

FROM WAR TO EVANGELISM

By

J. D. Bilbro Ph.D.

CHAPTER 1

Jim sat bolt upright in bed, awakened by his mother's screaming, "Please don't hit me again, Bart, please!" Jim threw back the covers and rushed to the kitchen and saw his mother lying on the floor with bruises on her face and blood dripping from her nose.

His dad was standing over her with a snarl on his lips and a wild look in his bloodshot eyes. "That'll teach you to lie to me you hussy. I saw how you flirted with that handsome stranger who said he just came by to get a drink of our water."

Bart reached down and grabbed his wife by the shoulders, pulled her up and shoved her down into a chair. As he drew back his fist to hit her again, Jim grabbed a chair and hit Bart across the back with all his strength. For an instant he was knocked to his knees, but he quickly recovered and started toward his son exclaiming, "Damn you, Jim, I'll kill you as sure as hell." Jim turned and fled out the kitchen door, screaming as he ran, "I hate you, I hate you!"

Bart started after him but he was too drunk to move very fast, so he gave up the chase and just hollered after Jim, "I get you for this you little devil, and I'll whip you within an inch of your life!"

Exhausted from beating on his wife, he collapsed into a chair, leaned onto the table, and put his head in his arms. Mary sat in her chair holding a tea towel to her nose to catch the blood, weeping softly.

A few moments later she heard Bart beginning to snore, so she dragged herself to her feet and made her way to the wash stand where she wet the towel and slowly wiped her face; her nose had stopped bleeding. As it was one o'clock in the morning, she made her way to her bedroom and painfully climbed back into her bed, knowing from past experiences that Bart would be in a drunken stupor for several hours.

A few minutes later she heard Jimmy going past her door on the way to his bedroom. She got up, followed him into his room, and closed the door. Then she put her arms around him and said, "Oh, Jimmy, I am so sorry your dad got drunk again, and I thank you for stopping him from beating me. Now go on back to bed; your dad will wake up in the morning, sober, sick, and very mean."

"Mom, were you really flirting with that stranger?"

"No, I was not flirting with him, but I know I will never convince your father that I wasn't."

"Well then, Mom, why do you put up with him? Why don't you just leave him and get a divorce?"

“Son, when I married your father I made a vow to stay with him till death do us part, and I plan to keep that vow. I continue to pray for him, and I choose to believe the Lord will answer my prayer someday and save his soul.”

“Mom, I don’t think I can stand to see Dad beating you over and over again. I just want to kill him—and one of these days I just might do that!”

“Oh no, Jimmy, that would be murder and then I would lose both my husband and my son. Promise me you will not ever consider killing your father. I know deep down in him somewhere there is a bit of kindness and perhaps a little love. After all he was a good man when I married him, but he fell in with the wrong kind of men and began drinking and playing poker with them; now I'm afraid he has become an alcoholic.

“He is still a decent man when he is sober; it is just when he gets drunk that the demons beset him and he becomes a brute out of control.” She hugged her son again, kissed him lightly on his forehead, then went back to her bedroom and retired.

Jimmy had not made any promises, and his mind was full of thoughts of revenge as he crawled back into bed.

About seven o’clock the next morning, Mary dragged her bruised and aching body to the kitchen and began preparing breakfast as quietly as possible. Soon Bart awakened, raised his head off his arms, and looked at Mary through bleary, bloodshot eyes.

“How do you feel this morning, woman? I seem to remember something about you denying you were playing up to that cowboy and I slugged you a good one to teach you a lesson. And don’t let me catch you looking at another man like you looked at that cowhand.”

With that threat he made his way to the wash stand and splashed water on his craggy face with his calloused hands. Bart was a tall man with a husky build, well muscled from his working on the railroad, and darkly tanned from his hours of exposure to the sun.

Mary knew it would be fruitless to deny any wrongdoing, so she just kept on with her breakfast preparation and didn’t make any comment.

In a few minutes Bart asked, “Where is that headache medicine; my head feel like it’s going to bust open?” Mary got the medicine and a glass of water and handed them to Bart. Without a word of thanks he popped the pill and followed it with a swallow of water.

CHAPTER 2

Jimmy appeared in the doorway and glanced at his dad with a look of contempt. Then he walked over to his mother, planted a kiss on her cheek, and said, “Mom, I really do love you.”

Mary turned to her son, hugged him, and replied, “I love you too, son. Now wash your hands, breakfast is ready.”

The three sat down at the table and ate their breakfast without a word being said. When Bart finished, he got up, grabbed his cap, and started out the door. Then he turned toward Jimmy, paused for a moment like he was trying to remember something. Then he just shook his head and departed—he had forgotten his threats to Jimmy.

He walked the five blocks to the train depot; upon arriving he barked at the three section hands who worked under him: “I’m ready to go, so let’s get that hand car moving; we need to replace some ties this morning.”

Bart was the section foreman and he liked to exercise his authority. The men disliked him and did not say anything in reply; they just got their hand tools and climbed aboard the hand car. Two of them began pumping the power handles and the car started moving down the track. After they had travelled about two miles they stopped the car at the place when the replacement ties were lying alongside the track.

They climbed off the car and began the task of replacing the five ties. Finally Clem broke the silence. “I sure will be glad when this day is over because I’ve got me a hot date for tonight; I’m going to take Sally to the barn dance.”

“Well, Mr. Clem, you ain't got nothing to brag about. I'm going to that barn dance too, and I taking Rosie with me. Now how do you like that, big-shot?” Andy said with a smirk on his face.

Carl felt compelled to get his two-bits worth in the conversation, so he proudly countered, “You two ain't got nothing on me; I taking Mable and she’s prettier and sweeter than either Rosie or Sally. How about them grapes?”

Bart sensed a real argument was about to break loose so he said with an authoritative tone, “All right you proud peacocks, shut your mouths and get these ties replaced.”

The men looked at each other and decided they probably should obey Bart’s command; in about four hours they had the ties replaced. Then they pumped their way back to the depot where they cut weeds and cleaned up around the buildings until quitting time. It was Friday, dance night, so the men all left just as soon as it was five o’clock and not one of them said a word to each other or to Bart. They were not the most congenial bunch in town.

CHAPTER 3

Bart made his way home with his stomach growling as he had not taken time for Mary to make him a lunch. Upon arriving at home he was glad to see that Mary had fixed a very good meal—but he didn't say so.

"I knew you would be very hungry when you got home as you didn't have any lunch; I'm sorry I didn't get to fix one for you this morning."

Without a word, Bart washed up, and soon the three were silently eating their supper; Jimmy glared at his father for a moment, thinking about the events of the previous night.

After supper Bart changed into his street clothes and started for the door. Mary asked, "Where are you going, Bart?"

"It's none of your business, but I'll tell you anyway," Bart replied with a contemptuous tone. "I'm going to the dance because my three section hands are going to be there, and there might be a fight. If I'm there I'll see to it that no fight starts. I want my section hands to be able to do their job come Monday." With that remark he left the house.

Miracle of miracles Bart came home sober that night and went to bed without a remark to his wife or Jimmy; they were still up, reading.

They looked at each other in amazement and Mary said, "Well, thank the Lord he came home sober! So I guess it is safe for us to go to bed now."

CHAPTER 4

Everything went well with the Delaney family for a few days; then one evening Bart again came home quite drunk and in a very belligerent mood. Mary did not have supper on the table so Bart lashed out at her, “What have you been doing all day, woman? Why ain't my supper on the table?”

“I'm very sorry, Bart, but I just got very busy cleaning house and forgot the time; but supper is almost ready.” In a few minutes she and Bart were seated at the table.

“Where is that worthless son of yours, woman, can't you keep up with your own kid?”

“Jimmy is next door visiting with Jerry, but he should be home at any minute.” About five minutes later Jimmy appeared, and without a word sat down at the table and began eating.

His dad looked at him with disdain and growled, “Dumb head, don't you know when to get home for supper? And I think you are spending far too much time with that Jerry kid.”

Jimmy did not reply as he was afraid of what he might say. So Bart addressed him again. “Answer me boy, don't you have enough brains to know when to come home for supper. And just to teach you a lesson, I forbid you to go over to the Brown's for a month!”

Mary spoke up. “Bart, don't you think that is far too much punishment for such a little thing? And he's not a dumb head; he's smart and he's a good worker. And as you know, he and Jerry have been working after school at the local car dealership for the last two years. They are learning how to repair automobiles and manage a business; you should be proud of him.”

“Shut your mouth, woman, and don't you ever get smart with me!” And with that outburst, Bart struck his wife across the face with the back of his fist, knocking her out of her chair and giving her a nosebleed.

Jimmy jumped from his chair and bent over his mother to help her up. But Bart grabbed him and tried to punch him. Jimmy quickly freed himself, picked up a chair, and bashed his dad over the head with it; Bart fell to the floor, unconscious.

Jimmy helped his mother back into her chair, and then got a wet tea towel and wiped the blood off her face. Mary took the towel and held it to her nose, and the bleeding soon stopped.

“Are you okay, Mom?”

“Yes, Jimmy, I'm okay, but how about your dad?” Jimmy got down on his knees and listened for breathing.

“He's breathing, Mom, he's going to be okay. I didn't kill him, but I almost wish I had.”

“I’m sorry to have to say this, Mom, but I’m going to have to leave home, because if I stay here, sooner or later I will kill him either by accident or deliberately. But before I go, I’m going to leave a note telling him that if he mistreats you again I will come home and kill him!”

“Oh, Jimmy, where will you go?”

“Mom, I can’t tell you that now, but I promise when I get settled in someplace, I will send you a letter. Now I’ve got to hurry and leave, because if he comes to I might have to hit him with the chair again—and this time I might ‘accidentally’ kill him.”

He rushed to his bedroom, quickly packed a suitcase, and returned to the kitchen. He hurriedly scribbled a note and placed it on the table. The note read: “Old man, if you abuse my mother again I will come back home and beat you to death!”

“Goodbye, Mom, and don’t worry about me; everything is going to be all right—and I will write you, just like I promised.”

With tears flowing down her cheeks, Mary stood up and put her arms around her son. “Please be careful, son, I’ll be praying for your safety.”

Jimmy kissed his mother on each cheek, hugged her tightly, and said goodbye, as he grabbed his suitcase and rushed out the door. Then he stopped, turned around, and momentarily looked at his mother as if he believed he would never see her again. Then he returned to the door where his mother was standing. Her face was pale and scarred from her many beatings, and her almost-grey hair was framing her face and waving gently in the morning breeze. Jim took her frail body into his arms, and hugged her tightly and lovingly. Then, with tears in his eyes and sadness in his voice, he said, “Mom, I love you so much.” With that he released her, turned, and trotted off, never looking back; it would have been too painful.

CHAPTER 5

Jim sprinted to the train station, and bought a ticket to Johnstown, Kansas, where his mother's sister and family lived. He arrived there the next day and walked the short distance to the Cockreham's home. He was somewhat awed by the size and grandeur of the house and the landscaping of the surrounding yard.

There were several very tall Elm and Locust trees neatly arranged in the yard, and beautiful vines growing on the yard's wire fence.

"Wow," Jim thought as he walked up to the door and knocked, "Uncle Herman must be a very wealthy man!"

In just a moment the door opened and Jim's Aunt Mae was standing there. She took a long look at Jim then exclaimed, "Well, hello, Jim, what brings you to Johnstown. Come in and tell me all about it. I haven't seen you since you were a little boy, so I had to think a while before I recognized you."

Jim took the seat indicated by his aunt and began his story. "Well, Aunt Mae, it's a long story, but I'll try to make it a little shorter. I don't know if Mom has written you about the changes in Dad's life—bad changes. He got in with the wrong crowd and has apparently become an alcoholic; and every once in a while he will give Mom a beating.

"The last time he got drunk and started beating on her I broke a chair over his head and knocked him out. Then I told Mom I had to leave, because if I didn't I might kill him the next time he abused her.

"She didn't want me to go, but she said she understood and let me go anyway. So I packed a suitcase real fast, then I wrote a note for Dad. I told him in the note that I would come back home and kill him if he beat up Mom again.

"I told Mom I would let her know where I landed so she wouldn't worry. Well, here I am, and I hope Uncle Herman can put me to work. One other thing, I would like to finish my last two years of high school here in Johnstown—if I can."

"Jim, I don't know what to tell you, but when Herman gets in from work this evening you can talk to him about this. I suspect he will be able to use you because he has a hard time keeping good help."

So that evening Jim told Herman he needed a job, and was just wondering if he had one that he might have; Herman said, yes, he had a job where he could use him.

Then Herman told him a little about his farming and ranching operations, and added that there were plenty of jobs that Jim would be able to do with a little training.

"Jim, I realize you don't have any farming or ranching experience, but I know from your mother's letters that you are a very smart, hardworking young man. So I don't have any doubts about your being able to do the jobs I'll need you to do here

on my farms or in Colorado on my ranch.” Herman then told him all about the various jobs to which he might be assigned and Jim listened in awe.

CHAPTER 6

When Herman finally finished telling him about the jobs, Jim spoke up, “Uncle Herman, I never would have dreamed that there is so much to farming and ranching! But I'm excited about all of this and I'm looking forward to learning all about the various jobs. And by the way, you didn't say anything about teaching me to ride a horse, but I suppose that will be done when the time comes.”

“Yes, Jim, we will teach you how to ride a horse, and we should be able to do that in about fifteen minutes,” Herman said with a laugh.

“Oh, yes; I failed to mention the fact that some of the jobs will be done while you're in school. But don't let that worry you; there will be plenty for you to do in the evenings and on Saturday. Now, are you sorry you decided to come to me for a job?”

“Oh, no, Uncle Herman, I know it is going to be a lot of fun working for you. And again, I thank you for taking me in; I know Mom will be thrilled to know I'll be working for you.”

That evening after Jim went to bed, he began to review the day. The first thing he thought about was the big difference in the looks of his aunt and uncle. Aunt Mae was a little short, dumpy lady with brownish hair. She was not pretty, but she was pleasant to look at; and more important than that, she appeared to be a very sociable lady that was always joking and laughing—Jim took an immediate liking to her.

Uncle Herman was a real contrast to his wife. He stood about six feet tall, had red hair and a face that looked like he'd been in several car wrecks (and Jim found out later, he had been).

He was mostly serious about things but occasionally he would tell a joke and laugh heartily at the punch line. Jim was a bit awed by his uncle but in a very short time he came to really like and respect him.

The next day Jim borrowed the needed materials and wrote a letter to his mother, telling her that he was at the home of Uncle Herman's and Aunt Mae. He told her that Uncle Herman had promised him a job working on the farm and on the ranch. He added that he was very happy with his situation, and that he would write to her and keep her updated on how things were going with him. He signed it “Lots of love to my sweet mother,” Jim; then he added a P.S. asking if his dad was behaving.

CHAPTER 7

After a day of riding around with Herman and seeing his vast land holdings and the countryside, Jim began feeling at home and was eagerly looking forward to starting to work for Herman.

However, Herman had other plans; he decided to go to his Colorado ranch to see how things were going there. He also toyed with the idea of leaving Jim there for a while to get acquainted with Eldon and the ranching operations. So he asked Jim, "How would you like to drive out to the ranch with me, and get acquainted with Eldon and Dolly?" Jim liked the idea so they loaded into the car and started for the ranch.

A few miles before they got to their destination, canyons appeared, and Jim asked, "Uncle Herman, are there canyons on your ranch?"

Herman chuckled, "Oh, yes, Jim, we have some very big canyons on the ranch. In fact the ranch house is at the bottom of a very steep and very big canyon, and we had a hard time making a road down to the bottom of it. It took us several days to carve a road in the side of the canyon; all we had to work with were horses, moldboard plows, and dirt-moving fresnos."

A little later Herman pulled into a rather small town named Milestone, according to the city limits sign. He drove into a service station and had the gas tank refilled; then they resumed their journey.

"Milestone is a pretty nice little town; it has stores for about anything needed in this area," Herman said. "Also, I understand they have a good school system."

About three miles further down the road, Herman stopped the car at his mailbox there on the rim of a canyon and said, "Jim, when you want to send a letter to your mom, here is where you can mail it."

Then he said, "Let's get out of the car and walk over to the rim of the canyon." When they had walked the few feet to the rim, Herman said, "Jim, just look down and to the right, and you can see the homestead. Quite a scene isn't it?"

"Boy! Everything looks so little from up here; and I never thought about a canyon being beautiful, but this one certainly is."

CHAPTER 8

Herman started the downward drive and in a few minutes they arrived at the ranch house. Herman stopped just outside the fenced-in yard and sounded the horn.

Immediately Eldon, a rather plain-looking man, came out of the house and greeted them. Jim was really impressed by the sight of his clothing. He looked just like some pictures Jim had seen of “genuine” cowboys. He was dressed in blue jeans and a western-style shirt, and had a big, broad-rimmed hat covering most of his coal-black hair; to finish his get-up, he had a big, red neckerchief around his neck and scuffed cowboy boots on his feet. He was a big man, about six-feet two-inches tall, well built and had a friendly grin on his suntanned face—Jim liked him immediately.

“Eldon,” Herman said, “I want you to meet Jim Delaney, my nephew from Oklahoma. And, Jim, this is Eldon Clark, the best cowpoke in the west. He has ridden in many rodeos, broke many horses, won a few races, and won several prizes for bull dogging and bull riding.”

Then with a laugh, he added, “He also he has many scars and healed-up bones to show for all his ribbons and prizes. But the best prize he ever won is his lovely little wife. Let’s go into the house so you can meet her.”

They walked the few steps to the house and went in. “Dolly,” Eldon called out, “come here a minute; I want you to meet a fine young man.”

Dolly immediately came from the kitchen into the living room, wiping her hands on her homemade, well decorated apron. Extending her hand toward Jim she said, “My name is Dolly Clark, what’s yours?”

Jim took her hand, politely shook it, and answered, “My name’s Jim Delaney, and I am very glad to meet you, Dolly.”

Dolly was a very petite young lady with reddish hair, blue eyes, a silk-smooth complexion, and a lovely face. Jim wondered, “How in the world could a man as ‘plain’ looking as Eldon ever capture such a pretty little lady for his wife—especially since Eldon is bound to be several years older than she is.”

