

Lesson 8

READ THIS STORY #2, Advanced

Black Hawk Saloon

When Minnie walked through the swinging double doors, she felt as though she had been transported back in time. The Black Hawk Saloon was almost empty. It was quite dark, and the long narrow room seemed steeped in gloom. Yet it was a hot afternoon, and the air in the place was stifling.

The polished wooden bar shone like a silver spoon. Lots of tall bottles reflected in the mirror behind the bar. Minnie could imagine that scores of ranchhands had hooked the heels of their boots over the footrail. She could picture the men standing at the bar drinking as the whiskey flowed freely. The men would shoot the breeze while chewing wads of tobacco. If their aim was good, they would hit the spittoon.

Then Minnie recalled that the Black Hawk Saloon had been a refuge for hoodlums and crooks. So most of the action probably took place in the backroom where the cardsharks gambled and played poker. Some men must have stood by as lookouts for the sheriff or other do-gooders.

It would have been taboo for any decent woman to enter the Black Hawk Saloon. Why, then, did Minnie think that the Black Hawk was a romantic place?