

*Erika & Oz Adventures in American History*

# MURDER IN BOZEMAN

SAM DREXLER & FAY SHELBY

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Summary: Having the ability to time travel, Erika and Oz, transport themselves to Montana, 1867, to solve the mystery of who really murdered John Bozeman.

1-American history—fiction 2-John Bozeman 3-Blackfeet Indians  
4-Time—science fiction

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By

Sam Drexler & Fay Shelby



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## Authors' Note:

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Although this book is based on historical research, it is a work of fiction. We tried to maintain historical accuracy but events and characters were occasionally altered for literary purposes. Thus ***Murder in Bozeman*** should not be treated as exact history, but what we like to call historical science fiction.

This novel is the second Erika & Oz Adventures in American history. The first book in the series is ***Lost in Spillville***. That book was inspired by a trip to the Bily Clocks Museum located in Spillville, Iowa.

This book began after a trip to the Pioneer Museum in Bozeman, Montana and the Museum of the Rockies, also in Bozeman. There are many theories surrounding the death of John Bozeman—perhaps after reading this book you'll come up with your own.

## Acknowledgements

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## Dedication

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To Mary (Moe) Sampsel who loved  
Montana so much.





## Prologue

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*A sharp knife pierces my throat. Black eyes stare into mine, like deep wells where I'm slowly drawn. I almost surrender—hopeless, helpless—but somehow, somebody pulls me out. Is it Erika? "Erika!" I cry. But she isn't there.*

*I wander through endless hills until I spy a rope hanging from a high branch. A noose swings back and forth, back and forth. Falling on my knees, I inch forward until I reach the cliff's edge. Four newly dug graves appear below, but whose are they?*

These dreams have haunted me for months, ever since I began searching for my biological father. What is the connection between my search and those dreams? I don't know. All I know is if you have a recurring dream, it's telling you something. Is it telling me my father has black eyes? That's hard to believe since I have clear blue eyes.

I live with my grandparents who understand my anguish about my father. But they are as clueless as I about his whereabouts and origins.

Mom doesn't understand my obsession. "I don't care to know who he is," she says when I discuss the subject. "Why do you care?"

"Because I want to know who my father is. That's why," I reply.

I decided to search on my own, without even telling her. I began on the Internet. I've found a chat site where people help each other find their biological parents. Someone on the site showed me how to hack the sperm

bank records where my mom went. I thought I was finally going to find my father. It was so exciting; my chest was exploding with my heartbeats.

But it wasn't as easy as I thought. They programmed the information so no one could decipher it, not even with a fake permission code. But I wasn't going to give up, not yet.

My search led me to one interesting clue: my biological father is either from Bozeman, Montana or his name is Bozeman. I won't go into the details of how I found that out, but believe me I'm pretty sure about it. So naturally I began studying everything related to that town in Montana.

School started about the time I began my search into my father's background, which made me lag behind in schoolwork. I didn't tell anyone—not even Erika. She wondered what I was up to, but didn't ask. My teachers, especially Mr. Leffelholz, noticed my absent-mindedness. He bugged me when I got bad grades on the first couple of quizzes. Then he threatened to fail me in American history in front of the whole class. I could see failing in geometry, but American history? He said he doubted if I could write the research paper he'd assigned. That really ticked me off! Most kids live up to adults' expectations. My friend Glen had Bs in English until his dad said he was a lousy writer, now he gets Ds. Not me, I'm going to prove Mr. Leffelholz wrong, and do better than he expects me to.

We're supposed to write about someone in the past and how they affected history. Most of the kids are writing about Abe Lincoln or George Washington. They're pretty cool, but I'm interested in a guy named John Bozeman. Who is John Bozeman? He's the reason there's

a Bozeman, Montana, and my possible relative. He did all kinds of things, like mine for gold, build mills, and scout new territories in the West. He came up with a trail in Idaho and Montana that saved settlers 400 miles of traveling. For all I know, he could be my great great-grandfather. Did I get my adventurous spirit from him?

I've read a lot on the Old West and American Indians, but I want to see what it's really like. I want to see if John Bozeman looked like me. I want to see why history books say he died a mysterious death.

So what am I going to do, you ask? I'm going back in time to meet the man I'll write about. Just imagine my teacher's face when he reads my report. He'll think I really did some research huh? Yeah, like I was there!

That is, if Erika joins me. Erika's smart and thinks of stuff I don't. Time travel is tricky and you don't want to go by yourself. It's like scuba diving; you need a buddy in case something goes wrong. And according to Murphy's Law—something *always* goes wrong.



## CHAPTER I

Since my last adventure in time travel I, Erika Van Barnaby, see life differently. I now see it as a long road with millions of people marching on it. Each person is destined to travel a certain distance, leaving behind a track for others. In other words, I see life as an endless continuum rather than something with a fixed beginning and end. I hope you know what I mean, because when I wrote the same idea for Mrs. Gerund in English she didn't get it. She wrote on my paper, "Explain. Give examples." I almost wrote back: "Here's an example: When the Bily brothers built their clocks as time machines, Oz and I found and used them. So what they did in the past affected us now." But I didn't. I still think that our experience in time travel should remain a secret. Who knows? Some weirdos might use it to ruin the history of humankind, like Oz always says.