Jim’s evaluation process was interrupted when Dolly said, “Jim, would you like to have some fresh cinnamon rolls and a cup of coffee? I don’t need to ask your uncle that question because I know what his answer would be: ‘Yes, ma’am!’” She laughed and continued. “I sometimes think Herman drives all the way out here so he can get some of my cinnamon rolls.”

Herman grinned and replied, “She’s right; she makes the best cinnamon rolls I have ever eaten. Unfortunately, Mae has just never discovered Dolly’s secret for making them, but she keeps trying.”

While Dolly was preparing the goodies, Eldon turned to Jim and asked, “Jim, have you ever ridden a horse?”

“No, sir, I never have, but Uncle Herman has promised me that I would be taught how to ride one. He said it wouldn’t take but a few minutes to teach me.”

Eldon grinned and said, “Well, Jim, your uncle may have been a little too optimistic about it, but it really shouldn’t take very long.

“By the way, Herman, how about just letting Jim spend a week or two with us and he can get acquainted with the ranch and what goes on here. In the meantime, I will see that he learns all about riding a horse and taking care of it.”

Herman responded, “I tell you what, since we are at our slack time back at Johnstown, how about him staying for at least a month? That way he can learn enough to make a good cowhand when it comes time to work the cattle.”

“Great idea Herman, but what about his belongings?”

“Well, I brought Jim’s stuff with us as I thought things might work out just the way they have. So if it is all right with Jim, he can stay for a while. How about it, Jim?”

Jim quickly answered, “I would really like to do just that; I guess I’ve wanted all my life to be a cowboy!”

About that time, Dolly appeared, handed out napkins and cinnamon rolls, and then passed out cups of coffee. Conversation ceased for a few moments while everyone enjoyed the goodies; then Herman spoke up. “Well, I guess I had better start back to Johnstown; I want to get there by bedtime if possible.”

He shook hands with the trio and made his way to his car. Then he turned and hollered “Goodbye, you all,” climbed into his car and drove off.

CHAPTER 9

The next morning Eldon loaded Jim into his truck and took him on a tour of the ranch. Indeed there were a lot of canyons, but there was also many acres of “flatland;” some were mostly covered with short grasses but some had numerous small cedar trees.

“Eldon, I notice a lot of tree stumps; what happened to the trees?”

“Well, Jim, Herman has a contract with a fellow to come in every two or three years and cut the small trees for fence posts. He trims the branches off the trees to make them suitable for posts, and gets half of them as payment for his labor.

“We use our half to build fences around certain areas of the ranch. That way we can move the cattle from pasture to pasture to keep them from overgrazing the land. Fortunately, we have windmills in every pasture, so we don’t have to haul water to the cattle. All we have to do is just check the pastures pretty frequently to see if we need to move the cattle to another pasture. We also check to be sure there are still plenty of salt blocks near the windmills.

“Of course we are always on the lookout for new-born calves. It generally takes us about a full day on horseback to check everything out. And I’ll guarantee that your backside is mighty glad when the checking is over!

“By the way, Jim, I’ll be checking a pasture one of these days. So this afternoon and tomorrow I’ll train you in riding and caring for a horse so you can go with me to check things out—if you want too.” Jim quickly and earnestly replied, “You can bet your bottom dollar I want to!”

CHAPTER 10

Eldon drove back to the ranch house and they arrived just in time for dinner. After the meal was finished, Eldon took Jim to the corral and had him pick out a horse for himself. After much pondering, Jim chose a three-year-old, black gelding.

“You made a good choice, Jim; he has just recently been broke. If you will treat him gently, but firmly, in a short time you will have a fine horse to ride. And from what I have observed, he has a lot of intelligence and a lot of spirit. I would guess that you probably can even teach him some tricks if you have the patience to do so.”

Eldon caught the horse and bridled and saddled him. Then he turned to Jim and asked, “By the way, have you thought of a name for him yet?”

Jim hesitated for a moment and then said, “No, I haven't; I have thought about ‘Smokey,’ ‘Blacky,’ and ‘Coaly,’ but I can't make up my mind. So I guess I'll wait until I get a little better acquainted with him before I decide on which one to use. And I was just wondering, Eldon, if I decide to teach him some tricks would you be willing to help me?”

“Yeah, Jim, I'll be glad to. In my years of working rodeos I saw a lot of horses that had been taught all kinds of tricks, and I actually picked up on several of them. So I may remember them well enough to show you how to go about teaching your horse to do them.

“But I'm sure you will be able to think up some additional tricks. It's really not hard to do; it just takes patience and a close relationship with your horse. I've heard it said that a horse is more intelligent than a dog, and that you can actually train the horse to do more stunts than you can a dog.”

“I'm glad to hear that, Eldon, because I once had a dog that I trained to do several tricks. So maybe it won't be too difficult for me to teach Smokey a few of them.”

“Well, Jim, it appears that you have already decided on a name for your horse, and I think you made a good choice.”

“Yeah, Eldon, I believe Smokey just has a better ring to it than ‘Blacky’ or ‘Coaly;’ what do you think?”

“I agree, Jim.” Then he laughed and said, “Now let's start training you and your horse.

“Now, Jim, I want you to watch me very closely and listen to what I say. I'm going to get on Smokey and demonstrate how you should sit in the saddle, and how you should use the reins, your legs, and your body motions to get Smokey to respond to neck-reining. Again, Jim, just watch my motions and listen closely as I go slowly through the procedure.

“Once you get into the saddle, you should start Smokey walking slowly as you begin the neck-reining procedure. To turn him to the left, you need to look to the left and rotate your body slightly toward the left. At the same time, lightly pull on the left rein; press your right leg lightly against him while you gently lay the right rein against his neck, just in front and above the withers. To teach him to turn to the right, reverse the process, using your left rein against his neck and pressure with your left leg to initiate the turn. Do you understand my instructions?” Jim answered in the affirmative.

Eldon dismounted and gave Smokey a handful of oats. Then he said, “All right, Jim, it’s your turn. Climb into the saddle and go through the procedure. Just remember, you are to do all of the procedure—slowly, gently, and patiently; no jerking on the reins. I’ll talk you through the procedure for your first attempt. Then I’ll watch you while you do it the second time on your own. Fair enough?” Again Jim answered in the affirmative as he climbed into the saddle and took the reins from Eldon.

Jim followed Eldon’s instructions and got through the entire procedure without any mistakes. Then he repeated the procedure successfully as Eldon stood by silently.

When Jim dismounted, Eldon said, “Jim, after you repeat the entire procedure several times, Smokey will have learned it so well that you will not need to pull on a rein to get him to go in the direction you want him to go; your body motion and the slight pressure of the rein on his neck is all that will be needed.” Then he added, “Jim, I believe you are going to be a great horse trainer, and I predict you will soon have Smokey eating out of your hand and doing all sorts of tricks.”

Smokey quickly learned to respond correctly to neck-reining; then with the help of Eldon, Jim began teaching him various tricks. When Smokey would do a trick correctly, Jim would reward him with a handful of oats or a lump or two of sugar.

CHAPTER 11

Then it became time for Jim to go back to Johnstown and Herman arrived to get him. But Eldon had a suggestion. “Herman, I believe Jim would be a bigger asset working here with me than going back to work with you. He has taken to ranching just like a duck takes to water. Also, as you know, our herd is now the biggest it has ever been. And we will soon need to take some of the cattle to market and others to your farms at Johnstown to winter on the wheat fields there. Jim would be a big help to me in rounding up the cattle and then getting them separated to go to market or to the wheat pastures.”

Herman thought about the suggestion for a few moments, and then replied, “You know, Eldon, I believe you’re right. So I’ll just leave Jim here with you, and he can attend school about as well here as he could in Johnstown.” Then he turned to Jim who had been standing by. “What do you think of the idea of staying on here through the winter?”

“Well, Uncle Herman, I believe I would like to do just that, but I think there might be a bit of a problem—how will I get to school?”

Eldon spoke up, “Jim, you are old enough to learn to drive a car—I will teach you how—and then you can drive yourself to school; it’s only about five miles away.”

Herman thought that everything was worked out so he said goodbye to Jim and the Clarks and departed for Johnstown.

Jim was ecstatic about the various plans for two reasons: He would get to have a car of his own, and he would have a lot more time to train Smokey.

Daily, Jim would take the time to work on training Smokey a new trick. Eldon liked to help because he had always wanted to do some trick training but it seemed he never had the time. However, since he now had Jim to help with the ranch operations, he had some spare time to help Jim with his project. Eldon took a real liking to Jim and looked upon him like he was his own son.

Dolly also became attached to Jim; his very polite and friendly manner was much appreciated by her. Additionally, Jim made it a practice to help Dolly with the household chores—a practice for which she was thankful.

The time arrived for the cattle to be brought into the big corral at the ranch headquarters and then sorted into three groups: a group to remain on the ranch, a group to go to market, and a group to go the wheat pastures near Johnstown.

As soon as Jim and Eldon got the cattle sorted into their respective pens, Herman hired a trucking company to come to get the cattle and take them to market and to the wheat pastures.

All went well and Jim was glad when it was all finished; he had literally developed saddle sores. However, for Jim there was a good side to having saddle sores—Dolly would doctor them for him. He very much enjoyed the tender loving

care that Dolly bestowed on him while he was recovering from the sores. Dolly sensed that Jim was fond of her but she did nothing to stifle it; in fact, she encouraged it. He was the son she knew she could never have by Eldon.

CHAPTER 12

Eldon bought a second-hand model T Ford and taught Jim how to drive it. Jim was a fast learner and soon was driving like a pro. He really enjoyed driving and dreaming about one day being in a stock car race driving a Stutz Bearcat, or some other racing automobile. He also had two other fantasies: training Smokey to do unusual tricks that he could display at rodeos, and finding and marrying a girl as pretty and as sweet as Dolly.

School started and Jim drove to the schoolyard, taking along his lunch. He noted that the grade school was on one side of the road and the high school was on the other. "Good idea," Jim thought.

The bell for school to begin started ringing just as Jim got out of his car. He was a bit nervous about the idea of being in class with boys and girls he didn't know; but he tried not to show it as he made his way into the schoolhouse along with the other boys and the girls.

The teacher ceased ringing the bell, and in a very nice way told the students to be seated; in a few moments all were seated. Then the teacher said, "All right, students, I want all the boys to sit on the west side of the room, and I want all you girls to sit on the east side of the room." Amid much grumbling, the students shuffled around until the teacher was finally satisfied.

"Thank you, children. Now I want to introduce myself as your new teacher; my name is Miss Anita Langley.

"I assume you girls are ladies and will not give me any trouble. But just in case I'm wrong, what I am about to say will pertain to you girls as well as to the boys." She hesitated a few moments until she had the undivided attention of all the students. Then she began her tirade with a voice of upmost authority.

"Right up front I want you to know that I will not tolerate insolence, back talk, smart mouths, uncouth language, impudence, disrespect, impertinence, rudeness, audacity, whispering, or any other disruptive behavior. I realize that some of you may have already decided that my being a rather small woman means that I will not be capable of keeping discipline in this classroom.

"Well, I am here to tell you that if that is what you think, you are going to be in for a great surprise. I grew up with four brothers and I learned at a very early age how to take care of myself. Now, if any of you children would like to challenge me to a fist fight, wrestling match or a screaming, hair-pulling contest, all you have to do is stand up."

The room got so quiet you could have heard that proverbial pin drop; the students just glanced at each other, truly speechless. After a moment of silence, Miss Langley spoke again, "Thank you for your decision to not take me on in a fight. But if at anytime in the future you feel like challenging my authority, please

feel free to let me know and I will arrange to give you the opportunity to find out you made a wrong decision.” Silence still reigned.

“Thank you students for being so understanding. Now I want to assure you boys and girls that I’m here to teach you, not to baby you nor to have certain favorites, commonly called pets. I will give all of you the benefit of a doubt and assume you are here to learn, not to goof off, and just have a good time.

“Also I'm not here to baby sit you or to mollycoddle you. If you will earnestly strive to learn your lessons I will do my best to see that you do learn them. My objective as your teacher is to see you graduate with enough education to enable you to find jobs at which you will be competent; jobs at which you can make your employer glad that he hired you.

“So your education will consist of more than readin,’ writin,’ and ‘rithmethic, it will also contain some lessons on etiquette and principles of work ethics. I want you to be proud of your education and able to use it to make a satisfactory living. Are there any questions?” The students were so dumbfounded by what they had just heard that not a one of them held up their hand.

CHAPTER 13

“Now let’s get acquainted. First of all, are any of you first timers?” Only Jim held up his hand.

“All right, sir, would you please stand up and tell us your name, age, what grade you are in, where you came from, and where you are now living?”

Jim was embarrassed as he stood up, knowing he was not only the tallest boy in class, but he was also aware of the fact that he was dressed a little differently than the other boys; his clothes were all new and somewhat expensive: cowboy boots, fancy western shirt, starched denim pants, and a broad-brimmed felt hat.

He removed his hat and said, “Ma’am, my name is Jim Delaney, I am sixteen years old, a junior, and I am from a little town just outside of Oklahoma City. Presently I am staying on a ranch with Mr. and Mrs. Clark.”

“Thank you for that information, Jim, you may be seated. Now I am going to go around the room and have each of you tell me your name, age, and what grade you are in. And unless I say otherwise, I will expect you to always sit in the seat you are now occupying; that will make it much easier for me to learn your names.”

While Miss Langley was gathering her desired information, Jim recovered from his embarrassment and began sizing her up. “Well,” he said to himself, “she looks to be about thirty years old and she’s not as pretty as Dolly—but she is nice looking. Her hair must be long because she has it done up in a bun at the back of her head, and it looks almost blond. She is a little taller than Dolly but she is not as shapely. I can’t see her eyes well enough to decide what color they are, but I’ll bet they are blue. And for a woman, she pretty stoutly built—and after what I just heard her say about discipline, I don’t plan to ever cross her!”

Having finished with his assessment of the teacher he turned his attention to the classroom and counted the number of students—twenty, a nice round number, Jim thought; but he was surprised to see that the class was evenly divided: ten boys and ten girls.

He noted that most of the girls were just “plain Janes.” But there was one girl who was very pretty, had a nice figure, and appeared to be about his age. He vowed to himself at that moment he was going to work up the courage to ask her for a date at the first opportunity. Later, he found out her name was Beverly Goin.

CHAPTER 14

Much to his dismay, Jim stood out in the student body like a bullfrog in a punch bowl. Not only was he the tallest boy in the school, but he was the most stoutly build due to his many hours of hard work on the ranch. This fact, plus the fact that the girls were always playing up to him, made Jim very unpopular with the other boys and they were very jealous of him—and with good reason: He was very charismatic and had gotten acquainted with all ten girls in his class. It had been easy because every girl had made it a point of introducing herself to him.

However he was “smitten” by Beverly and it wasn’t very long until he asked if he could eat lunch with her. Her reply was “Yes.” So when lunch time came, they walked together to the dining hall and sat down at a little table in one corner of the room.

Since Jim had never dated a girl before, he didn’t really know how to have a conversation with one. But Beverly was a very bubbly, outgoing girl and she soon had Jim at ease.

“Jim, please tell me about yourself. All I know now is that you are working on a ranch, are sixteen years old, and came from Oklahoma. What brought you to this neck of the woods, and how long do you plan to stay in this area?”

“Well, Beverly, my life’s story is very boring, but I will tell you about it anyway—just because you asked me to.

“I was born and grew up in a little town named Tribune, which is just a few miles from Oklahoma City. My dad works for the railroad, and my mom is just a housekeeper. While going to high school, I worked at a garage repairing automobiles and learning about how to run a business. Well, that is about all there is to tell.”

“No Jim, that is not all there is to the story. You didn’t tell me why you wound up on a ranch here in Colorado.”

“Well, Beverly, I just got tired of the same ole rat race there in Tribune, so I decided to go to Johnstown, Kansas, to live a while with my uncle Herman who is a wealthy farmer and rancher. In fact, he owns the ranch where I am working.

“Uncle Herman gave me a choice of working on his farm or working on the ranch—I chose the ranch, and I’m sure glad I did!” Then he dropped his head and said in a sheepish tone, “Because if I had chosen the farm, I wouldn’t have ever met you.”

“Why, Jim, it was so sweet of you to say that, and I’m really glad you chose the ranch.” About that time the bell rang and they had to go back to the classroom.

CHAPTER 15

Well, the love bug had bitten Jim and he came down with lovesickness almost immediately. He had a hard time concentrating on his school work, and when back at the ranch, his thoughts were mostly of her.

Dolly noticed the radical change in Jim's behavior, and one evening while he was in the kitchen helping her finish the dish washing, she asked what was ailing him. Jim was very embarrassed by the question and was hesitant about answering it. But since he had a close relationship with Dolly, he finally made an effort to tell her about his feelings toward Beverly.

"Dolly, I don't quite know how to explain how I feel toward Beverly; I've never been in love with a girl before."

Dolly interrupted him and said, "Jim, let's go to the living room and sit on the sofa while we talk about love and marriage." When they got seated, Dolly began her discourse.

"Well, Jim, I'm not really blind or naïve; I believe you think you are also in love with me; your actions speak louder than words. But I need to explain something to you about different kinds of love. The love you feel for me is more like a son loves his mother, and perhaps I have been largely responsible for that. You see I have always wanted a son, but unfortunately, because of an injury that Eldon received in one of his rodeo experiences, it's impossible for him to father a child. And when you came along, I guess subconsciously I looked upon you as the son I thought I would never have, and I have treated you accordingly. You responded to my affection and attention and that generated a feeling of love for me.

"There is really nothing wrong with the kind of love you have for me, but your love for Beverly is of a different kind. You are attracted to her because she is pretty and very nice to you. But the love you feel for her is not the kind of love that will keep a marriage together once the honeymoon is over.

"Jim, I'll certainly admit that I'm not an expert on matters of love; but I will say this: you are too young to be getting serious in your relationship with a sixteen-year-old girl. Just be good friends with her and don't go beyond that. And what is sometimes called "love," is really nothing more than infatuation, and that kind of love is often referred to as 'puppy' love. And when people marry in 'puppy love,' the chances of a successful marriage are quite low."

CHAPTER 16

“What I'm going to share with you now is just between you and me and Eldon. I feel sure he won't care if I share with you his story of the consequences of marrying when the couple is very young and have mistaken puppy love for the real thing.

