

# Kerry McDaniels and the Cave

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*“A fun adventure for young men and women to experience!”*

~ Doree Anderson, author

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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my children  
who have been an inspiration and a blessing in my life



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# CHAPTER ONE

MONTANA IS RUGGED, beautiful and mystical as are the legends and myths of the people who settled here. My dad has never put much credence in the legends or myths but says there's truth in the beginning of any tale. Myself, I'd never given much thought to either until Shadow and I found the cave.

I'm Kerry McDaniels, the youngest son of Sally and Jacob McDaniels. Raised on Rose Feather Outfitters Ranch outside Libby, Montana, we are the fourth generation. I have three older brothers and one sister and we all have a particular job that we do on the ranch besides being the entertainment at the nightly camp fires and all the celebration in town. We all play the guitar and sing, and Mom and my sister Danene also play the piano. Music is as much a part of us as ranching. Steve works the cattle, Rob the horses, Jace is the ranch veterinarian and Danene enjoys doing the trade shows that bring clients to Rose Feather. We've been busier than usual and we have a short break. A break I'm going to take advantage of.

The snow had finally melted from the higher mountain elevations and the water in the rivers was slowing down. It

was the first day of July and I started collecting all the necessary equipment that I'd need for my three day fishing trip. My best friend since he was a malamute puppy, Shadow playfully ran around my legs as I strolled into the house for the grub bag my mom had put together for me. Before lifting up the canvas bag from the counter, I added an extra half-dozen homemade peanut butter cookies and a few packages of honey balls.

I finished tying up my fishing pole and tackle box to the back of my saddle. With another rope, I secured the grub bag and my sleeping bag when Mya, my quarter horse, looked back at me, and I presumed she was wondering what else I was going to put on behind that saddle. After everything was secure, I picked up my rifle and put it in its scabbard.

"Okay, Mya. I see you're as anxious as I am to get going." I chuckled at her pawing the ground. "Just a few things girl, and we'll be ready." Shadow came out the back door carrying a knapsack in his mouth. "I see Mom fixed you something special, too. Let's have it. I think I've just enough room left in my saddle bag, Shadow."

"Kerry?"

"Yeah, Dad?"

"Do you have an idea where you're going to camp?" he asked, taking off his hat, and hitting it against his leg to shake the dust off. He ran his fingers through curly, dark blond hair before placing the hat back on.

"I was thinking up Granite Creek. There's some great fishing up there."

"I just want an idea where you'll be. Watch out for traps. Anderson has been trapping around that area. You might

think about camping down from the falls to keep Shadow out of trouble.”

“You don’t think he’d shoot Shadow if he saw him, do you?” I asked, looking at the seriousness in his blue eyes.

“He’d shoot and ask questions later. He’s always on the hunt for wolves, and I don’t think he’d wait to get close enough to tell the difference.”

“I’ll camp away from the falls just to be safe.”

“Good. You have everything you need? Bait, fry pan?”

“Yeah, Mya undoubtedly thinks she’s a pack mule with all I’ve packed.”

Mom came out of the kitchen and gave me a hug. Her long auburn hair was pulled back in one long braid. A light breeze blew the loose strands lightly across her face. She had such a sparkle in her blue eyes and a mischievous smile that Steve, one of my older brothers inherited, always making me wonder what he’s up to.

“Have fun and be careful,” she said, putting her arm around my dad’s waist.

“See you on Wednesday,” I said, mounting Mya. We headed east past the stables, Jace’s veterinarian building and the milk barn.

New growth surrounded us. Indian paint brush, bitter root, daises, poppies and lilies were all in bloom, spreading an array of color along the trail.

Stopping at the edge of a meadow, we watched a small herd of deer grazing. Four young spikes were playing. Cautiously, a moose and her twins entered the meadow. After sniffing the air she lowered her head to graze, and the calves ran past

her to play. We watched them until the breeze shifted and they caught our scent. Heads came up. Sniffing the air, they ran in leaps and bounds, leaving the meadow in solitude at least 30 seconds, until Shadow took chase. Occasionally, I could see him in the tall grass chasing something.

