me, with Gus, Mary Jane, and our- I mean, you want to leave us for gold?" She held her stomach, knowing she was four months pregnant with another child, but had yet to mention such news.

"Schnucki (A German term for darling), you know that's not what I meant. I will come back, pockets full of riches, to care for you and our children."

"I refuse. I am coming with you, and so are our children. You can judge for yourself if this journey is truly worth it."

Augustus not pleased with the arrangement, but had the sense not to argue with his wife when she had made up her mind.

Catherine's only hope was that they would not live to regret the decision.

The Schuberts boarded the raft, and began their journey down the Thomson River. The rest of the Overlanders had instead chosen to face the far more dangerous Fraser River.

Gus sat beside his sister, Mary Jane, who was still too young to speak properly. Meanwhile, Augustus searched ahead, trying to gain a sense of the duration of their ride, with Jimmy, the youngest child, in his arms. Each of them settled in on the raft, prepared for endless stretches of travelling down the river.

None of them had expected the journey to last six weeks long.

Along the way, the family had lost crucial supplies, of which included food, and other survival necessities. Catherine and Augustus had to resort to foraging for edible plants within the surrounding forestry, in order to feed themselves and their children. She was grateful for the Métis guide who had led the Overlanders through the Rocky Mountains, to the Tête Jaune Cache, a young man known as André Cardinal. It was him who taught her, along with the Overlanders, where to find food in the least likely places. Whether it be salmon berries, huckleberries, or even rosehips, there was comfort in not having to starve, despite the loss of their supplies.

As the family began to approach Fort Kamloops at last, Catherine spoke up, frantically. "August, something is wrong. I... I think the baby is coming early."

"Are you certain? It's still a bit early, innit? Charles – a doctor they had met during their time with the Overlanders – said we should 'ave at least another month!"

"You're not the one in this marriage who has been thrice pregnant. Trust me, Augustus, *it's happening.*"

Gus, seemingly oblivious to the matter at hand, pointed towards the shore. "Mama, who're those people?"

The people in question seemed to be First Nations people, likely from nearby. There was an unknown number of them, their silhouettes only just visible from the canopy of trees they stood behind. Catherine repeated as much, worry sprouting on her face, akin to the needles growing upon a douglas fir tree. "I don't know if we can trust them." She had trusted André, and those he had introduced her to, though she had no way of knowing if they were affiliated.

She felt torn between two choices. Despite the solid trade relationship and assistance in adjusting to the environment that the Overlanders as well as other settlers have gained from the First Nations peoples in the past, she also knew of the tension and history between them. She shuddered, thinking of the Chilcotin war, a violent dispute between gold prospectors and the Tsilhqot'in nation. Trusting in others was a gamble, but her decision had been made. "I refuse to nearly drown while in labour, on this rickety, old raft, after living on it for weeks on end. We must get off at Fort Kamloops."

It was far from easy to fight against the current, in order to allow the raft to approach their destination. Not one Schubert left that experience without being completely and utterly *drenched*. Despite the tribulations, the family persevered, paddling to the shore with all the might a man, three children, and a pregnant woman could possibly have, combined. It is ill-advised to underestimate the strength of a mother.

Catherine crawled onto the rocky riverside, the rocks digging into her palms and knees. Mary Jane had begun bawling during the affair, her screams nearly overpowering the loud noises the river's currents had screeched out, while Jimmy remained eerily silent amidst the chaos. Gus, evidently shaken up, had clutched onto his father's legs for comfort. The five of them had safely reached the shore.

However, their fight was far from over.

Surrounding them were the First Nations people they saw while on the raft. They loomed over the family, like the great cedar trees of the forest, with spears, bows, and guns – of which they had likely traded for – on their bodies. Catherine's stomach dropped and she knew it was not because of her unborn child. It was instead, an old friend.

Dread.

Burning like hot coal in the core of her body, it roared, boiled, and smoked. The lives of her family were at the mercy of these strangers.

Catherine Schubert was a proud lady. At the age of sixteen, she had moved from her home in Ireland to Springfield, Massachusetts, and found respectable work there as a housemaid. In her youth, she had taught herself how to read and write, as well as opened a grocery store independently for her community. She had begun her travels with the Overlanders while four months pregnant, and was not about to allow all the aches, sores, and scars she had achieved along the way to go to waste. Catherine was a proud lady; but she was also a wise one.

She knew what lengths she would go to for her family.

Catherine stood up from the ground, warily eyeing the others around her. Seemingly noticing her hesitation, they introduced themselves as members of the Shuswap First Nation. Women, all of whom

were Shuswap rose up, wanting to assist her. She recognized the looks on their faces, one that had been on her very own face too many times. The true, raw, need for *understanding*.

With their help, Catherine safely delivered a young girl, of whom they named Rose; a reference to the wild rosehips they had eaten to fight off starvation.

TO BE CONTINUED... (not yet finished)

TO DO:

- mainly lowering action/wrap up stuff:
- explain subplot of Catherine caring for children while supporting Augustus and his gold prospecting dreams
- include Augustus' character development subplot about being present for his family
- the Schuberts settle down and have another child as well as obtain a farm
- connect their settlement/migration patterns to main idea/topic... tie in confederation if possible?
- mention their deaths later in life and conclude the story.