“He was a senior in high school when he fell in love, so he thought, with a pretty young girl in his class. After a whirlwind courtship, they married although their parents were against it and told them so.

“Eldon took a low-paying job working in a saw mill while his wife sat at home, bored stiff. Unfortunately, one day a smooth talking broom salesman came by. She invited him in and they had a brief, polite conversation; then he turned on the charm and played on her loneliness and desire for excitement.

“She didn't buy a broom, but she told him she might be interested in buying one later. She said that the best time for him to come by was about two o'clock in the afternoon. She did not tell Eldon what had happened, and the salesman started coming by their house almost every day. Things soon got out of hand and she betrayed her husband.

“Eldon noticed the distinct change in his wife and asked her what was going on. After a few minutes of her lying, Eldon called her hand and she confessed to the affair—without sparing any of the details. Apparently she wanted to hurt him so much that he would be glad to give her a divorce. If that was her reasoning, it worked. With a broken heart, Eldon allowed her to divorce him, and she and her new husband immediately left town.

“Eldon was so embarrassed by the whole affair that he quit his job and started moving from place to place and job to job, trying to find healing from the wounds his wife had inflicted on him. Finally, after almost ten years of roaming around, he found a place that he really liked and he finally settled down. Would you care to guess where that place was? It was Johnstown, Kansas. And by the way, during his years of roaming around he found out that his former wife's second marriage didn't even last a year.

“Now, I could tell you of other similar cases but I'll spare you that. But I do hope you will strongly consider cooling off your relationship with Beverly until you are a little older and more mature. If it is meant to be for you to have her as your wife, the Lord will see that it happens—in His perfect timing.”

CHAPTER 17

“Well, Dolly, I really appreciate you telling me all this, and I will certainly give it some serious thought. And by the way, would I be out of line to ask you about your life and how you came to marry Eldon?”

“No, Jim, you would not be out of line. I suspect a lot of people we know have wondered why I married a man so much older than I am. Well, here is my story.

“I was born in Missouri and lived there all my life until my parents were killed in a tornado. I happened to be at a friend’s house at the time and their house was not touched by the storm. So when my aunt in Johnstown learned about the death of my parents, she invited me to come to live with her. I was just out of high school and had no job, so I took her up on her offer. Soon after I got to Johnstown, I got a job working in the town library. It didn’t pay much but it was a very nice place to work and the head librarian was a very sweet old maid, named Miss Parker.

“She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church and she invited me to attend with her. Since I had joined the Presbyterian Church back while I was in high school, I took her up on her offer. I was very pleasantly surprised by the friendliness and love of the people in the church. And after visiting the church a few times, I joined it and attended regularly.

“Then one Sunday, after the pastor taught about the Holy Spirit and how we needed Him to direct our lives, I asked Him to come into my life and fill me. He did; and for the first time since my parents were killed, I experienced boundless joy, a wonderful peace in my heart, and the assurance that the Lord would always look after me.”

CHAPTER 18

“I had been living in Johnstown for about three years when the head of the nurses, Miss Parker, told me the local hospital was looking for volunteer help. She said they were short-handed and didn’t have the funds to hire additional personnel. Since most of my evenings were free, I volunteered my services. Then one evening when I went to work, I was told that they had a new patient that was in a very serious condition. He had been gored and trampled by a bull while competing in a rodeo in the Fair Grounds. He was in a coma and needed watch-care around the clock. So I volunteered to take the shift from six p.m. to midnight.

“The head nurse filled me in on all the details as to what I should do while on my shift. One of the most important things was for me to notify her if the patient showed any signs of discomfort or awakening from his coma. She didn’t say I couldn’t pray for him to recover, so I did—every night.

“For the first three nights there was no apparent change in the patient and the doctor was about to give up on him, but I continued to pray for his recovery. Then, by the grace of God, on the fourth night he regained consciousness and asked for a drink of water. I helped him take a drink and then I rushed down to the nurses’ station and quickly reported his being awake. The nurse on duty immediately ran down to the patient’s room, entered, and said to him, ‘Good evening, sir, welcome back to the land of the living!’

“The patient weakly replied, ‘Good evening, nurse; it sure is good to be back in the land of the living.’ From that time on, I would change his bandages while on my shift, and visit with him about trivial things. He began to recover faster than they had expected, much to my delight and the delight of the doctor and nurses. It was obvious he had developed a strong desire to get well as soon as possible—and the Lord was answering my prayers.”

After a brief pause, Jim said, “Dolly, I notice you have been very careful to not reveal the name of the patient, but I’ll bet I know who it was: Eldon!”

Dolly laughed and said, “I was sure you would come to that conclusion, but I thought I would see how long it would take you to do so.”

“Now you have told me how you met Eldon, but you haven’t told me how you came to marry him. Was it a short or long courtship?”

“Well, mister-nosy-Jim,” Dolly said with a laugh, “it was not really either. It was just long enough for both of us to be one-hundred percent sure that we were doing the right thing. It did take a while because Eldon had been so devastated by his having been divorced by his first wife, that he had trouble even thinking about getting married again.

“After he got out of the hospital, he got a job working for your Uncle Herman. And periodically, he would come to the library to check out a book, and we would get to visiting about various things. Finally one day he asked me if he could take

me out to the local café for supper. I said, ‘Yes,’ and we had a good time; that was the beginning of our courtship.

“We talked about most everything and we discovered we had a lot of things in common. However, I found out that he had not been raised in a Christian home, and he really didn’t know very much about the Lord and salvation.

“But he showed a keen interest in the subject of Christian religion and began going to church with me on Sunday mornings and to Bible studies on Sunday evenings. In addition, we would often discuss matters about living a Christian life, what heaven would be like, and other rather ‘deep’ subjects.

“He started reading the Bible I had given him, and often after we had our supper at the café, we would discuss various passages of scripture. And some times he would ask me to clarify some particular passage he had read. Having been brought up in a Christian home and going to church and attending Bible studies most of my life, I generally was able to give him a satisfactory answer to his questions.

“As time went on, we had supper together more and more frequently. During our conversations I noticed that the wounds from his divorce experience were beginning to heal. He became more open, and told me more about his past and the emotional hurts he had experienced. I saw this big, tough-appearing man was beginning to soften. And he began to exhibit his long-suppressed humor, and to smile and laugh again—and I found myself falling in love with him.

“Then one evening after we had dined at the café, we drove to a little park on the outskirts of town. The moon was full that night and the air was cool and refreshing. We sat in silence for a few moments, just enjoying the moon and the presence of each other. Then he turned to me and said, ‘Dolly, for the first time in years I feel alive again. Your love, friendship and concern for me have enabled me to put the past behind and to look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm.’ Then he slid across the seat, took me into his arms, and kissed me. ‘Dolly,’ he whispered, ‘I love you so much. Will you marry me?’” Then Dolly stopped and said, “Jim, I’m getting embarrassed—telling you so many details about myself and Eldon.”

Then after a brief pause, Dolly continued. “Well, Jim, since I have gone this far, let me finish the story;” Jim said, “Please do.”

“From time to time, Eldon and I had talked about the responsibilities of being married; that is, what should the husband expect from his wife and what should the wife expect from her husband. Amazingly enough we agreed on the pertinent topics almost one-hundred percent. And any subject on which we did not agree on one-hundred percent, we discussed until we did agree on it one-hundred percent.

“So knowing that Eldon and I were in agreement on the important responsibilities of marriage, I said ‘Yes,’ to his proposal and we got married the

next week. And as a wedding present, your Uncle Herman made him foreman of the ranch. We moved in three years ago and we have lived a very happy and fulfilling life.”

Then she laughed and said, “Now, Jim, you know all there is to know about the love life of Dolly and Eldon.”

Jim answered, “Thank you, Dolly, for being so open and honest about all of this. I know you have given me some very good advice, and perhaps someday I will be mature enough to act on it.”

Then he added, “Dolly, I also want to thank you so much for loving me like a mother; I feel quite honored to be your son.” And with that avowal, he slid over to her and gave her a loving hug and a kiss on her cheek.

Jim pondered the advice Dolly had given him and tried to figure out how to go about cooling the relationship. Fortunately for him, Beverly took care of the situation for him. One day while they were having lunch together, she politely told him she had decided to date other boys because she didn’t want to get into a “going steady” relationship.

Jim was hurt by her decision but tried not to show it. He determined that he would act indifferent about it, and then at some point he would start dating other girls. But in the meantime he began in earnest the training of Smokey. He reasoned that doing that would help him get his mind off Beverly.

CHAPTER 19

Jim got acquainted with Smokey and won his affection and obedience by feeding him oats and sugar cubes out of his hand, patting his neck, and brushing and combing his hair with a curry comb. Additionally, Jim talked softly to Smokey all the time he was petting, feeding, and grooming him.

Eldon was a great advisor for Jim; and Jim was a patient, gentle, but determined, teacher. So it was not many weeks until Smokey was fetching an old hat, sitting on his haunches, doing some fancy dance steps, rearing up, and lying down, all in response to a one-word command and simple gesture from Jim.

Jim was very pleased with Smokey and the tricks he could do. However he was not really satisfied overall, so he went to Eldon and said, "Eldon, I hope one day to be able to showoff Smokey before a bleacher full of people at a County Fair; a lot of horses can do the tricks that Smokey can do; so I want to come up with something original and I think I have. In addition to the tricks, I would have an original performance for Smokey and me.

"Let me tell you what I have in mind and you can tell me if it is worth considering. Okay?"

"Yeah, Jim, I'll be glad to hear your idea, and I'm sure it will be a good one."

"Well, here it is. The fellow with the megaphone would announce something like this: 'The next person on our entertainment program is young Jim Delaney. He has trained a horse, named Smokey, to do some fancy tricks. So let's give a big hand to this young man.'

"I will ride Smokey into the arena and have him bow before the audience. Then I will dismount and put him through his routine of tricks. After he finishes his tricks, I will have him bow before the audience again.

"Then the announcer will read my script while Smokey and I act it out. The announcer will say, '**Now, folks, imagine Jim and Smokey making their way across a deserted, waterless wasteland. They have travelled many miles since they have had anything to eat or any water to drink.**' Then I will have Smokey lower his head and plod along very slowly. Next the announcer will say, '**Suddenly a rattlesnake strikes at Smokey but misses him, but Smokey is spooked and bolts to one side, causing Jim to fall off.**' Smokey and I will enact those words. Then Smokey will walk away, leaving me behind lying on the ground obviously injured. The announcer will say with distress in his tone, '**Oh, look, folks, Smokey is going to walk off and leave Jim to die there on the trail!**' But after Smokey gets about a hundred feet away he stops, and the announcer will say, '**Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Smokey is thinking it over. Will he go back for Jim?**' Then Smokey turns around, comes back to me, and nuzzles me for a minute. I reach up and pat his head, and then I slump back down. The announcer

will say, **‘Jim was trying to get up, but he was too weak to do so. It really looks bad for Jim. It appears he’s doomed.’**

“Smokey stands there by me for a moment, and then I tell him to lie down. So he lies down beside me close enough that I can get hold of the saddle horn. The announcer will say excitedly, **‘Hold on a minute, folks, it looks like Smokey is going to try to help Jim out of this tough spot.’** Then I reach out, grab the saddle horn and the announcer will say, **‘Yes, folks, it appears that Smokey really is trying to rescue Jim.’** At that time I tell Smokey to get up, and he does so with me in the saddle—and the crowd should go wild at this point. Then as we start down the trail, they take the spotlight off of us for a moment and focus it on the flag flying from a pole on the opposite side of the arena fence while the crowd keeps cheering and whooping it up. After a second or two, the spotlight comes back and focuses on me and Smokey. He will be bowing toward the audience and I will be waving my hat at the crowd and patting Smokey on the neck. That should get a continuation of the cheers or another outbreak of them. Finally, the spotlight goes back on the flag as Smokey and I exit the arena. Well, Eldon, what do you think?”

“Golly, Jim, I think that program would be a great success. Are you really planning to put it on next fall at the County Fair?”

“Yeah, Eldon, I plan to have Smokey trained to do all the tricks and the routine in time to perform at the Fair. Now I have a big favor to ask of you; would you be the announcer for me and Smokey? If you are willing, that will enable me to practice the routine a whole lot better.”

“Well, Jim, I am honored to think you would want me to work with you on this routine; I’ll be glad to help you out.”

CHAPTER 20

For the next several months the duo practiced the routine and finally got it perfected to their satisfaction.

After one of their practices, Eldon said, “Jim, I believe we are ready for the rodeo next month. But let’s go through the whole thing with Dolly watching. She can then tell us if there are parts that we need to work on.”

“Great idea, Eldon; let’s go ask her now if she is willing to do this for us.”

Dolly listened to their proposal and said she would be glad to watch the performance and make any suggestions that she thought would improve the routine.

The next day Jim and Eldon put on a performance just like they planned to do it at the rodeo. Dolly was very impressed by it and said, “Fellows, I believe you have a prize winner here; I don’t have any suggestions for improving it.”

Every week or two, Jim and Eldon would go through their routine with Smokey to maintain his, and their, performance levels.

In the meantime Jim continued attending school. He did well and his report card was all A’s or B’s. He remained friends with Beverly but did not ask her for a date.

Finally, he decided it was time for him to begin fraternizing with the other girls; he had no trouble doing so as he was a tall, handsome lad with a very winsome personality. So once a week or so he would ask a different girl to have lunch with him. This worked out fine as no one could accuse him of partiality.

Some of the girls were very attractive, some were very “plain”, but Jim treated them all like they were special. In the long run, Jim was very glad he had adopted this plan. He enjoyed the company of the girls and no longer had the “puppy love” feeling toward Beverly.

However, Jim did not fair so well with the boys—they were jealous of him. Although most of them would speak to Jim when he spoke to them first, he had not yet developed a friendship with any of them; but he kept being polite to all of them and hoped the icy atmosphere would thaw out some day.

Then one day on the way home from school, Jim came upon a classmate lying in the ditch with his horse standing a few feet from him. Jim stopped the car, got out, and ran to the boy. He was unconscious and bleeding from a cut in his head and some scratches on his arm and back. Jim carefully lifted him, carried him to his car, and placed him in the passenger’s seat. Then he got out the water jug he always carried in the car, wet his handkerchief, and carefully tied it around the boy’s head. In just a few moments the boy opened his eyes and looked up at Jim.

“What happened, Bruce? Did your horse throw you?”

“Yeah, Jim, a pheasant flew out of the brush right in front of us and ole Buster shied; I was not ready for that and off I went. I guess I must have hit the ground pretty hard with my head because I saw stars and then I blacked out.”

“Well, Bruce, how about me tying your horse to the rear bumper and then taking you home? This old Model T can move slowly enough in low gear that your horse won't have any trouble keeping up.”

“Thank you, Jim; I would sure appreciate that—and I sure don't feel like riding a horse just now. The road to my house is just a short ways ahead; you can't miss it. When you get to the lane, just turn to the right; and from there it is only about a mile to my house.”

Jim tied the horse to the back bumper and started down the road; in about thirty minutes they pulled up in front of Bruce's home. Jim sounded the horn and instantly Bruce's mom and dad rushed out to the car, and were alarmed at the sight of blood on Bruce and Jim.

“Bruce, darling, what has happened to you?” his mother asked.

Bruce answered rather weakly, “I'm okay, I just had a little fall off of ole Buster; but lucky for me, Jim here came by and rescued me. Now if you'll help me into the house, I will tell you all about it.”

So Jim and Bruce's dad helped him into the house and onto the sofa. Immediately Bruce's mother got a pan of warm water and some cloths and began cleaning and treating Bruce's cut in his head and the scratches while he filled them in with the details of his misfortune.

He finished his narrative by saying, “I thank the Lord for sending Jim by when he did; otherwise I might still be lying out there in that ditch and bleeding to death.” Then he turned to Jim and said, almost tearfully, “Jim, I am so sorry I have been treating you with a cold shoulder; will you forgive me?”

Jim replied, “Bruce, there is not really anything for me to forgive, you never mistreated me in any way.”

“Well, Jim, I could have treated you a lot more friendly; and I must confess, I was jealous of you; but I know now I had you figured all wrong.” The boys shook hands at Bruce's initiative and they smiled at each other—and a friendship was in the making.

By now, Bruce's mother had stopped the bleeding in Bruce's head and the scratches on other parts of his body. Then she remarked with a sigh of relief, “I believe he is going to be all right.”

At this time Jim spoke up, “Well, I guess I need to get on home so my family won't be getting worried about me. And, Bruce, I hope to see you in school Monday.”

Jim untied the horse from the car and handed the reins to Bruce's dad who again thanked Jim for his kindness. “You're most welcome, Mr. Martin, I'm so

glad I was able to help Bruce.” Then he climbed into his car and drove off for home.

Bruce did make it to school on Monday, but made light of his accident. He left out most of the details, and did not mention Jim’s name. He was afraid that if he did he would be ostracized by the other boys in the class.

He later apologized to Jim for his behavior. Jim said he understood Bruce’s reluctance to mention his name; he also said that he wanted to be friends with him.

CHAPTER 21

Time for the county rodeo finally arrived, and Jim and Eldon went to the officials and registered for their act. They were to be second to perform on Saturday night, and Jim had a bad case of butterflies in his stomach; so Eldon tried to encourage him. "Jim, I'm sure we will do just fine; please don't worry about it." But deep down inside Eldon had some butterflies too.

Saturday evening came and they loaded Smokey into the horse trailer behind Eldon's car and drove to the rodeo grounds adjacent to the County Fair barn. They checked in with the officials and then took Smokey to the holding corral.

They watched the first event which was bronco riding and it prompted Jim to remark, "They must work hard to find Broncos that can buck like these do!"

Eldon replied, "Well, Jim, I understand that some professional horse breeders breed horses that buck like these do and sell them to rodeo owners. Also, when regular horse breeders come up with horses that they cannot break from bucking, they also will sell them to rodeo owners. So you see the rodeo people have at least two sources for 'professional' bucking horses."

About that time the coordinator for the various performances came up to Jim and Eldon and said, "Your performance is next, so be ready to enter the arena in five minutes."

At the end of the five minutes the coordinator announced Jim and Smokey, and the gatekeeper opened the gate and Jim rode Smokey into the arena. He turned Smokey toward the bleachers and had him bow while he waved his hat. Then he dismounted and put him through his many tricks in response to a single word command. The crowd was very entertained by the tricks, and when the tricks were finished, they gave Jim and Smokey a big round of applause.