Grizzly and black bear roam Montana, but for the most part they don't bother their two legged brothers. It's mountain lions I'd say I fear the most. When you think you're tracking them, they'll circle around and track you; the same as a bear but more silently. Another good reason for bringing Shadow with me is that mountain lions and bears keep their distance. They hate ruckus, and dogs like to make a lot of noise.

"Well, Mya, I guess we should catch up." A squeeze of my legs and Mya loped across the meadow to where Shadow was waiting. We continued on up the trail until we came to the river, then rode down along the bank. Because of the gentle slope to the water's edge, the game crossed the river here and used it for a drinking hole. Looking at the sun, I'd say I'd been riding two or three hours. Not wanting to set up camp on the game trail, we continued up river where I found a perfect spot under three lodge pole pines.

After taking the pack and saddle off Mya, I tied her to one of the pine trees. I found a flat spot cushioned with pine needles to lay out my sleeping bag. Using a couple of thigh high boulders for a table top, I placed my food and packs on them to keep them off the ground. Shadow sat patiently while I set up camp and made a small fire pit. With my pole and line in hand, I sat down on a fallen branch. Shadow made himself comfortable, too.

"Shadow, soon as I get this pole lined, we'll go catch

dinner.” His ears perked up as he walked over and laid his head on my leg. “That just about does it, boy. Just need to get us something to munch on and we’ll be on our way.” Shadow barked as I stood up from the log. I smiled; he was as excited as I was.

Putting on my backpack which contained the bait can, a small tackle box, our goodies and a first aid kit, (that I always kept in my pack) we were off. I untied Mya and led her beside a tree stump.

“Mya, I’m not going to saddle you.” Before she stepped closer to the stump, she shook her head and whinnied as if she understood. After mounting her, we headed back up the river towards the falls.

Willows grew along parts of the bank and I watched the morning cloak butterflies dance in and out of them. Their dark red and bright yellowish banded wings, spotted with bright blue, added to the beauty of the mountains. Coming around a bend, we came across the start of a beaver dam. We stopped to watch a beaver trying to put a log into place. When Shadow barked, the beaver let the log slide and dove into the water.

“Now, Shadow, that wasn’t very nice. That beaver was working hard on his house.” Shadow barked again and continued up river with us on his heels. The roar of the waterfall was within earshot before we reached the oxbow and the narrow trail that wove its way through the clusters of pine. Entering the open area, pines thinned and quaking aspen grew sporadic in the colorful small meadow around the base of the fall. Thirty feet of granite rock wall on both sides of cascading water would lead one to believe that the trail

ended here. However, the game trail continued up past the falls on the other side of the river. Spray rebounded from the rocks and was a cool relief on a hot day. After tying Mya to a quaky my first thought was to look for wolf traps along the river bank.

“Shadow! Stay. I want to check out the surroundings.” Sure enough, four traps were set along the shore and one under a pine tree. “This trap looks big enough for a bear.” Carefully uncovering the trap so it was exposed for any animal that might stroll by. The traps in the water I left alone. However, I would keep Shadow close to me.

“This looks like a good spot, Shadow.” We sat down, I baited my hook and tossed it upstream into the current. Watching my bobbin float past and then dip out of sight, I felt a tug on my line. The trout tried to swim down river, jumping in and out of the water trying to dislodge the hook, making it difficult to keep a taut line. As the fish came closer to shore, Shadow was barking and prancing around. You’d have thought that he caught that trout! I reeled it ashore onto the grass.

“Shadow, this trout is a beauty. I believe he’s about thirteen inches. We’ll let him go. Besides, he’s too big for our fry pan.” Taking the hook out, I tossed him back into the river. We played catch and release for most of the afternoon. The last five we kept, cleaned them, filled my fish basket with grass and put them inside. I wanted to get back to camp before the sun went down. Looking at its position in the sky, I figured we’d make it with about a half hour to spare. Enjoying a couple of peanut butter cookies on our way back to camp took the edge off my hunger.