Since our 'time' experience in Spillville, Oz and I have become best friends. I introduced him to my parents, who amazingly really liked him. They don't mind him hanging around with me at home, discussing the Bily, time travel and our future.

However, exactly in August, Oz started to act weird—sort of absentminded and unavailable. Whenever I'd say

we shouldn't mess with time travel again, he'd grow quiet and look up at the sky or kick a pebble on the ground with his huge hiking boot. That worried me because it seemed that he was planning something he wasn't telling me. I can't believe he'd think of traveling in time again after we almost got killed last time and barely made it back.

A few weeks after school started, Oz came up with excuses for not walking home with me after school. At first I didn't think much about it. He had to do research in the library or the computer lab. But then I began to wonder if those were only excuses to avoid me. Sometimes I'd phone him at home. His grandma would call him, only to come back and tell me he was busy. I got majorly hurt. Was he seeing someone else?

One afternoon in October, I confronted Oz and asked him why he was avoiding me. I had to know the reason, no matter what. In a hurry, I pulled on a black turtleneck over regular jeans, laced my black-and-white running shoes and headed out without bothering to comb my hair that hangs down almost to my waist.

The October breeze rustled the yellow and orange oak leaves, which glowed in the sunlight and made the mile walk unexpectedly enjoyable. When I arrived, I paused in front of the blue two-story house. I regretted not bringing my cell phone to call, but I wanted to see Oz instead of hearing some lame excuse.

As usual, his grandparents greeted me cheerfully. "My you look so nice in black," Mrs. Larsen said.

"Thank you." I blushed. "Is Oz in?"

Mr. Larsen held the screen door open. "Yes, and I'm sure he'll be happy to see you. I'll call him."

"Can I just go upstairs?"

"Sure," Mr. Larsen said, winking at me.

I skipped up the narrow staircase two steps at a time. Hesitating, I took a deep breath in front of Oz's closed door, and then knocked. The sound of unfamiliar music streamed out of his room. I knocked louder, wondering if I should barge in. I imagined catching him with a new girlfriend. My heart skipped a beat.

I pushed the door open. The room was a mess—a big mess. A strong wood scent hung in the air. An unmade bed, clothes strewn all over, open books on the desk and floor. In one corner of the room Oz, crouched over, chipped away at some wood with a chisel. His disheveled blond hair covered his eyes.

"Hi," I said with a big smile, relieved to find him alone.

But he didn't hear me. He filed away like a madman.

"Oz!" I yelled above the music.

He winced, then looked toward me. When his eyes finally recognized me, he smiled. "Hey Erika. What's up?" His oversized T-shirt made him look thinner than the last time I saw him.

"You tell me what's up!" I pushed the clothes off his desk chair and sat down. "What music are you listening to?"

"Jack Gladstone." Oz turned the volume down. "He's a Blackfeet Indian from Montana."

I've thought of my friend Munta many times, a Winnebago Indian who saved my life. I wish he lived in our time so I could see him more often. "When did you start listening to Indian music?"

"I bought the CD for this one song, but I like the rest

of them too. They're cool." He handed me the case.

I read the list of songs. "Which one is it?"

"*The Bozeman Trail*; let me play it for you." He punched in the song's number and I waited for it to start, curious about what Oz was really up to.

"Here it is—listen."

The song had a soothing beat, guitar music and a folk style. It was awesome, but I knew that wasn't why Oz was listening to it. There must be a hidden reason, and I was dying to hear it.

"Oz, I'm gonna ask you a question and want you to answer honestly," I said, tapping my fingers on the desk. "Why have you been avoiding me?"

He turned down the volume. "What?"

"You've been avoiding me lately. Why?"

He stretched his arms over his head and yawned. "You notice a lot of stuff."

I picked a dirty sock off the floor and threw it at him. "Don't avoid the question! Tell me what's going on."

"With what?"

"You know."

He plopped over the bed's edge next to me. "Okay. I was going to wait another week before I told you, but I guess I can tell you now."

My heart pounded in my ears. Was he going to tell me about the new girl? How come I never saw them together? How would I handle it? I felt sick in the stomach. "I'm listening," I said almost in a whisper.

"First, promise not to flip out on me."

"Promise."

"Whether you agree with me or not."

"I said I promise."



Oz's blue eyes flashed with excitement. The first time I saw his eyes flashing like that was at the old church in Spillville when I told him we were sixty years in the past.

Oz whispered. "I'm going back in time."

"What?" I yelled. All my suspicions evaporated into thin air leaving me with a hollow feeling of a different worry.

"You heard me, I'm going back in time."

"Ozymandias, you must be crazy."

"You can say that," he chuckled.

I pushed him on the shoulder. "And that's nothing to be proud about."

"Anyhow," he said, brushing his hair back with stained fingers. "Whether you're going with me or not I'm going."

"What do you mean whether I'm going with you or not? You didn't even ask me!" I sprang toward the door.

"Wait!" Oz pleaded. "Let's discuss it."

I turned around to face him. "I told you a million times that we should not mess with time travel."

"Yes. But this time it's for a good reason. An important reason."

"There's no reason good enough to endanger our lives. And I don't want to discuss it any further. Goodbye Oz. Have a good weekend."

I slammed the door behind me and dashed down the staircase.

"Won't you have a cup of tea with us?" asked Mrs. Larsen when I reached the front room.

"No thank you. Maybe some other time," I said, wondering if there would ever be another time.