Then Eldon took over the megaphone and told the audience to imagine Jim and Smokey were wandering through a dry and barren land, and they had been without water and food for three days. Then as Eldon related the dialog, Jim and Smokey performed accordingly.

The act went off perfectly and the audience sat in rapt attention until the end of the performance. Then they arose to their feet and gave Jim and Smokey cheers and a long round of applause.

Jim closed out the act by riding Smokey up close to the bleachers and having him bow again while he waved his hat. The people were very impressed by Jim's outstanding performance and gave him a second standing ovation as he rode out of the arena.

Then to the boys' surprise, the rodeo company had posted men at the exit gates to take donations for Jim and Eldon. They received over one-hundred dollars for their performance.

Word of Jim's outstanding performance spread throughout the area and he got requests to perform at several of the rodeos that were being held in the surrounding counties; in every case donations were collected, and amounts ranged from a little less than one hundred dollars to over two hundred dollars.

Then one evening at supper while they were discussing their success, Jim said in jest, "Eldon, you reckon we should go nation-wide with our performance?" But before he could answer, Dolly interrupted and said very bluntly, "Over my dead body you'll go nation-wide!" The men were momentarily stunned by her outburst. Then she laughed and added, "And I don't think Herman would go for it either"—end of discussion.

CHAPTER 22

Early one morning during a lesson by the school teacher, the door burst open and a man with a kerchief over his face and a gun in his hand stepped in. He closed the door behind himself and said in a raspy voice, “All right, everybody, don’t make a move or I’ll shoot you!”

One of the girls screamed and the gangster said, “Shut up you young wench or I’ll part your hair with the barrel of this pistol.” Then he ran his eyes over the classroom and asked, “Which one of you young bucks is Leonard Pearson.” Jim immediately jumped to his feet and said, “I’m Leonard Pearson, what would you want with me?”

“Well, well, Leonard, you are a mighty fine looking boy, big too; I’ll bet your banker daddy will pay a good price to get you back. Come up here with me.” As Jim walked forward, the kidnapper continued, “Now I’m going to take Mr. Leonard out the door with me and then lock it so you kids won’t be following me.” He turned, looked at the teacher and said, “Okay, teacher, toss me the key to the front door.”

Miss Langley slowly opened her desk drawer, pulled out the key, and tossed it toward the kidnapper; she did not pitch it hard enough and he had to lean forward to grab it. When he did, Jim grabbed his gun hand and jerked it up; the gun fired as Jim kneeed the kidnapper in the groin with all his might. The kidnapper bent over in great pain and dropped the gun. Jim instantly gave him an uppercut, knocking him over backwards; he hit the floor, unconscious.

“Bruce, run to my car and get the rope for me, please.” Jim picked up the gun and pointed it at the kidnapper’s head—just in case he regained consciousness. Bruce quickly returned with the rope and helped Jim tie the kidnapper’s hands behind his back. Then Jim said, “Bruce, take my car and go get Sheriff Madison—and please hurry!”

The students had been glued to their seats in near panic while all the turmoil was going on. Then Miss Langley spoke up, “It’s going to be all right, kids, just stay in your seats until the sheriff gets this kidnapper out of the way, then I may send you all home. And by the way, I’m proud of the way you youngsters kept your heads during the fracas.”

In about five minutes, Bruce, the sheriff and his deputy entered the schoolroom. The sheriff surveyed the scene and exclaimed, “Well, Jim, looks like you have everything under control; but just what happened here?”

The teacher quickly filled the sheriff in on the happenings. Then the sheriff thanked her and Jim for subduing the kidnapper, turned to his deputy and said, “All right, Weldon, let’s get this thug out to the car.” Quickly he and his deputy dragged the still-unconscious kidnapper out to the car, loaded him in, and drove off.

“Now children, since it is almost time to go home anyway, I'm going to let you go at this time. I'll see all of you tomorrow morning.”

As the children filed out the door, they shook Jim's hand and commended him for his bravery. And Leonard Pearson waited until everyone else was gone, then he went up to Jim and said, “Jim, I'll never be able to repay you for what you just did for me. And would you please forgive me for having been sort of cool toward you? I would like to be your friend;” Jim took his extended hand and shook it.

“Leonard, you do not owe me a thing, and I will be glad to call you my friend.” That was the beginning of another lasting friendship.

The news of the attempted kidnapping made the front page of the local newspaper and Jim's heroic act spread like wildfire. He was an instant hero, and all his male classmates suddenly wanted to be his friend. Also Mr. Pearson drove out to the ranch and thanked Jim for stepping in for his son.

“Jim, I'm sure you saved my boy from a very bad experience and perhaps even death. The would-be-kidnapper turned out to be a criminal named Mort Knapp. He was from Missouri and wanted for a long list of crimes, including murder. If I can ever do anything for you, please let me know.” He shook hands with Jim and the Clarks, and departed.

A week later the Clarks had a visit from Sheriff Madison. After the usual pleasantries, he said, “I've come to give Jim the reward money for capturing Knapp,” and he handed Jim a check for one thousand dollars.

Jim was speechless for a moment, then he replied, “Thank you, Sheriff Madison; I had no idea there was a reward for that man. But I can sure put the money to good use for something like a car or motorcycle!”

CHAPTER 23

Winter came and Jim and Eldon were busy most every day checking on the cattle, and occasionally there would be a new-born calf to attend to. Eldon would put the calf over his saddle and start for the headquarters, followed by the calf's bawling mother.

They would put the cow and calf into the large barn and feed the mother for several days. Then when the calf was old enough to withstand the elements, they would take it and its mother back out on the range.

In the evenings after the chores were done, the trio would spend their time listening to the radio, playing poker for matches, playing some other card game, or reading novels; and sometimes Jim would spend his evening doing homework.

Although homework was not encouraged in most schools because the parents did not want it to interfere with chores, Miss Langley assigned homework to her students, and none of the parents objected.

Jim didn't mind homework and actually like reading books for History and Geography classes. Also, he would study his spelling assignments with zeal because those who got a one-hundred on their spelling tests for a month got some sort of reward from Miss Langley. There were few students that ever got a reward, but Jim got two during the school year: a compass and a jack knife. Jim had developed a close relationship with Miss Langley and cherished the gifts.

CHAPTER 24

Jim finished his senior year with some regrets. He had enjoyed the company of both boys and girls and knew he was going to miss the good times with them. But shortly after his graduation, the United States declared war on the Germans and Jim decided he needed to volunteer for the army.

So he said goodbye to the Clarks and the Cockrehamms and thanked them for caring for him for the last two years. Then he caught the train to Oklahoma City because he knew there was an army recruitment station there.

After he arrived at Oklahoma City he soon found a hotel room just a short distance from the Recruitment Center. It was still open so Jim went in, introduced himself as Jim Delaney, and shook hands with Arthur Dublin, the recruitment sergeant.

Then the sergeant asked Jim why he wanted to join up. Jim replied, "Well, Sergeant, I feel like it is my duty as a United States citizen to help drive those Germans back to where they belong."

"That's a very noble reason, Jim, and it does look like we're going to have to help out the Brits and French or the Krauts will wind up taking all of Europe, and only the Lord knows what else. So you be down here at six o'clock in the morning and we will give you a physical exam.

"If you pass, we will send you on to Fort Sill for your basic training. If you don't pass, we'll send you back home. And by the way, do you want some of your pay to go directly to your family? Your starting pay will be thirty dollars a month and gradually increase up to forty dollars per month."

Jim thought a minute then said, "I'd like to keep ten percent of the pay and send the rest to my mother." He was given a form to fill out authorizing the military to distribute his pay in the fashion he specified.

CHAPTER 25

Jim arrived at the Center right on time the next morning and was immediately ushered into the exam room. It did not take the doctor long to finish his examination. He said, “Young feller you are in great shape, so we are going to ship you to Fort Sill in a little while, along with a few other volunteers. They will put you through some very rugged training, but I've no doubt you will be able to take everything they put you through—and Godspeed.”

Within the hour Jim and three other young men were on their way to Fort Sill on a train. As they rode along, they took turns telling a little about their lives. Not surprising, the three were all from a farm, but they didn't all have the same reason for joining the army.

Rex said he thought getting into the army would be a great adventure, and he was anxious to get overseas. “I'm planning to get me a bunch of them Krauts. From what I've heard they are a very mean bunch of killers who make it a habit to destroy everything in their path.”

John had a much different reason for enlisting. “I got a girl in trouble and I sure didn't want to marry her. So I figured the army would be a good place to be; she certainly can't get to me when I'm over there in France.” Noting the disapproving look on the face of the other three, he hastily added: “She was a no-good little slut, who played up to me, got me drunk and.... And come to think about it, I'm not sure that I was the one who got her pregnant.”

There was silence for a few miles, and then Robert spoke up. “Well, I guess I need to tell you guys why I'm here. The reason is pretty simple. My dad is a dirt-poor farmer, and I thought joining the army would mean one less mouth to feed; also I would be able to send some money home to help out a bit. You see, I left behind two sisters and three brothers, all younger than me. Mom didn't really want me to go to the army, but Dad said it would be all right—and what my dad says goes in our family.”

Jim replied, “Robert, it sounds like you did your family a good turn, and I admire you for your unselfishness.”

Again there was silence and the boys rode along, just listening to the clackety clack, clackety clack of the train as they rode along through the ever-changing countryside. Occasional there would be blasts from the whistle as they passed through a town.

As they rode along Jim looked at each of the young men, noting how much they differed in appearance. Rex was tall, nice looking, with blond hair, and blue eyes. John had reddish hair, green eyes, and a face pitted slightly from his days of fighting acne. Robert was by far the most handsome of the three. He had brunette wavy hair, dark eyes, and near-perfect facial features. They all had two things in common: Like most farm boys they were all very muscular and well tanned.

After a silence of about ten minutes, Rex turned toward Jim and asked, “Jim, aren't you going to tell us why you are on this train?”

Jim replied, “Well, I guess it only fair for me to share my reason with you guys, after all you’ve shared your stories with me. In a nutshell, I'm here because I was afraid that if I stayed around home any longer, I might just kill my old man. I'm sorry to say, he is a drunkard, and when he gets drunk, he beats on my mom.

“When I left home about two years ago he was unconscious on the floor because I had just hit him over the head with a chair; he had just knocked my mom out of her chair for no good reason. Mom didn’t want me to go, but she didn’t stop me from leaving because I think she was really afraid I would kill the old devil. I left a note for him telling him that if I heard he was abusing my mother again, I would come home and beat him to death. I choose to believe he will take my threat seriously, and quit beating on Mom because he will not know where I am.

“I went to Johnstown, Kansas, to see my Aunt Mae and Uncle Herman. Uncle Herman gave me a job on his ranch in Colorado and I worked there while finishing high school. Then when we declared war on the Germans I decided to enlist—and here I am. But I guess I need to finish my story about my home life and my mom and dad.

“I did once ask Mom why she didn’t divorce the old devil and she said she had made a wedding vow that she would stay with him until ‘death do us part.’ I know she prays all the time for the Lord to change him. I’m not much on prayer, but I've asked the Lord a few times to make him like his cousin, Jim Delaney, the fellow I was named after.

“You see I used to go visit Jim and his family, and he always had a good story about his life to share with me. He really has had a spellbinding life, like getting wounded in the Spanish-American war and busting broncos in South Texas, He was also a bounty hunter and a famous sharpshooter. Boy, I sure would like to be more like him.

“And, by the way, he gave me some advice about wounding the enemy in case I ever had to go to war. He said, ‘Don’t shoot to kill, just wound the enemy, that way it will take the enemies’ time, resources, and manpower to take care of him; that will not be the case if the soldier is dead.’”

CHAPTER 26

The boys arrived in Ft. Sill just at dinner time. So they were fed, and then taken to the commissary where they received their uniforms and other items essential to their training.

The recruits were instructed to return to their barracks, and then at 1 pm they were to assemble themselves on the training field. Jim and his three friends arrived at the field just a few minutes before one o'clock.

Promptly at one o'clock a sergeant showed up. He had the thirty recruit's line up in single file. He then began his educating of the men followed by some instructions.

"All right, you pinheads listen up; I'm Sergeant Horace Whippenour and what I'm fixin' to say is very important, so I want your undivided attention. You're lucky, you're only going to be with me here for thirteen weeks; The Regulars had to put up with me for six months. But during that thirteen weeks I'm are going to teach you an awful lot of things, things that will enable you to kill the enemy and things that will help you stay alive.

"Here are some of the most important things I will teach you: I will teach you how to crawl like as snake, flat on your bellies; how to get in and out of foxholes and trenches, just like a rat; how to run zigzag across no man's land, running like a deer; how to shoot a rifle, pistol, mortar, and a canon like a sharpshooter; how to win a bayonet fight and then run it through the enemy, just like you are a toreador; and how to sneak up behind an enemy as quiet as a shadow, and cut his throat, just like butchering a hog. Are you with me, pinheads?" Getting no answer, as he expected, he continued his colorful description of what training was all about.

"In the meantime you will be making torturous hikes with a full sixty-pound pack of rocks on your back and your beloved weapon in you hands; and periodically you will be doing it double time just like a pro.

"When I get through with you pinheads, you will have muscles like steel and brains like mush, but that mush will cause you to react to an order without even batting an eye. And, oh yes, you'll learn to do close-order drill without bashing each other in the head with your rifle butt.

"You're also going to learn how to dig a foxhole like a badger; how to pitch a tent like a circus clown, in just two minutes; how to sleep like a baby, on the ground; and how to be as cool as a cucumber when bullets are whizzing over you head. I'll tell you about a lot more things before you are finished with your training; I'm afraid if I told you the whole story you would be inclined to desert and run home to mama.

"But when I get through with you, you will have a burning desire to get to France and stomp the guts out of them kid-killing Krauts. Now understand, you'll be fighting alongside the Brits and the French. Don't be concerned that you don't

know any French; there will always be someone with you who can speak French. I know the Brits don't speak English like we do—in fact I once heard a wise-acre Brit say, 'You damned Yanks don't speak English, you speak American.' Well I'm here to tell you; today those Brits don't care how we talk, just as long as we come over and drag their chestnuts out of the fire. In fact, I've heard that they have been begging us Americans for some time to come over and give them a hand, and now I guess we're going to have to do it.

“Another thing, I know you're going to really hate me before I'm through with you because I'm going to scream at you, cuss at you, and work your butts off; and when you think you can't lift another leg, I'm going to get right in your face and rev you up with a really loud cussing out. Yeah, I know you're going to hate ole Sarge, but that's all right. There will come a time, if you live long enough, that you will look back on what ole Sarge made you do and be darned glad he made you do it. Now, do any of you pinheads have any questions?” Jim had several but he was afraid to ask them.

“One more very important thing,” the Sarge said, “on the wall inside your barracks is a good-sized poster. Be sure you read it; after today it will be your schedule. Follow it or you will be in a heap of trouble.”

After a few minutes of slowly walking along in front of the recruits and eyeballing each of them the sergeant said, “Now go to the weapons depot and sign out your rifle. Then come straight back here immediately, and I will go over instructions for taking care of it.

“After I've finished those instructions, we'll go to the firing range and I'll give you some instructions on how to properly handle and fire the rifle. The weapons depot is just two buildings in that direction; now hit it double time!” and he pointed south.

CHAPTER 27

In about twenty minutes the thirty recruits were lined up in front of the Sarge. He glared at them and with sarcasm in his voice he said, "Well, pinheads, what took you so long? I guess you just don't understand what double time means. Listen closely because I'm going to tell you exactly what it means, and I don't expect to have to tell you again; double time simply means do it twice as fast. Have you got that in your brains now, pinheads?" Getting no reply, he continued, "You were supposed to reply, loud: 'Yes, sir!', now let me hear you say it." The recruits replied rather weakly, "Yes sir."

"That was mighty weak; let me hear you say it again and this time I want you to make yourselves heard all over this camp! Now on three: one, two, three!" This time the young men really hollered: "Yes, sir!"

"That's more like it; and now that you know how to say it, from now on I'll expect you to answer in like manner.

"Now I'm going to explain to you how to take care of your rifles. Think of them as your sweethearts because there will come a time when they will be all that is between you and sudden death. First lesson: keep her clean because if she is dirty she won't work right." Then the Sarge showed them how to disassemble, clean, and re-assemble their rifles.

"Second lesson: don't ever get more than arm's length from her when you are in the battle zone; sleep with her cradled in your arms or right beside you. Now that you know how to take care of her, follow me double time in single file and I will take you to the firing range." The Sarge turned south and set off in double time with the recruits behind him—in a disorderly fashion.

The firing range was only a short distance away but most of the boys were huffing and puffing when they arrived at it. Once there, the Sarge had them line up facing the targets.

"Well, well, pinheads, sounds like you boys aren't in very good shape; but don't worry, I'll take care of that in just a few days. But for now I am going to show you how to hold your rifles and how to shoot it while standing up and when you're down on your bellies. Just keep your eyes on me and do just as I do. Of course right now your weapon is not loaded, so you won't be shooting anybody."

After a few minutes of demonstration Sarge was satisfied with the performance of the boys. "Well, you boys learned pretty fast; there may be hope for you yet. Now I'm going to pass out some cartridges to you, then I'll show you how to load them into your rifles." In a few minutes the boys had their rifles loaded.

"Now all of you have a target in front of you, so I'm going to walk along the line and watch each of you as you fire at the target." With that statement he walked to the first man in the line and said to him, "Okay, boy, let me see you hit the bull's-eye."

The recruit fired and hit the target but nowhere near the bull's-eye. "Not too bad, boy, but I'll expect you to do much better after a few hours of practice." He proceeded down the line, observing each boy's performance. As the targets were rather close, all the recruits managed to get the bullet inside the target with their first shot.

After they all had made their shot, Sarge spoke up again. "I'm going to give each of you a box of twenty-five cartridges to shoot. And I expect you to be hitting the bull's-eye most of the time before you have fired all twenty-five cartridges. If you ain't, I'll give you another box, and you jolly well better be hitting that bull's-eye most of the time before you finish the second set of twenty five cartridges. If you ain't, then I may have to send you back home." Fortunately, all the boys had reached the goal by the time they finished the second box of cartridges.