At camp I slid off Mya, set my pack down by the fire pit and tied her to a pine.

“Shadow, let’s gather firewood.” We didn’t have far to go from camp to gather enough wood to keep a fire going most the night. Shadow carried his share in a couple of trips. He’d drag in limbs and I’d break them into camp fire size pieces. After breaking and stacking our wood beside the campfire, I put pine needles in the bottom of the fire pit, and then covered them with kindling.

Getting in my pack, I brought out the fry pan, lard, salt and pepper, sage and partially cooked spuds along with my matches. Lighting the pine needles and blowing lightly on them soon had the kindling crackling. I put on the larger logs cabin style so my fry pan would sit on top and then placed the foil wrapped potato in the fire. Adding salt and pepper and sage to my flour, I lightly battered the fish with the mixture before placing them in the fry pan.

“Are you hungry Shadow?”

“Ruff!”

“Yeah, I’m hungry, too.” I put a couple of pats of lard in the pan with the fish and put the pan on the fire. “It won’t be too long now.” I took two handfuls of grain over to Mya and lengthened her lead rope so she could reach the grass.

Checking on the fish, I turned them over. “There’s nothing as good as fish cooking over a fire. I think that spud should be close to being done.” I patted Shadow as he sat beside me.

“Look at that moon coming up. We’ll be sleeping under a

lantern tonight.” I pulled the spud out of the fire and pulling off the hot foil, the potato fell onto my plate. Taking the first fish out of the pan, I put it on Shadow’s plate, having filleted it from the bottom side. Checking it again for bones, I blew on it to cool it off and laid it down in front of him. I took out the second one and placed it on my plate. My mouth started watering as the aroma reached my nostrils. “A meal made for a king. Don’t you think so Shadow?”

After we finished, I took our plates down to the river and washed them. Returning the plates to the grub bag, I put another log on the fire and quickly finished putting everything away.

Tightening up Mya’s rope for the night, I left it long enough so that she could lie down. After walking back over to my sleeping bag, I took my boots off, crawled inside and gazed skyward. I couldn’t remember ever seeing so many stars. It reminded me of the big city lit up at night. The sky seemed so close that if I was on the ridge, I could just reach up and touch the moon and perhaps gather stars to carry in my pocket.

“Look Shadow, a falling star. What a ride that would be!” His ears perked up when we heard the howl of a wolf. “It’s all right; he’s howling at the moon. Besides, he’s a distance away.” The second howl seemed closer. “Maybe I’ll put another log on the fire,” I said nervously.

The sound of the river was relaxing, and the nocturnal creatures were mystically singing their songs. Soon I found I could no longer keep my eyes open and drifted off into a peaceful slumber.

## CHAPTER TWO

MY EYES LAZILY opened as the sun was entering the valley. Shadow was still lying beside me, and Mya was trying to reach the grass just beyond her reach.

“Guess it’s time to rise and shine, as Mom would say.” I slid out of my bag and stretched before putting my boots back on before walking over to the grub bag.

“I believe Mom put some cornbread in here that would taste great with trout.” I picked up my pole and the bait can and walked down to the river. After threading the hook through a juicy worm, I cast my line. In a couple of minutes, I had the first trout and enough for breakfast in a half hour. We gathered more firewood and soon breakfast was cooking.

Mya was restless and started circling the tree. Shadow began barking.

“All right, what’s coming down the trail?” Taking my rifle out of the scabbard and standing up on the rock for a better view, I saw what was causing the alarm. “Guess someone else thought breakfast smelled good.”

Prodding down the trail was a black bear cub. “That’s not good, Shadow. Where there’s a cub, its mom isn’t far behind. Hey boy, think you can chase him off?” I watched him shoot

up the trail. The cub, however, didn't scare. In fact, he thought Shadow was there to play. This wasn't working. I needed to get that cub away from camp! Then I thought of something. The honey ball candy I put in the grub bag just might do the trick. Cubs are very curious and playful, so I knew I could get close to him. I just prayed that his mother would stay away a bit longer. I took one bag of honey balls and walked towards the cub. Throwing one in front of him, he stopped, sniffed, and ate. "You want more, then come this way."

