



Run for the Hills

Elva Knavel

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May 31, 1889. A recreational dam, high in the western Pennsylvania mountains, breaks. It sends an avalanche of water plummeting fourteen miles toward the unsuspecting residents of Johnstown, destroying everything in its wake. More than two thousand lives are snuffed out in minutes and tens of thousands left homeless. It is the major American tragedy of the 19th century. Run for the Hills tells this story with historical accuracy. Anna and her family struggle with fear, separation, death, hatred, and forgiveness. The family horse becomes Anna's best friend as her mother grows distant. The family leans heavily on their Christian faith. Especially distressing is the hatred they feel toward the "rich folks on the mountain", whom many blame for the disaster. They feel the rich folks had no regard for the safety of their families. It is an exciting human-interest adventure. All ages enjoy it, especially young readers, twelve to fourteen. Those who love horses are drawn to it. Some prospective uses: entertainment, historical education, school curriculums, libraries; museums; tourist centers, elevation of Christian ethics; a discussion starter on topics such as responsibility to others, how our actions affect others, forgiveness, and the issue of dam safety. Elva Knavel, a native of the Johnstown area, says she wanted to write this story for years. She now makes her home in Florida with her pastor husband and family, but returns every summer to the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania and the "salt of the earth" people she loves.

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