"You younguns did pretty well, so I'm going to change up your training a little bit. I'm now going to teach you how to march and then tomorrow I'll teach you close-order drill." So he marched them to the drill field and gave each of them a helmet.

"This helmet will protect you a little bit from a rifle butt when you make a wrong maneuver. We're going to go slow initially to minimize the head-banging. But as you get acquainted with the orders and are making the changes in direction without getting clobbered by a rifle butt, I'll gradually speed you up a bit until you are making the maneuvers without any mistakes. You may or may not accomplish this today, and if you don't, we'll resume the marching tomorrow."

The recruits spent the rest of the day learning to march and did fairly well. Sarge was pleased but he didn't tell the boys so; he had to maintain his "rough and tough" image.

He dismissed the boys and sent them back to their barracks to get ready for the evening meal. One the way to their barracks there was a lot of under-the-breath cussing and complaining, and they were all literally dragging their tracks out—really exhausted.

As soon as he got back to the barracks, Jim checked the poster the sergeant had mentioned; it was a Daily Routine Schedule:

- Reveille 5:00 a.m. Wash, shave, dress
- Roll Call 5:30 a.m. Stand at attention, salute flag
- Inspection 5:40-6:00 a.m. Personal/bunk checked
- Breakfast 6:00 a.m.
- Training 7:00 a.m. Drill, calisthenics, etc.
- Lunch/Dinner 12:00 noon
- Lectures 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Training 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. Drill, firing line

- Supper 6:00 p.m.
- Lectures 7:00-8:00 p.m.
- Lights out 8:15 p.m.

CHAPTER 28

As soon as he got cleaned up and his clothes changed, he hurried to the chow line and joined his three friends so he could gab with them.

Then after they finished their meal, the boys made their way to the lecture building. And for one hour they received a lecture on why the United States was helping other nations destroy the Germans.

At 8 p.m. they went back to the barracks, shucked uniforms, and got into their bunks. No one had to tell them to be quiet and go to sleep; they all were “sawing logs” in just a few minutes.

At 5:00 a.m. the next morning, Reveille was blown, and Sarge came into the barracks bellowing, “Rise and shine, you pinheads, and get yourselves ready for roll call and inspection. Then you can trot over to the dining room and get your breakfast. I’ve got a great day planned for you, so hit the deck.”

Jim crawled out of his bunk very slowly as he was aching in every muscle; he had lots of company—the other recruits also had a multitude of sore muscles.

But with much groaning and belly-aching, the group hurriedly got dressed and ready for roll call and inspection. After inspection, they double-timed to the mess hall.

The food was good and the coffee was hot and strong, and by the time Jim had finished his plate, he felt much better. Their chattering was soon interrupted by the booming voice of Sarge. “All right, pinheads, be lined up on the drill field in fifteen minutes; now get your butts in gear!” It seemed to Jim that the Sarge had only one voice level: loud!

The group lined up on time and heard the “good” news. “Today we’re going to do some drills and calisthenics to work out your soreness and maybe even build a little muscle,” By noon Jim’s soreness was almost all gone but his distaste for calisthenics was sky-high.

As he was doing the arms-over-head, moving his legs in and out, he thought, “Why in the world did I ever decide to become a soldier—I must have been crazy!”

CHAPTER 29

After lunch the boys assembled in the auditorium and endured lectures on various topics for two hours. Then they returned to the training field and had more drilling, target practice, and calisthenics. By five thirty Jim was again really pooped out. But after supper he went back to the barracks determined to write his beloved mother, just as he had promised.

“Dear Mom,

I know you have been anxiously awaiting a letter from me, and I am finally getting time to write you. When I left Johnstown, Kansas, I went to Oklahoma City and enlisted in the army. Now I'm at Ft. Sill getting training along with three new friends, Rex, John, and Robert; they are all farm boys.

The sergeant (we refer to him as “Sarge), is one of the homeliest guys I've ever seen. His face is very pitted and scarred, probably from fighting or smallpox; his eyes are real close together and he squints them down to little slits, except when he is giving us a new command or a chewing out. His hair, what little there is of it, is turning grey, but I don't think he is over forty years old. He's kinda short, but built like a brick outhouse, and from what I've seen, he must be as strong as an ox. Anyway, he told us right off that he was going to really put us through the wringer, and that we would soon hate his guts—he was right!

By the way, he told us that he would be training us for thirteen weeks, and then we would be shipped out to France to fight the Krauts. I'm not really looking forward to that, but somebody has to go up against those kid-killing monsters. And I guess I had rather fight them over there than have to fight them here on our own territory.

Well, Mom, I guess I had better close this and get to bed; tomorrow will come too early. I will try to write you every once in a while and keep you posted on what is going on with me. You can send me letters just marked Jim Delaney, Army Training Center, Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

I love you, Mom.

Jim

P.S. Is the old man behaving himself? Please don't let him know where I am or what I am doing. I want him to think I can be home in a heart beat in case he should decide to beat up on you again.”

During the next several weeks Sarge kept his promise to train the boys on “things that will enable you to kill the enemy and things that will help you stay alive.”

The lessons they were learning were very tough lessons, but the boys finally came to the point they believed they were “men of steel” and were invincible—and now they were ready to take on the Krauts.

Jim and his three friends, without Sarge but with the rest of their group, were put on a train and transported to the east coast where they would be put on a troop ship.

When they arrived at their destination, about sundown, they were loaded into trucks and taken to the landing where ships were being loaded with men and supplies. The boys climbed out of the trucks and walked the few yards to the gang planks. As they approached the gangplank, they were handed a slip of paper known as a numbered “Billet” and given the warning not to lose it.

As soon as the boys stepped off the gang plank onto the ship’s deck, they were directed to what was called the “berthing space” where they would live, eat, and sleep during the voyage. Each one was assigned to a numbered bunk made of heavy canvas and iron pipes. Jim’s bunk was the center one of a “stack” of three bunks. Because it was not easy for a soldier to get into the second or third bunk, it was the duty of the soldier who had the bottom bunk to help his two companions get into their bunks before he got into his.

Jim was surprised to learn the bunk was relatively comfortable. It also had a numbered life preserver (same number as the Billet and bunk) which doubled as a pillow. A washroom was close by where Jim could wash-up, shave, etc. He soon found the shortest route to the ship’s deck—in case he had to abandon the ship.

Mealtime came and the boys were led to the mess hall; there they were handed a mess pan and utensils. Then as they walked along the row of food-containing kettles, a sailor behind each kettle would dump a portion of food into their mess pan. When they got to the end of the row their pans were full, so they walked to the adjacent dining hall and ate their meals with the other recruits.

After they had “licked their platters clean,” they dipped them into a tub of hot, soapy water and then rinsed them well. Then they placed their pans with other pans to be dried by a sailor.

The boys were then instructed to go back to their bunk where they could sleep, read, play cards or poker, or talk; Jim chose to talk to his three friends who had bunks close by. They were having a great time visiting when a sergeant appeared and announced: “Lights out in ten minutes.” The foursome quickly said “Good night” and made their way to their bunks.

The next morning they were awakened by the sergeant at seven o’clock, got dressed, made their way to the mess hall, and ate a good, hot meal. Then they were escorted to the deck for calisthenics after which they were returned to their bunks to await the noon meal and supper.

One day Jim decided to watch the recruits play poker. He found it a fascinating game, but he never worked up the courage to get into one. However, he did learn that it paid to study the faces of your opponents to see if there was a pattern to their being really confident, or just bluffing. Little did he realize that the time would come when what he had learned would be of significant benefit to him.

CHAPTER 30

Jim asked one of the sailors how many ships were in the convoy. His answer was the convoy has three or four troop ships and five or six Navy warships in it. So Jim asked him what the odds were that they would get torpedoed by a German sub; his answer was "I don't have any idea. So my advice to you soldiers is to keep your mind off the war and onto the ladies; that way you won't get too worried about getting torpedoed." At that remark, most of the boys laughed, but a few remained silent with worry written all over their faces; Jim was one of them.

Then he remembered his mother's statement that she would be praying for his safety. There was some comfort in the thought, but not nearly as much as he would have liked. So he climbed into his bunk, closed his eyes, and whispered a prayer.

"Dear God, I don't really know you, but my mom does; she prays to you all the time about my dad and me. So far you haven't answered her prayer about dad, but she really believes you will; I think she calls it 'praying in faith.'

Please answer her prayers for dad and for me. Thank you for answering our prayers." And suddenly he had a feeling of peace and security come over him, a feeling like he had never had before; then he concluded that maybe God does answer prayers. With that notion in his head, he drifted off to sleep.

Suddenly Jim was awakened; he had heard a strange, rather loud sound. Other boys were also awakened by the sound which was repeated every few minutes. Finally someone asked the Sarge if he knew what was causing the sounds. He replied that they were most likely the sounds from depth charges being dropped over a submarine to destroy it. The sounds got weaker and further apart until finally they were no longer heard.

The next morning at breakfast Jim found out that indeed the noises were from depth charges and they had finally destroyed the submarine. This fact was determined by the kind of debris that floated up from the destroyed submarine. But now the problem was that the boys knew that they were in a submarine area and could be torpedoed at any time.

Fortunately Jim's ship was not torpedoed, and at the end of fifteen days on the ocean they put into a port in France. They disembarked and were transported to a barracks where they could rest up from the rigors of the voyage. Then they were put through exercises to re-establish and strengthen their muscles, and to familiarize them with the kind of trenches they would soon be occupying.

CHAPTER 31

On the last day of their stay at the training grounds, they were assembled in a large barrack and told about what to expect when they got to the battlefield. The speaker was a rather old, well-seasoned sergeant.

He began his narration: “Gentlemen, I am Sergeant Riley O’Malley and I am going to tell you what lies ahead of you so you won't be quite so shocked when you get to the battlefield. I can tell you from experience there are a lot of things you will have to get used to, things they were not able to expose you to back in the states. But I want to assure you, you will get sort of numb to the smell, the sights, the terror of an advancing enemy, and shelling. However, I'm afraid that the one repulsion that you probably won't get used to, is the rats chewing on dead bodies—and on you.

“We have tried numerous ways to control them but none has worked completely. So far the best control seems to be taking turns patrolling the trenches with clubs and beating them off. Of course they come back really soon and try again. But at least we have found that alternating the men between sleeping and patrolling with clubs, enables the boys to get a little more sleep.

“As you have just been taught in your training and teaching, you will be doing your fighting out of trenches. Usually you will be in an area where there are three trench lines. You will start out in the first trench, called the ‘communication trench,’ so you can get used to trench life; then after a short time you will be moved to the second line, called the ‘reserve trench’ and it will be close enough to the front that you will hear plenty of gun fire, but it is a relatively safe trench to be in. Of course you will still have the stench, mud, bugs, rats, and other vermin.

“Naturally you will be exposed to conditions that can result in your becoming infested with lice and nits, and the wetness of the trenches will predispose you to Trench Foot and other diseases. But in the first or second lines trench you’re not likely to get hit by rifle, mortar, or cannon fire. However, exercise great caution wherever you are because the enemy has snipers who will blow off your head if you give them a reasonable target.

“But while you’re in the first and second line trenches you’ll be transporting supplies and food from the supply trucks to the front-line trench which is next to ‘No Man’s Land.’ Then after a few days of adjusting to your new life style, you’ll be transferred to the front-line trench to relieve some of the men there. They only replace a few men at a time so the new recruits can be looked after by the experienced ones. The chances are you will be in the front line for fifteen to twenty days; then you will be relieved and sent back to the first trench for some rest, and the cycle starts all over.

“And by the way, you will be fighting alongside British and French soldiers. But don’t worry about not knowing French. There will always be one or more among you who can communicate very well with Frenchmen.”

The next day Jim and Robert were put into a squad and loaded into a truck. Unfortunately Rex and John were assigned to a different squad and were loaded into a different truck close by. As the trucks started to pull away, the boys waved at each other and hollered, “Goodbye.”

Despite all the warnings and teachings about the horrible conditions at the battle ground, Jim was not prepared for what he saw and smelled. There were dead bodies of the enemy which had not yet been buried, and the stench of rotting flesh was almost overpowering.

Noticing the horror-stricken look on the faces of the new soldiers, their sergeant, a young man named Drake, spoke up, “Remember fellers, Sergeant O’Malley told you about what to expect when you got to the battle area, and just as he said, you’ll get used to it.” Jim had serious doubts about that!

CHAPTER 32

After three days in the first trench Jim and Robert were moved to the second trench. Conditions there were much the same as in the first trench but now they could hear the sounds of battle more distinctly. Because the men in the second trenches were replacements for those on the front line, periodically a few were picked to move to the front line through connective trenches.

The boys were assigned to the first trench, and they spent most of their time moving ammunition, food, and other supplies from the first trench to the second and third trench. They also helped transport the wounded back beyond the first trench where they could receive medical attention.

Needless to say, the boys were very fearful and exercised the utmost precaution. When they were in the trenches they kept their heads below the level of the sandbags of the parapet.

After dark there were fewer jobs to be done, so the boys could get a little sleep in their dugouts, or write letters by candlelight or flashlight. Jim decided he should write his mother.

“Dear Mom, I can't tell you exactly where I am, I just know it is somewhere in France. I'm writing to let you know that I am doing fine, and so are my three friends.

We are not up to the battle lines yet but will probably be moved up there in a few days. Right now we are ‘pack mules’ carrying ammo, supplies, and wounded men.

We are being very careful not to get our heads up too high as that is when the German snipers will polish you off.

Conditions here are unbelievable, but I'm adapting to them. The stench is becoming less noticeable; I guess my nose is finally getting used to it. The food is not very good, but so far there has been plenty of it.

I get a few winks of sleep between the time I'm on duty and sunrise. The rats are the biggest problem but men are appointed to club them to keep them from getting in your face or on you while you try to sleep.

Mom, I made a big mistake when I decided to join the army, but I try not to think of that because it only makes matters worse. I know you are praying for my safety, Mom, and I sure appreciate that. I know in my heart that that is the reason I am getting along as well as I am.

Well, I guess I had better close and try to get some sleep. I will write you again soon and please write to me. My address as long as I am in France will be James Delaney, Co. E 540 Army, American Exped. Forces. Love, Jim.

P.S. Is Dad still behaving himself?

P.P.S. Mom, could you please send me some paper and envelopes? Here on the battlefield they are very hard to come by. Thanks, Mom.”

In a few days Jim got notice he was going to be moved to the front line for fourteen days, so he decided he needed to write his mother before he actually made the move.

“Dear Mom, I am being transferred to the front line trench for fourteen days, so I probably will not be able to write you until I return to the first trench line. So please say a special prayer for my safety; I just have a strange feeling about this move. But I guess it is normal to have a strange feeling when you know you are moving to within a few yards of the enemy you hate and fear; they are vicious and unpredictable. Thank you, Mom, for your love and prayers; and tell Dad hello for me. I sure do love you, Mom. Your soldier boy, Jim.”

CHAPTER 33

Jim and Robert both got transferred to the front line trench on schedule, and they got a lot of comfort from knowing they had each other to buddy with. When possible, they would take turns sleeping and keeping the rats away. That was a really good thing because the stress and strain of the situation made sleep difficult enough without have the rats to contend with.

It all seemed so stupid to Jim. He thought, “Supposedly civilized men in trenches a few yards apart, trying to kill without getting killed—men who are brave in appearance, cowardly in reality, but too proud to let it show. It’s just a deadly game. I’ll shoot at you if you shoot at me, and you’ll shoot at me if I shoot at you. How can anyone be a winner in a situation like that?”

Almost every day, shots between the two forces were fired—sometimes only a few shots and sometime many; sometimes with rifles, and sometimes with machine guns, or mortars, or shells. Also, there was often sniper fire exchanged between the two enemies, and all too often the German sniper either wounded or killed his prey.

When Jim was ordered onto the firing line he would always pray a short prayer for protection, not really believing he was worthy of having it answered; then he would think of his mother and her prayers for safety for him—and he would get some much-needed comfort from that.

Then early one morning the sentry hollered “The Krauts are coming, the Krauts are coming!” The bugler sounded “Charge,” and immediately the men were climbing over the parapet and charging towards the Germans who were still about one hundred yards away. Robert and Jim were running side by side when suddenly Robert cried out “I’m hit!” and dropped to the ground.

Jim immediately dropped to a kneeling position and began firing at the approaching Germans. Suddenly, the German he was firing at threw his hands in the air, dropped his rifle, and fell to the ground, motionless and gravely wounded; Jim had just shot his first human being!

But he didn’t stop to think about what had just happened; he just kept firing at the Germans—some he hit, some he didn’t. In a few moments the fighting ceased and the Germans retreated to their trench.

The allied soldiers immediately ran back to their trench, carrying or dragging their wounded; Jim dragged Robert who was unconscious and bleeding profusely.

Once in the trench, a medic stuffed gauze into Robert’s wound in an effort to stop the bleeding; it helped but blood kept on oozing from the wound.

In desperation, Jim sat down beside Robert and applied pressure to the gauze; in a few minutes the bleeding stopped. Robert was in shock and still unconscious.

Jim asked a medic if they had anything to put on the wound to prevent infection; the medic just shook his head, and said, “No, it’s all used up,” and continued his tending to another soldier.

Jim inquired as to how long it would be before his buddy could be taken back to the field hospital a mile or so away. He was told that it would be tomorrow at the earliest. Jim knew from experience that infection could set in before Robert got to the hospital; then a repulsive, but significant, idea came to Jim.

He recalled that he had once heard that peeing on a wound would not stop the bleeding, but it would prevent infection and speed healing. At the risk of getting court marshaled, Jim decided to pee on his friend’s wound. Looking around and noticing no one was looking in his direction, he wet Robert’s gauze thoroughly.

CHAPTER 34

Jim spent the night beside Robert, keeping the rats away and continually wetting his lips from his canteen. At dawn the next morning, Robert opened his eyes and smiled weakly as he looked at Jim. "What in blazes has happened to me," Robert asked in a whisper. Jim told him about the battle and how he was able to drag him back to the trench and get a medic to put gauze on the wound to slow the bleeding; but he had put the pressure on the gauze that had actually stopped the bleeding.

"Gosh, Jim, you saved my life. Thank you, and I will never be able to repay you," Robert said. Then he asked, "Am I going to die?"