"Shadow, go back to camp. Go on!" I needed to get the cub over that small ridge where the mother was sure to go when she caught my human scent. I was out of site of the camp when I could hear the cub's mother crying out to her cub. Taking some of the honey balls and scattering them on the ground, I quietly backed away to wait behind some pines. It wasn't long till the mother bear reached her cub. Curious about what the cub was eating, she nosed around and ate a few of the honey balls that the cub hadn't devoured. Sniffing, she came after two honey balls that had fallen as I'd backed away. Catching my scent, she reared up, startling me. Scrambling away, my foot caught on a fallen log and I fell backward. She came running at me. Jumping onto my feet, I climbed up the closest tree, hoping she wouldn't follow.

"Now, Mother bear, you don't want to come up this tree. I don't want to hurt you or your cub." Not knowing if she wanted to tear me apart or could smell those honey balls in my pocket, it didn't matter as I watched her struggle to reach me. I didn't want her on the same limb. "Shadow! Shadow! Here boy!"

Hearing him come over the ridge barking, Mother bear

slid down the tree and sprang after her cub, herding him up the canyon. “Good boy,” I shouted, climbing down the pine. “I didn’t want to have to shoot her, Shadow. Good job.” Kneeling down I rubbed the sides of his face. “Let’s get back to camp.”

Back at camp you could smell the fish burning. Putting my rifle away, I tried to salvage breakfast.

“My guess, Shadow, is that you couldn’t turn this fish over?” He just looked at me and barked. “Wait until I tell Mom someone else loves her honey balls as much as I do. But that’s not surprising, is it boy?”

We ate what we could salvage of the fish along with the cornbread, cleaned up and packed everything back inside the leather bag. Tying the grub bag up a tree would keep it out of harms way, just in case our visitors wondered back this way. Just to be safe, my sleeping bag went on the next limb, higher.

After saddling Mya, we were on our way back up to the falls. I stopped at a few different holes along the river and had great success. It was after twelve when we reached the falls. Mya was acting skittish, so I decided to tie her up down from the waterfall, but within sight. Proceeding back to the spot I’d fished the previous day with my pole and bait in hand eager to start, I heard Shadow growl. Cautiously, my eyes quickly scanned the area.

“What’s the matter, boy?” I asked, kneeling down beside him. That’s when I spotted him laying low across the river. “A wolf! So that’s what Mya could sense.” When I stood up, he tried to back away. That’s when I saw he was caught in

one of Anderson's traps. Jogging back to where Mya was tied, I took my backpack off the saddle and put my pole in a crevice. Looking up and down the river for a shallow crossing, we found one that was only about knee deep. Gingerly, we crossed the river, making it without any trouble. We slowly walked toward the wolf. His coat was a beautiful silver and black and I was thinking he was around two years old.

"You've got yourself caught in one of Anderson's traps, huh fellow?" He tried to run, but the trap held him fast. He crouched and snarled. Shadow barked and growled back.

"That's enough Shadow. Stay!" I cautiously proceeded toward the wolf. "It's ok, boy. I'm not going to hurt you. Easy there." I reached out my hand. He pulled away and cried out. "Easy, boy, let me help you." From where I knelt I couldn't tell if his leg was broken. I stood up and walked to his left. I could see there was a small branch caught in the trap also. In fact, I hoped it prevented the trap from breaking his leg. But I wouldn't know until I removed his leg from the trap. I walked back to face him and knelt down.

"Easy, boy, I'm not going to hurt you." I kept talking, keeping my voice low and calm. "You hungry, fellow?" I scavenged around in my bag and came upon some beef jerky. I took out a couple of pieces and eased them toward him. He snarled and then whined. "Easy, boy. Here, you'll like this." I removed a couple of pieces... Shadow growled again. "Shadow, be still. Sit!" I inched closer to the wolf and laid down the jerky within his reach. He snarled and I backed off a bit.

"I know you must be hungry." I used a stick and pushed the jerky closer. He sniffed it. Keeping a close watch on me,