"No, Robert, you are not going to die; you are going to be okay. I just found out they will be taking you to the field hospital in a few minutes. And I suspect they will be sending you home after you recover because I doubt that you would make a very good soldier with a shoulder as badly torn up as yours seems to be. So promise me you'll write to me after this lousy war is over. You can get my home address through the personnel at the hospital."

Robert gave Jim his word that he would get in touch with him by mail after the war ended. Shortly thereafter the stretcher bearers appeared, lifted Robert onto the stretcher, and gave him a dose of laudanum; then they started their way up the trench. Jim followed alongside the stretcher for a short distance, then said tearfully, "Goodbye, Buddy, and I'll be seeing you."

Robert smiled, weakly waved his hand, and replied, "Goodbye, Jim, I'll never forget you." Jim waved in return as he choked back his tears. A week later he learned that Robert had died on his way to the field hospital, and shortly thereafter he heard that Rex and John had been killed in a battle. A virulent hatred for the Germans consumed him.

CHAPTER 35

Jim was so filled with hatred for the Germans, especially for killing his friends that he spent many of his waking hours trying to think of a way he could get revenge.

Then one morning his commanding officer, a young lieutenant named Josh Bridgestone, came to Jim and said, "Jim, I just got word that they are going to send us a tank at daybreak tomorrow to mash down the enemies' barbed wire. Do you have any ideas as to how we can make the most of that situation?" The lieutenant had gotten acquainted earlier with Jim and realized that he was a highly intelligent young man and a very dedicated soldier.

"Sir, if you will give me a little time I believe I can come up with a plan as I have been working on one every since my three buddies got killed."

"Come up with your plan as quickly as possible, Jim, because, as I just said, that tank will be here just before sunrise tomorrow; just come to me in my dugout room as soon as you get your plan finalized."

Jim quickly scrawled an outline and summary of his plan to be sure he would not leave out anything; then he hurried to the lieutenant's room, a little cave in the side of the trench.

"Sir, I believe I have my plan completed, would you like for me to explain it now?"

"Yes, I would, Jim; but first let me get my staff sergeant here as I want him in on the plan. He already knows about the coming of the tank." In a few moments the lieutenant returned with his sergeant.

"Sergeant Rucker, you know Jim Delaney don't you?"

The sergeant nodded, "Yes, sir, I know him."

"Well, Jim has come up with a plan as to what we can do to get the most out of the tank's mashing the Jerries' barbed wire in front of their trenches. Jim, let's hear your plan."

"Well, sir, I figure that as soon as the tank mashes the barbed wire the Jerries are going to believe we will be charging them, and they will come up out of their trenches immediately. They will be correct in their thinking, but we will not be charging them in the manner they will expect.

"I believe tonight we should slip out to our barbed wire barricade and snip the wire every few feet so we can crawl through it. Then we can take our shovels and crawl to the nearest shell hole; as you know there are a lot of them just to the other side of our barricade. We need to make sure the hole is big enough to allow at least two men to crouch down below ground level; any dirt dug out will be placed in front of the hole as added protection.

"As we crawl back to our trench, we can drag our shovel points along to make small trenches that we can follow out to the hole in the darkness in the morning.

“And right now we need to set up our machine gunner and his weapon about the center of our section of trench and tell him what he is to do tomorrow morning. The Jerries don’t know we have just gotten a new machine gun, so they will be in for a real surprise tomorrow!

“Just before the tank arrives, we will crawl out and get into the holes with some grenades and our rifles ready to fire. If we are cautious, we should be able to get into our foxholes without the enemy spotting us as there will not be any moonlight.

“Now when the tank comes along and mashes the wire, the Jerries will come out into No Man’s Land, and our machine gunner will mow them down; and anyone that doesn’t fall, will be shot by us from the foxholes.

“Once the field is cleared of Jerries, we will rise from our foxholes, charge toward the trench and throw in our hand grenades to kill any Jerries left in the trench. But just in case some survive the grenades, we should cautiously check for men in holes down in the trench.

“There should not be any casualties among our boys; but if by chance there are, we can bring them back to our trench as we return to it.”

“Jim, I think your plan might just work. What do you think, Sergeant?”

“I agree it is a good plan.”

“Great! Now, Sergeant, I want you to go to your three squad sergeants and tell them the plan; just be sure they understand it. When you are convinced they do, tell them to brief the rest of their squad. Also tell the squad sergeants that you will tell them when they are to go out tonight and in the morning; send the squads out one at a time to minimize any noise. Oh, one more thing: be sure to tell the men to keep their heads down tomorrow morning as long as the machine gun is firing. Is everything clear?”

“Yes, sir; the instructions are very clear.”

“Jim, your plan is so good that I am going to the Captain of our company and see if he wants all the rest of the squads to follow the same procedures we will be following. I be back shortly and tell you the results of the meeting.”

About one-half hour later, Lt. Bridgewater returned with a big smile on his face. “Captain Morper liked the plan and is going to implement it for the rest of the squads in the company!” Jim felt both elation and fear; he asked himself the question, “If it doesn’t work, will I get court-marshaled?”

The plan was implemented the next morning right on schedule, and the squads and machine gunners were ready when the tank arrived. It was very effective in mashing the barbed wire and in a few minutes it had successfully flattened all the wire in front of the enemies’ trenches. And just as Jim had predicted, the Germans’ came out of the trenches immediately and started charging across No Man’s Land.

The machine gunner opened fire and swept the machine gun back and forth across the enemy, downing most of them before they really knew what had hit

them. The few still on their feet were immediately shot by the soldiers occupying the foxholes; and then they jumped to their feet, ran up to within about thirty feet of the enemies' trenches, and lobbed hand grenades into them.

When the dust and smoke cleared the various squads in the company cautiously inspected the trenches and did not find any survivors. Jim had participated in the action, but had only wounded two men; someone else fired the fatal bullets.

Despite his hatred for the enemy, Jim had again abided by his namesake-cousin's advice: "Don't shoot to kill, just wound the enemy, that way it will take the enemies' time, resources, and manpower to take care of him; that will not be the case if the soldier is dead."

Having finished their inspection, the squad members ran back to their trenches, congratulating each other on the way. Fortunately, none of the squad members had received any significant injuries.

In a little while Captain Morper, Lieutenant Bridgestone, and Sergeant Rucker sought out Jim and congratulated him for the success of his plan; Jim was greatly relieved—there will be no court marshal for him!

But more German troops were soon brought in; and under cover of darkness they rebuilt the barbed wire barricades. In addition, they brought some of their big guns up to the Front and began bombarding the trenches of the Allies.

Though they were largely unsuccessful in their attempts, a few of the shells landed close enough to the trenches to cause cave-ins, and occasionally one would actually land in a trench. Unfortunately, one landed in the trench near to Jim, wounding him severely.

He was taken to the field hospital where they removed most of the shell fragments and sewed up his wounds. When Jim regained consciousness from the ordeal, he realized he could not see. He called for a doctor and told him his plight.

The doctor made another search and found a few more fragments. However, none was the cause of his blindness. After the doctor conferred with his colleagues, they decided to send Jim to London where he could receive treatment from doctors who specialized in healing blindness.

So they put him on a ship, along with a number of other seriously wounded soldiers, and sent him off to London. Depression set in and Jim began thinking it might have been better if he had been killed instantly. But the Lord had other plans for Jim, plans that were to unfold over the years.

CHAPTER 36

Once in the hospital in London, Jim was examined thoroughly from head to toe, and any shell fragments that had been overlooked in the field hospital were removed. Some of those fragments had initially been hidden under Jim's hair. So when the doctors removed them they expected Jim's sight to be restored in just a few days. Unfortunately, it did not happen and Jim sank deeper and deeper into depression.

The doctors decided to try an experiment. They assigned their most charming and compassionate young nurse, Betsy, Dr. Wilson's nurse, to be Jim's private nurse. She was told about Jim's condition and was urged to do all she could to help him climb out of the pits of depression and self-pity. Betsy accepted the challenge.

The first morning after Jim's arrival at the hospital, Betsy walked briskly into Jim's room with a cheery "Good morning, Private Delaney, how are you this morning?"

"To be quite honest about it, nurse, I don't feel worth a damn!" Then he muttered to himself, "I've lost my friends and now I'm blind; how else could I feel."

Betsy was a little taken aback by Jim's uncouth response, but she quickly recovered her equanimity and said in her most pleasant voice, "Oh, I'm so sorry you feel so badly, sir, but you will feel better after you have had a good breakfast," "I hope so," was all that Jim could say.

It was a very good breakfast and Jim managed to force himself to eat all of it. Then Betsy came in again and began to carefully examine Jim's wounds. As she uncovered one after another, she would say almost gleefully, "This wound looks like it is healing nicely. Now I'm going to put a little salve on it and re-wrap it." When she finished the last wound she said, with compassion in her voice, "I hope I didn't hurt you while I was changing your bandages; if I did I'm sorry."

Jim was not used to such soft and pleasant talk; it was so radically different from the harsh commands he had received from the military noncoms and officers. So he heard himself saying, "You didn't hurt me a bit, and I thank you for being so gentle." For the first time since he got wounded, Jim sensed a ray of hope springing up in his soul.

Betsy made a trip into Jim's room frequently to check on him. Sometimes he would be asleep and she let him remain so. When he was awake when she entered, he would respond with a slight movement of his head because he wanted her to know he was not asleep. He had come to realize she was his private nurse, and that she apparently was very dedicated to her profession.

As the pall of self-pity and depression began to lift, Jim found himself wondering what this angel of mercy looked like. He visualized many different scenarios: all the way from fat as a pig to slim as a broom handle; from homely as

a mud fence to a raving beauty; from a shining blond to a dull brunette; from a Shorty, to a gangly six-footer. And the more he visualized Betsy, the more determined he was that one day he would be able to see her like she really was.

CHAPTER 37

The striking change in Jim's outlook on life was discussed among the doctors and the nurses. In addition to Jim's improvement in attitude, his personal doctor, Dr. Smythe, noted that his wounds were healing more rapidly than usual, but his eyes were still sightless. He discussed these matters with his colleagues and they concluded that a positive attitude must somehow prompt the body to speed up its repairing work.

"Hopefully, what has been happening with his other wounds will also happen with his eyes," Dr. Smythe said; his colleagues nodded in agreement.

Then one day Jim worked up the courage to ask Dr. Smythe: "Dr. Smythe, I going to ask you a very weighty question, and I want you to be completely honest in your answer, is that okay?"

"Well, yes, Jim. I will do my best to sincerely answer any question you might have. Now, what is your question?"

Jim hesitated a moment, summoning up the courage to ask the most important question he had ever asked; "Dr. Smythe, will I ever see again?"

Dr. Smythe pondered the question for a moment, searching his mind for the best possible answer. Finally he said as cheerfully as he could, "Jim, I've no reason to believe that you will remain without your sight. I sense in my spirit that your eyes will one day soon be uncovered and you will see."

"Thank you, Dr. Smythe, I really needed to hear that," Jim exclaimed.

As the days passed, Jim's wounds healed sufficiently, and Betsy began taking him by the hand and leading him around the hospital in order to get his leg muscles back into shape. Jim really enjoyed the holding-of-hands and being led around by Betsy. He got the impression she was certainly not fat or tall, but he was eagerly awaiting the time when he would be able to see her as she really was. So he continually and silently prayed, "Oh, Lord, please let me see Betsy. Thank you."

CHAPTER 38

Then one day, at the urging of Betsy, Jim dictated to her a letter to his mother.

“Dear Mom, I am dictating this letter to my private nurse, Betsy. She is a very caring lady and an excellent caregiver. I would describe her to you, Mom, but I'm blind. Now don't you go to worrying about my blindness, the doctors are very optimistic that I will regain my sight most any day now. But now that I have a lot of time on my hands and there are no bullets whizzing over my head, I will tell you all about my adventures (or maybe I should call them misadventures) from the time I arrived at the battlefield up until now.

“When I arrived at the front lines I was surprised by the trenches. They were bigger, deeper, and had a lot more zigzags in them than did the ones we used when training. They also had a lot more sandbags on their edges, (called the parapet); that is where we laid our rifles when we were on guard duty or shooting at the Krauts.

“We had little holes, called dugouts, in the sides of the trenches. We used planks and sandbags as ceilings, and we also used planks to cover the bottoms of both the dugouts and the trenches. We rested and slept in the dugouts and also used them as places to write letters or read.

“The trenches got very wet when it rained, and it rained all too often. Sometimes the water got ankle deep and, as a result, we had problems with wrinkles and blisters that cause a disease called Trench Foot. Fortunately, I never got the disease but I had problems with the rats, lice, frogs, cooties and other vermin; and I guess the rats were the most loathsome of all the creatures! They were there by the millions, and some of them were as big as a cat. We would beat them off with a club, or rifle butt, but they would immediately come back. So when I was trying to sleep, Robert would stand guard and keep them off of me; when it was his turn to sleep, I did the same for him.

“Oddly enough, days in the trenches were very calm. At first light, the order ‘Stand to!’ is given; this means the danger of a night raid is over and the sentries can relax.

“Then we would get breakfast, usually canned beef, bread, and jam. (Sometimes we had an abundance of cheese, and some guys would eat too much of it, and get constipated.)

“Then there were times when we ran short on regular food and had to resort to a stash of biscuits. Sometimes they were so dry that you couldn't get your teeth in them and you had to soak them in water for a while.

“When we finished breakfast we cleaned our weapons. We were taught how to do this blindfolded so we could do it in total darkness. Our instructors told us that our rifles were our ‘girlfriends’ and we should treat them accordingly.

“After we finished cleaning our rifles, an officer would come around and inspect them. If your rifle was not clean, you were in a heap of trouble. I guess they could actually have court-martialed you if they wanted to, but usually the punishment was an extended time of cleaning out the latrines, filling them in, or digging new ones.

“Following rifle cleaning, we had to do chores such as filling sand bags, patching floors, carrying supplies, and running errands for the officers. And if there were not enough ‘extended-time’ men to do the jobs, several men would be ‘volunteered’ for latrine duty. I got ‘volunteered’ a few times and believe me, it was bad, bad!

“Surprisingly enough, Mom, there was not necessarily a battle every day. But when there was a battle, we usually started by heavily bombarding their communication and front-line trenches. The logic behind this tactic was that a heavy bombardment would kill the enemy in the trenches and destroy the barbed wire, so the Allied troops could get into the trenches easier and kill any surviving Germans.

“Unfortunately, the enemy trenches were sometimes so deep that the bombardments failed to kill a significant number of the Germans. If this was the case, we would climb out of our trenches, rush through breaks in our barbed wire, and run toward the enemies’ trenches. Then the Germans would come out of their trenches and rush towards us. We would try to kill them before they got to us because we did not want any of that hand-to-hand combat business. Almost without exception, when we got close to the enemy, he would turn tail and run back to the trenches, and we would return to ours. Stupid warfare!

“Only one time did I get into a hand-to-hand battle with a German. He rushed at me with his bayonet in place (evidentially he had run out of bullets just like I had). We thrust at each other with our bayonets for a few seconds, and just as I was about to run him through, he turned tail and ran back to his trench. Thankfully, about that time we got the signal to return to our trenches, and the Germans retreated to theirs. It was very obvious that neither side wanted to do hand-to-hand battle!

“Another tactic that was sometimes used was to lay down a low, continuous, heavy machine gun fire (for those squads that were lucky enough to have a machine gun) to keep the Germans from raising their heads to return fire.

“The big drawback to this technique was sometimes the machine gun firing got a little too low; and some of our troops got killed.

“When the machine gun was not being used, we would arm ourselves with several hand grenades and crawl on our bellies toward the enemy until we got close enough to lob the grenades into their trenches.

“The Germans immediately got wise to this, and started putting the barbed wire barricade so far in front of their trenches that we could not get close enough to them to lob in the grenades.

“There was one tactic that our men tried only one time: Our soldiers started digging a tunnel towards the enemy line. Unfortunately, the Germans heard the digging and started digging a tunnel toward ours. When the two tunnels met, the enemy was ready for our soldiers and all of them were almost instantly killed.

“The enemy had well-trained snipers, and a lot of our boys got killed by them. All you had to do to get a bullet in your head was to expose it for a second or two. I learned that my other two friends, Rex and John, had been killed by snipers

“Shortly after my friends got killed, I heard that in some battle areas poisonous gas had been used. (I believed it was called Mustard gas.) Immediately, troops in our area were equipped with gas masks.

“We were told that the gas was usually deadly and we should keep our masks on until we got the signal to remove them. We were also told that the gas was very painful and would cause blisters on both our insides and outsides; but within a few hours of exposure to it you would likely die. “But if it didn’t kill you, you would likely be burned and blinded.

“Thank the Lord I was never exposed to the gas. But some of the soldiers in my squadron got exposed to it and were burned, blinded, and finally killed by the gas. How cruel and uncivilized this world has become!

“Then one day I got hit by an exploding shell the Germans had managed to land in our trench; and that’s how I came to be here in this hospital in London, blinded.

“But don’t you worry, Mom. I know you will pray for the Lord to restore my sight and my body, and I choose to believe He will.

“Well, Mom, I guess I had better close for now, but I promise I will keep you posted on my recovery and other things. Give my regards to Dad (is he still behaving?).

Lots of love from your bunged up son, Jim.”

CHAPTER 39

Although Jim was somewhat concerned about his physical status, foremost thoughts in his mind were about Betsy. He would find all kinds of excuses to have her present in his room. Betsy was not naïve; she knew exactly what Jim was doing—and she really liked it.

During their time together Jim found out all about Betsy's upbringing, her family, and several other rather personal things. Betsy did not mind as she had nothing to hide—her family members were “commoners,” hard-working, and God fearing Christians with a good British name: Mitchell.

As for herself, Betsy had always wanted to be a nurse because she had a deep desire to help people regain their health and get back into a normal life—she was a loving person with a very compassionate heart.

Jim was moved by her many acts of compassion and felt a very strong attraction for her. But questions filled his mind: “What does she look like? Is she so homely that I won't want to marry her; or maybe she is obese, or too short?” Knowing that he wouldn't get the answers to these questions until he got his sight back, each day he eagerly awaited the doctor's arrival, hoping that it would be the day of the great news: “Your sight is returning, Jim!” He so desperately wanted to hear those words so he could see what Betsy really looked like.

In the meantime Betsy was growing fonder of Jim with each passing day. She could visualize herself walking down the aisle to marry this handsome six-foot, two-inch tall gentleman with wavy black hair and a build that would be the envy of most men. “And I think he loves me too,” she said to herself; “I really, really hope he does.”

Not many days later the doctor gently lifted the bandage partially off Jim's eyes and asked, “Jim, can you see anything at all?” To his delight, and the delight of Betsy, Jim excitedly answered, “Doctor, I can see dark images moving around but I can't tell you who they are!” At that, the doctor recovered Jim's eyes and said, “Jim, I'm going to re-cover your eyes for now; I don't want to put undue strain on them. Tomorrow I will remove the bandage for a little longer period, and perhaps within a week or so your sight will be completely restored;” then he added, “Praise the Lord!”

Jim and Betsy were very ecstatic about the announcement and could hardly wait for tomorrow. In fact they were so excited that neither of them got much sleep that night.

Early the next morning the doctor arrived, also very excited about Jim's possible recovery. He washed his hands then proceeded to begin removing the bandage from Jim's eyes. As he did he asked Jim the usual question again, “Jim, can you see anything?” Jim excitedly responded, “Yes, Doctor, my vision is better;

I can see the outlines of you and Betsy, but I still can't see them clearly enough to be able to describe how you two look!"

"Jim, you have improved significantly; I'll see you early tomorrow. Goodbye for now," and he strode out of the room.

Then Betsy came over to the bedside and helped Jim sit up. She propped him up with a pillow behind his back, sat down on the bed, and took his hand. "Jim, I believe tomorrow you will be able to see clearly enough to describe me, and I hope what you see will be acceptable to you."

Jim replied, truthfully, "Betsy, I don't need to see you clearly to know that I love you, and I've loved you for several weeks; I was just afraid to tell you because I would not want you to marry me if I were to remain blind. But now..." and he reached out, gently grasped Betsy by her shoulders and slowly drew her face near to his and carefully and gently ran his hands over her face and through her hair. Then he pulled her still closer and kissed her passionately with a lingering kiss.

Betsy's response was, "Oh, Jim, I've wanted to tell you for days of my love for you, but I wanted to be sure our feelings for each other were mutual.

"If you had asked me to marry you, I would have done so—even if you would never recover your sight. But, thank the Lord; you are going to see again. Then I can take you sight-seeing all over London and the surrounding area, where it is so beautiful this time of year."

Jim said with love and laughter in his voice: "Darling, it sounds like you already have our honeymoon planned."

"Well, as a matter of fact, marriage does sound like a great idea, doesn't it?"

Jim pulled her closer and replied, "Yes, my beloved, it sounds like a great idea, and just as soon as they get this bandage off my eyes for good, and if you are willing, I will locate a minister and we will get married." Then he paused and a slightly troubled look crossed his face as he asked, "But what about your parents, how do you think they will feel about you marrying a Yank?"

"Oh, Jim, don't worry. I've been telling them about you every since I first saw you, and I can tell by their responses to my descriptions of you that they will wholeheartedly approve of our marriage.

"As soon as you get out of the hospital, will you go to my home with me and meet my family? It would mean so much to me and to them. And while we are there, perhaps you might ask for my hand in marriage if you feel comfortable about doing so," Betsy said with a big smile of anticipation on her lips.

Jim was in perfect agreement with all that Betsy had suggested. But as he had never really been in love before, he wondered about the "new" feelings he had. (They were so different from those he had had toward Beverly.) Why the thrill and rapture in his heart, and why would goose bumps arise when he kissed Betsy? No, he did not understand the chemistry of love that was going on in his very soul and

spirit, but he did know that it was more than pleasant—it was inexplicably wonderful! And he realized that he would marry Betsy, regardless of how she would look when at last he would be able to see her clearly.

The next day was a day of great rejoicing and triumph. The doctor removed Jim's bandage from his eyes and immediately Jim was looking squarely into the smiling faces of Dr. Smythe and Betsy.

Then for a second, he almost gasped as he looked at the scars on Betsy's chin. But immediately he looked beyond the scars and saw a loving, compassionate young lady who had rescued him from the bottomless pits of self-pity and depression. By her empathetic manner, she had created within him a desire to live—and love.

With tears of joy in her eyes, Betsy bent over Jim and bestowed a loving kiss on his lips. Then Jim's eyes began to well-up with tears as he said, "Thank you, Betsy; you are so beautiful and so radiant, and I love you so much!"

At that, Dr. Smythe said with a big smile, "Well, I guess I had better take my leave so you two lovebirds can rejoice together in private," and he walked out the door and softly closed it.

Jim sat up, put his feet on the floor and said to Betsy, "My sweetheart, would you please step back two or three feet so I can see the whole you?"

Betsy did as requested. Now able to see well, Jim slowly passed his eyes over Betsy from head to toe. What he saw was a very trim, attractive young lady with short auburn hair neatly tucked under her nurse's cap. Jim also noted she was probably six inches shorter than he was and that she had an angelic look on her faintly-scarred chin. "You are a living doll, Miss Betsy," Jim said with a grin on his face, "and I am madly in love with you!"

CHAPTER 40

After an hour of “billing and cooing,” Jim got dressed while Betsy went to the office of the head nurse to arrange to take her two weeks of vacation time. While she was gone, Jim went to the mail clerk and was given an envelope from the local American Military Headquarters. Inside were orders stating he had three weeks to recuperate, and then he was to report to them for further orders. Jim had been hoping he would get an honorable discharge and a ticket back to the States. But he set his jaw and determined that he was not going to worry about the matter—he was going to marry Betsy and have a three-week honeymoon!

He went back to his room and waited for Betsy to return; when she did he told her about the letter.

“Oh, Jim, I just asked for two weeks off; let me run back to the head nurse and see if she will extend that to three weeks.” In about ten minutes she was back with a big smile on her face. “She was very gracious and said our honeymoon was important, so she extended the time to three weeks! Now, Jim darling, would you like to go get some lunch, make a sight-seeing tour, and then go to meet my parents?”

“Yes, my beloved bride-to-be, I think that is a great idea.”

They walked the short distance to a homey little restaurant and ordered their lunch. The food was good, and between mouthfuls they softly spoke words of love and adoration. Finally they finished eating, paid the bill and went back to the hospital and got into Betsy’s automobile.

“What would you like to see first, Jim darling?” Betsy asked.

“Betsy, my love, I would like to go to the countryside and view the flowers, and trees, and grass, and anything else mother nature can provide; it has been a long time since I’ve seen any of them.

“But before we do that, let’s go to a jewelry store and buy our wedding rings. That way we will be prepared for the ceremony whenever the opportunity arises. What do you think of that idea, Sweetie?”

“It’s a great idea, Jim.” So they slowly drove down the street to find a jewelry store. They had only driven a few blocks when they found what they were looking for.

They parked, went in and examined several rings and finally decided on a lovely matching pair. Jim paid the clerk and put the rings in his pocket. “In case we get married tonight I will have the rings handy,” he said with a twinkle in his eyes.

Then suddenly Jim exclaimed, “Oh, I almost forgot, we need to get a marriage license too.” Fortunately Betsy knew where the City Clerk’s office was located. So they got into the car and drove to it in just a few minutes. Fifteen minutes later that precious document was safely in Betsy’s purse and they were on their way to the countryside.

When they arrived there they were thrilled by what they saw: hundreds of flowers of all colors, lush green grass, many stately trees, and a bubbling brook winding through them.

They got out of the car and sat down on some large rocks alongside the brook to take in the beauty of the landscape and to enjoy the melodic sounds of the bubbling brook.

“Isn’t the sound of the brook restful?” Betsy asked.

“Beautiful music,” Jim replied as he snuggled up closer to Betsy. They were so enamored with each other it was difficult for them to focus on their surroundings.

But finally Jim said, “Do you suppose we should drive a little further into the countryside? Perhaps we will spot some of those lovely little cottages I’ve read about;” so they resumed their adventure.

They had not gone very far until they began seeing lovely little cottages as they drove along. They enjoyed the sights but after a while, Jim said, “Darling, are you hungry? I am.”

Betsy replied with a laugh, “Jim darling, I anticipated we might drive into the countryside, so I picked up some sandwiches and water from the hospital kitchen. They are right here behind my seat.”

“You are a very brilliant lady, Betsy, and a very sweet and thoughtful one. I’ve never in my life felt so content and so happy. If I’m dreaming, please don’t wake me up; I want this dream to last forever.”

“Oh, Jim, my lover, am I in the dream with you?” she asked teasingly.

“Betsy, you are what make the dream so wonderful, and without you there would be no dream.” They snuggled a little closer together on the car seat, enjoying every moment of the intimacy.

Then Jim said, “Betsy, see that little grove of trees over there? Why don’t we drive over there and eat our lunch?” Betsy thought that was a great idea and she steered the car toward the trees. In a couple of minutes they were inside the grove.

Jim got out the tarp that Betsy had put in the car that morning, “just in case....” He spread it under the trees near the little stream that ran through the grove.

Betsy got out the lunch and water, and the love birds sat down on the tarp to eat—“whispering sweet nothings” to each other between bites

After they finished eating, Betsy looked at Jim with an anxious look on her face, prompting Jim to ask, “Betsy, my love, why do you look so concerned? Have I done something wrong?”

“No, Jim, you have done nothing wrong; I was just remembering the startled expression on your face when you looked up at me when Dr. Smyth removed the bandage from your eyes. I am so sorry you were not prepared ahead of time to see my face. Does it distress you a little to look closely at it?”

“Oh no, Betsy; my love for you was not in the least bit adversely affected by your looks. Please be assured that nothing about you could ever weaken my love for you.”

With that declaration, Jim scooted over to Betsy, put his arms around her, pulled her tightly against his body, and kissed her. She responded by embracing him, returning the kiss, and slowly running her hand through his wavy hair.

“Jim, I love you so much; I've never before been so happy.”

Then after a few sacred moments of absorbing the love they felt for each other, Betsy quietly said, “Jim, I got these scars when I was a little girl. I was running down the sidewalk when I tripped and fell. It almost rendered me unconscious, and I did a lot of bleeding. Fortunately, the wounds did not get infected, but when they healed they left behind the scars.” Then Betsy smiled and said; “Now my Darling, you will no longer have to wonder how I got these scars.”

Jim pulled her face close to his, then slowly and tenderly kissed each and every one of the scars. “Now, Sweetheart, you are all well, and you will never again have to be embarrassed by the scars nor have to explain them to anyone.”

Betsy looked into Jim's eyes through the tears in her own; “Thank you, Darling, for setting me free from that blight on my life.” The subject of scars was never again mentioned.

After finishing their lunch, the lovers just lay there on the tarp for a long time, watching the birds flutter by, and listening to their songs as they perched in the trees.

“God certainly made some beautiful and wonderful things in His creation, didn't he, Jim?”

Jim replied, “Yes, He did; and of all His creations, you are the most beautiful.”

Betsy quickly responded by giving her lover a very enthusiastic hug and a very passionate kiss, a scenario that seemed to be repeated quite often.

After a few more moments of gazing at the clouds drifting through the sky and the birds flitting from tree to tree, Jim said, “My Beloved One I guess we had better start back to London because we need to get there by sundown. And by the way, where do you think I might get a bed for the night?” He was hoping he already knew the answer—and he did.

“Sweetie, I'm sure the folks would be glad for you to stay the night with us; we have a very comfortable bed in our spare bedroom. And besides, I told them I would be bringing you home with me this evening to meet them, and they suggested you could spend the night with us.”

“You're very thoughtful, Betsy, and you must have a wonderful family. And do you suppose your dad might perform our wedding ceremony this evening, and then I could spend the night in your spare bedroom—and of course you would be spending it with me,” Jim said with a twinkle in his eyes.

Betsy smiled and replied, “Based on his reaction when I mentioned the possibility that you might ask me to marry you, I think Dad will be glad to marry us, and then you can share a bedroom with me.” Betsy thought, “Jim is sure going to be surprised when he learns where that bedroom is.”

CHAPTER 41

An hour later the couple pulled up to the Mitchell's home at the outskirts of London, a gray-stoned house with white trim. It was surrounded by trees, had a stately fountain in the front yard, and multicolored flowers in beds that formed a beautiful border across the front of the house.

“What a lovely home,” Jim said, “and I’ve never seen a lovelier yard or a more attractive residence.”

“Thank you, Jim, for your compliments; Dad and Mom take great pride in keeping the homestead looking at its very best.” Then as they were getting out of the car, Betsy said, “Now I want to take you around behind the house so you can see my cottage.”

“You hadn’t told me you had a cottage,” Jim exclaimed!

As they strolled around the house, Betsy said, “Oh, yes, Jim. When I became a nurse my hours were such that I would be coming in all hours of the night, and I didn’t want my arriving to wake up the folks. So as a graduation present, Dad had this little cottage built for me. I really like it because I am now what you might say, totally independent when I want or need to be. Of course I usually eat breakfast with the folks when my schedule will allow it. They insist that I do so and I’m so glad they want me to. I understand some kids don’t even speak to their parents. Would you like to see the inside of my cottage?”

“Yes, Betsy, I sure would like to do that,” Betsy unlocked the door and they went in.

Jim looked around for a moment and said, “Betsy, you have a very lovely little cottage here.” It was rather small but well decorated with pictures and various knickknacks. Betsy took Jim by the arm and escorted him through the parlor, kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.

As they entered the bedroom, Betsy pulled Jim closer and whispered into his ear, “Darling, if Dad does marry us this evening, this is the spare bedroom where you will spend the night—with me.”

To speed up matters, Jim squeezed Betsy up tight and said, “Sweetie, shall we go to your folk’s house now so I can meet them? I’m very anxious to do so, and I know they will be great people because they have such a wonderful daughter.”

Betsy took Jim by the arm, escorted him up to the front door, and knocked. Immediately the door opened and a nice-looking, middle-aged lady with graying hair and a lovely smile reached out to the couple, “I’m Margaret Mitchell, Betsy’s mother. And this must be Jim—I am so glad to meet you at last, Jim. We have heard so much about you that I feel I already know you.”

Jim took Mrs. Mitchell's hand and replied, “I’m so pleased to meet you, ma’am; and I’ve heard a lot of nice things about you and your husband.” About that time a stately-looking, silver-haired gentleman, appeared on the scene and shook hands

with Jim. "Welcome, Jim. I'm Walter, Betsy's father; we are so glad you have come to visit us. Do come in;" Betsy took Jim by the hand and led him inside.

The inside of the house was just as lovely as the outside of it, and Jim could sense an atmosphere of tranquility and love.

"Please have a seat, Jim, while I prepare some tea for all of us," Mrs. Mitchell said as she started toward the kitchen.

Jim sat down on the sofa and Betsy sat down beside him, still holding his hand.

"Jim, Betsy has told us all about you, about your sight problem and how you were miraculously healed. I am a great believer in God's miracle-working power. I've seen Him work many miracles.

"As Betsy has probably told you, Mrs. Mitchell and I were missionaries in Ethiopia for several years, but my wife's health began to fail so we came back to England. She regained her health and our precious little late-in-life Betsy was born." Mr. Mitchell beamed with pride as he mentioned his lovely Betsy.

"I'm so glad you came back from Ethiopia," Jim said with a laugh, "otherwise I guess I would not have Betsy sitting here beside me."

About that time Mrs. Mitchell appeared carrying a tray with a teapot, cups, saucers, and a sugar bowl on it. She put it down on the little table in the center of the room, poured tea in the cups, passed them on to everyone else, and then took the last cup for herself.

She smiled and said, "Jim, if you would like some sugar in your tea, please help yourself to some. As you probably know, it is rationed; but I saved up my coupons and got some for such special occasions as this."

The discussion then turned to the war, rationing, and related subjects.

"Jim, do you think the war is about to end? We have heard some politicians say that it is—and I certainly hope they are right. And I know without a doubt that if you Yank hadn't joined us in the fight against the Germans we would probably be getting orders in German. By the way, you don't mind being referred to as a Yank, do you, Jim?"

Jim smiled and replied, "No, Mr. Mitchell, I am proud to be called a Yank. And as for your first question, I really don't know that much about the present war situation. I guess I've been away from the fighting too long.

"But I do know that when I was in the French battlefield it seemed that the Germans were getting weaker and less determined. They were crawling out of their trenches and charging us less and less frequently. And they would turn tail and run almost before we got out of our trenches.

"I may find out more about the war in three weeks when I report back at the Military Headquarters. But for the present, I've decided I was going to concentrate on two things: a wedding and a honeymoon. So I'm going to be very bold and ask

straight out: Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell may I get your permission to marry your beautiful Betsy?"

Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell looked at each other, nodded, then turned toward Jim and Betsy.

"Yes, Jim," Mr. Mitchell said, "you have our permission to marry Betsy, and I would like to perform the ceremony; I am still an ordained minister."

"That would be wonderful, wouldn't it, Betsy? And I would like to have the ceremony this evening if that would be all right with you."

"That would be just fine with me; and I suspect that we can get the neighbors to be the witnesses," Betsy replied. Then she turned to her father and said, "Dad, we were hoping you would marry us; in fact we were so confident that you would, that we purchased matching rings this afternoon."

"Martha," Mr. Mitchell said, "why don't you run over to the Boggs' house and see if they will come over about eight o'clock to witness the ceremony. In the meantime I will put on my clerical suit and get my Pastor's Handbook out of the library."

Martha replied, "I believe eight o'clock will be a good time; that will give me time to change into my Sunday best when I get back from the neighbor's. Oh, I am so excited!"

The Boggs, a nice-looking, middle-aged couple, arrived right on time and were introduced to Jim. Then the Reverend Mitchell spoke up. "Jim, if you and Betsy will join me in front of the fireplace we will get the ceremony started. And you three witnesses please stand right behind Jim and Betsy."

Then with great solemnity the Reverend Mister Mitchell began reading from his Pastor's Handbook. "We are gathered here today in the presence of these witnesses and Almighty God to unite you, Jim and Betsy, by the sacred ties of matrimony. And now, if you know nothing, either legal or moral, to forbid your union in marriage, and you wish to take its vows and obligations, please indicate your wish by joining your right hands;" Jim and Betsy joined hands and Mr. Mitchell continued.

"Will you, Jim, have this woman, Betsy, whose hand you hold, to be your wedded wife, and solemnly promise that you will loyally fulfill your obligations to protect her, honor her, love her, and cherish her in all circumstances, and keep yourself unto her alone, so long as you both shall live?" Jim answered, "I will."

"Then place the ring on her finger as a sign of your vow."

"Now, Betsy, will you have this man, Jim, whose hand you hold, to be your wedded husband, and solemnly promise that you will be unto him a tender, loving, and true wife in all circumstances, and be faithful to him so long as you both shall live?" Betsy answered, "I will."

"Then place the ring on Jim's finger as a sign of your vow."

He continued: “Now, by the power vested in me by the County of Greater London, I pronounce you man and wife.

“Now let us pray: Our heavenly Father, this couple has been joined together in holy matrimony; therefore, I beseech You in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to fill them with Your Holy Spirit that they might have the divine power and love they will need to truly live together in peace and harmony till death do them part. Amen”.

“Jim, you may now kiss your bride,” Jim turned to Betsy and gently bestowed a kiss on her lips. Next the pastor had them turn around and face the witnesses; then he announced, “Friends and family, I now present to you, Jim and Betsy Delaney.”

After the “Congratulations” and “Best Wishes” were all said, Mrs. Mitchell served some hastily prepared tea, and crumpets with jam. And after about thirty minutes, the Dobbs excused themselves, said goodbye and departed.

Mr. Mitchell took advantage of the lull in the conversations and said, “Since we were all so busy getting ready for the wedding, we missed supper. So now I suggest that we all go to the kitchen and break out some sandwich makings.” The rest of the “family” agreed that was a good idea. In just a few minutes they were all seated at the kitchen table enjoying ham and cheese sandwiches, a spot of tea, and discussing the wedding.

“Mr. Mitchell, or can I now call you ‘Dad,’ you did a magnificent job with the wedding ceremony and I want to thank you for performing it on a moment’s notice.”

“Thank you, Jim, for that compliment; and ‘Yes,’ I will be honored by your calling me “Dad.”

Jim turned to Mrs. Mitchell and asked, “Ma’am, would it be okay if I called you Mom?” Martha walked over to Jim, stood him up, grabbed him with a hug and said, “Jim, Walter and I’ve wished many times that we could have had a son to go with our Betsy—now we have one, and I am so pleased and so proud; and you certainly can call me “Mom!”

Jim returned the hug and said, “Thank you, Mom; I hope I can be a worthy husband to your daughter, and that I never give you any reason to want to disown me.”

Then Betsy came over to the couple and said with a smile, “Do you suppose I might get into this hugging game?”

“By all means, Betsy; and Walter, why don’t you join in the fun?” Martha asked. So Walter came over and hugs were exchanged, coupled with laughter and little pecks on the cheek.

“Gee, I don’t remember when I ever had such a joyful day,” Walter said with a grin, “but I think it’s about time for us old folks to go to bed.” Martha agreed and soon Jim and Betsy were alone in the kitchen.

Then with a slightly embarrassed, but anticipating look, Jim whispered in Betsy’s ear, “Honey, don’t you think it is about time for us to go to bed too?”

Betsy smiled and whispered back, “Yes, Lover Boy, I do,” and they started their short walk to Betsy’s cottage. When they got there, Jim opened the door, then swept Betsy into his arms and carried her across the threshold. She hugged his neck tightly and gave him a lingering kiss; the honeymoon had begun!

The next day Jim wrote his parents and told them all about his new bride and the wedding. He also told them he was recovering his health rapidly, and that he was already able to see normally again.

CHAPTER 42

Then Jim and Betsy began their honeymoon by spending the next several days touring around the countryside. They carefully avoided discussing the war and the possibility that Jim might have to go back to France. Finally, with only five days of recuperation time left for Jim, they got the best possible news: the war had ended!

It seemed that the whole population of London went into celebration mode. There were numerous parades, street parties, and even prayer meetings for thanking the Lord for the war's ending.

At the end of Jim's recuperation time, he and Betsy went back to the American Military Headquarters for his orders. They were very surprised and most ecstatic at what Jim was told.

First of all, they said he would get a special Metal from the army because his battle plan had saved many Allied lives. Also he was to get an honorable discharge, Purple Heart, special discharge pay, and a ticket for his return to the United States; he was to return to the Military Headquarters in three days to pickup his materials.

They rushed back to the Mitchell's home to share the good news with Walter and Martha. They were very delighted at the news and immediately began a celebration party. Martha cooked a meal of baked chicken, fried potatoes, and green beans. For side dishes she prepared crumpets and jam, and cottage cheese; the drink was hot tea.

After everyone had stuffed themselves, the ladies cleaned up the dishes while Jim and Walter discussed the war's end, and what the future might hold. They were soon joined by the ladies who immediately entered into the discussion.

"Jim, now that you will soon be out of the military, what are your plans, if I might ask. Naturally Walter and I are very concerned about the future of our daughter."

Jim pondered the question for a few moments, then answered, "Well, Mom, I guess I really don't have an answer for you even though Betsy and I've discussed the various options we might have. We tried to come up with a plan that would be the most logical and the least painful for all concerned, naturally meaning you and Dad and Betsy and myself.

"A decision would have been a whole lot easier to make if we lived on the same continent instead of thousands of miles apart. Then there is the question of my mom and dad. I fear that Dad's drinking will catch up to him one of these days, and Mom will be a widow with no income.

"Another problem I have is that I do not have a job to go home to. Jobs may be hard to find since the war is over and a lot of boys will be going back to America; and probably most of them will be trying to find a job.

“So, Mom and Dad, you can see why we haven't made any real decisions yet. Oh, Betsy said she could probably get a nursing job as nurses are generally in great demand there in the States. But her income would probably not be enough to support us in case I couldn't get a job. Then he turned to Betsy, “Honey, do you have anything to add to what I have just said?”

Betsy sat silently for a few moments, and then said, “No, Jim, I don't really have anything to add at this time. Dad, Mom, do you have any suggestions?”

Walter and Martha exchanged glances as if each one was waiting for the other one to say something. Finally Walter spoke up, “My beloved children, we appreciate your efforts to come up with a perfect solution, but I'm afraid there is no such thing in this case. However, if Martha will agree with me, I would suggest that you two go to the United States because I believe you would have a brighter future there than you would have if you stayed in England. Of course we would miss you two terribly, but we could come over to see you maybe once a year—or perhaps we could alternate; we visit you one year, and you come to see us the next year. What do you all think of that idea?”

The trio expected Martha to give her opinion, so they all turned toward her and waited for her comments.

Martha realized what they were thinking, so she hesitated for only a moment, and then she said, “Well, Walter, I think your suggestion is probably as good as any. And, yes, we would certainly prefer to be on the same continent with you youngsters, but...,” her voice trailed off and she got teary eyed. Betsy hurried across the room and took her mother in her arms.

“Mom, we certainly appreciate the willingness of you and Dad to set aside your own feelings so that Jim and I can do what you believe is best for us; that is unselfish, godly love. But an idea just came to me, so I would like to make another suggestion.

“Since our home is already paid for, and I've a good job here, I believe we could get by on my salary if necessary. Therefore, I suggest, Jim that we remain in England and see if you can find employment here.

“I understand there is a car manufacturing plant here that will soon be turning out cars again. And as you have experience with cars, perhaps you could get a job there. Then when your dad passes away we can move your mother over here so we can take care of her. Also, we will have Mom and Dad as a sort of backup in case of emergencies. How does this suggestion sound to you all?”

Jim thought a moment then replied, “I believe you have a good plan Betsy; I am certainly willing to give it a try. I feel sure my mother will approve of the plan; she is very understanding and unselfish. Mom, Dad, how do you feel about it?”

Without hesitation Walter spoke up, “Jim, I think it is a good plan. Martha, how do you feel about it?”

“I also think it’s a good plan; for very selfish reasons I would much rather have you two here than thirty-five hundred miles away!”

“Well, I guess that settles it”, Jim said. “Tomorrow I will check on a job with the automobile dealership.”

CHAPTER 43

The next day Betsy drove Jim to the dealership and went inside with him. A gentleman came out from behind a counter and greeted them. “Good day, ma’am, sir. My name is Charles Whitmore and I am the manager here. How may I help you?”

Jim extended his hand to the manager and said, “Well, sir, my name is Jim Delaney and this is my wife, Betsy. I’m getting out of the military in two more days and I will need a job, and I have skills of repairing and maintaining automobiles.”

“I’m glad to meet you folk; please come into my office and we will discuss the matter.” The Delaneys followed Mr. Whitmore into his office and he motioned for them to be seated on the sofa.

“Mr. Delaney, we’re expecting for business to pick up now that the war is over; consequently we will need more salesmen and mechanics. Have you had any experience selling cars?”

“No, sir, but I have about two years experience repairing and maintaining them, and I feel confident that I can also sell them.”

“By the way, Mr. Delaney, I notice your speech is American, not English; so what brings you to London?”

“Well, sir, I joined the army and was trained in Oklahoma, and then I was sent to France to help the Allies whip the Germans. I got wounded and was sent to London for special care. Betsy was my nurse and I fell in love with her; we got married just a few days ago.”

“Congratulations to you two.” Then he continued, “I am so glad you Yanks came over to help us out; I’m sure without your help we would not have won the war.

“So as a small token of my appreciation for what you did to help us win the war, I’m going to give you a job. Can you start next Monday? And by the way, if you are going to be a salesman, we will furnish you a demonstrator car for your personal use.” Jim and Betsy looked at each other in amazement.

“Thank you, Mr. Whitmore; we really appreciate you doing this. What time do you want me to be here next Monday?”

“Well, Jim, you will need to fill out a little paper work, so why don’t you come in a little before seven o’clock. Incidentally, you didn’t ask what your wage would be, and I take that as a sign you are a good worker. Your wage will be one pound per ten-hour day, and we work six days a week. And by the way, when I get a prospective buyer, I will get hold of you, Jim, and you can observe how I go about selling a car. And when you feel like you have learned enough, just say so and I will give you opportunities to sell them. Does that sound like a fair way to do it?”

Jim answered, “Yes, Mr. Whitmore, that sounds like a good plan. I promise you I will do my best at being a mechanic and a part-time salesman.”

“Well, before you go, do either of you have any questions?” Neither of them did so they shook hands with Mr. Whitmore, told him goodbye, and then drove to their home.

CHAPTER 44

Monday arrived and Betsy took Jim to work, kissed him goodbye, and then drove on to her worksite at the hospital.

Jim went inside the office building and reported on time as promised. He filled out a few pages of paper work, and then Mr. Whitmore took him on a tour of the facilities, introducing him to the other employees as they made their way through the office building and showroom. Jim was impressed by what he saw: a clean, orderly office and showroom, and a neat repair shop next to the office building.

“Now that you have seen our place of business, Jim, I’m going to assign you to George as an apprentice repairman. He is a very knowledgeable fellow who will be glad to teach you the ropes, and sharpen your skills as an auto repair man.”

Jim found George to be a very pleasant fellow who was obviously very skilled in his trade. So Jim paid close attention to everything George showed him and told him.

“I believe I’m going to like working at this place, Jim said.” Then he added, “How blessed I am.”

At the close of the day Betsy showed up to get Jim and take him home. But she found that Jim had already been assigned his “demonstrator” car and did not need a ride. So she said, “Okay, Sweetie, I’ll see you at home shortly,” and drove off. About ten minutes later, Jim followed her home.

When he arrived, he parked his new car and rushed into the house. Betsy had just finished changing from her uniform into her every-day clothes. Jim immediately threw his arms around her and began kissing her lightly and lovingly on her neck and lips.

“Oh, Jim, I’m about to get the impression that you love me and that the honeymoon is not over!

Jim smiled that little impish smile that he knew pleased Betsy and conveyed to her his intentions. Betsy read the message loud and clear; supper was a bit late that evening.

Before long the Delaneys had developed a routine: out of bed by five fifteen, ready for breakfast at five fifty, lunches prepared and off to work by six thirty. Saturday was their day to shop and to do things around the cottage and yard. Sunday was their day to attend church with the Mitchells and have a big meal with them—with Betsy and Jim providing their share of the food and energy to prepare it.

Afterwards, there would be a time of visiting followed by their Sunday naptime, just resting up for the coming work week.

Their social life was very limited. Occasionally Betsy would ask another young nurse, Jane, and her spouse, Ray, over for supper on a Saturday night; then visiting, combined with a card game, was the usual evening activity.

Also, Jim got well acquainted with a young fellow mechanic named Maxwell, and he would invite Max and his wife, Ellen, over for the same type of Saturday evening: supper, visiting, and a card game.

Due to monetary restraints, the Delaneys could seldom go to a theatre performance.

CHAPTER 45

Early in their married lives Jim and Betsy were satisfied with their humdrum existence, but as time passed they began to seek more exciting entertainment. Finally, one day Jim overheard two other mechanics discussing the good time they had had the previous Saturday night at a Poker Club. Their discussion raised Jim's curiosity, so he joined them in their conversation. They told him, in great detail, how they would spend the evening gambling for money—playing poker—and enjoying the alcoholic beverages available at a bar in the Club house.

One of the men, John, bragged that he had won twenty pounds at the poker table the last Saturday night. That got Jim's attention and he got the details about the location, hours they were open, etc. from the men.

That night during supper Jim shared with Betsy what he had learned about the Poker Club; she was aghast.

"Jim, I'm surprised that you would even consider such a thing! And what would my folks think if they knew we were gambling?"

"I'm sorry, Betsy, I didn't expect to upset you. I just thought you might be interested in something to sort of break us out of our Saturday evening routine. Frankly, I have become rather bored with it and would like to make some changes.

"The boys at work think it is great entertainment and so do their wives. We might win a jackpot like John did; just think what we could buy with twenty pounds! We could buy some new furniture, some better cooking utensils, some new clothes, and tickets to a great theatre act or a circus. Just think about it for a while, and if you still don't want to do it, we won't."

"I don't need to think about it, Jim, I believe it is wrong and I want no part of it—end of discussion!" That night the Delaneys slept back to back—the honeymoon was over.

The next morning was as frigid as the North Pole; few words were spoken. It was obvious that Betsy was still upset with Jim as she gave him a cold shoulder; only answering with the fewest possible words. So Jim gave up and did not say anymore about the Poker Club.

As soon as he had finished his breakfast he grabbed his lunch box and left without even a "goodbye."

No sooner had he exited than Betsy began to weep. "Oh, what have I done," she asked herself, "What have I done?" She finally pulled herself together and left for work, leaving her breakfast unfinished.

As Jim drove to work he pondered the situation and wondered how long Betsy would stay angry. Little did he realize that he had just put their marriage into the "yellow light" mode. Never having been in love before, he was at a loss as to what he should do. Betsy was in the same situation.

It was a very long day for the couple, and when they got home that evening, there was still frost in the air; neither party was willing to say, "I'm sorry." Betsy prepared supper while Jim pretended to be reading a magazine.

Finally, she said, "Supper's ready." Jim made his way to the table without saying a word, and there was no asking the Lord to bless the food.

Avoiding eye contact, the couple finished their meal without speaking; both so desperately wanted the other one to break the icy silence with an apology. Pride prevailed and neither one asked for forgiveness or admitted they had done wrong; that night Jim slept on the sofa.

The next morning the air was still frosty, but finally Betsy broke the silence. "Jim, I'm so sorry I was so sharp with you the other night; can you forgive me?"

Jim pondered a moment then half-heartedly said, "Yeah, I forgive you." Not feeling he had done anything wrong, Jim refused to ask for forgiveness from Betsy.

The frosty relationship went on for several days; then one day Maxwell asked, "Jim, what's eating you? You are not your old self;" so Jim told him most of the story, but left out the part about Betsy asking for his forgiveness.

"Jim, based on my experience of five years of marriage, I would recommend that you ask Betsy to forgive you for your actions. I'll guarantee that you will be glad you did—for one thing you can go back to sleeping in the same bed with her," Max said with a big grin.

After a few moments of thought, Jim replied, "Max, I thank you for your advice. I will apologize to Betsy this evening and tell her I'm very sorry for the way I've acted. You know, it sure will be nice to be able to sleep with my wife again; our sofa is not very comfortable." Max laughed with a "knowing" smile on his face.

Jim carried out his plan that evening and apologized to Betsy as sincerely as he knew how. Betsy responded with, "Jim, I accept your apology; now can we kiss and make up?"

"Yes, my dearest, we can!" The evening went well and bedtime came early that night.

CHAPTER 46

The Delaneys quickly re-established their former routine and everything went well for several weeks—but there was still a “fly in the ointment.” Hidden away in Jim’s mind was a desire to make a lot of money in a short time by playing poker at the Poker Club. The fact that his fellow workers kept discussing their “winnings” at the Poker Club began to accentuate Jim’s desire to try his luck.

Then one day the boss called Jim into his office and said, “Jim you have proven yourself as a good mechanic and a hard worker, and I believe I have taught you how to be a good salesman. So I'm going to give you a try at selling cars. I will pay you a base wage of one-half pound per day and give you a five percent commission on every car you sell for five hundred pounds or more.” Are you willing to give it a try? If you don’t make it selling cars, you can go back to repairing them. What do you think of the proposition?

“I’ll be glad to try selling cars, when do I start?”

“How about next Monday?”

“That will be fine with me, Mr. Whitmore, and thank you so much for the opportunity.”

Jim rushed home after work and found Betsy already there. So he gave her a hug and said, “Guess what, Honey, I have just been promoted to car salesman!

“Jim, I'm so proud of you, when do you start?”

“Next Monday, so how about us celebrating Saturday night by going to a theatre?”

“Oh, Jim, I would really like that.”

CHAPTER 47

Things went smoothly for a few weeks; Jim proved himself to be a good car salesman, but his actual income did not increase significantly. So the specter of the gambling house began to haunt him again.

Finally he cooked up an idea: He would tell Betsy he was going to have to work late at selling cars one evening, and then he could go to the Poker Club without her knowing about it. The thought of deceiving his wife bothered Jim's conscience a little, but he "salved" it by telling himself that he was doing it so Betsy could have a better life and maybe they could make a voyage home to see his mom.

So the next morning he told Betsy he was going to be about two hours late getting home because he had to demonstrate a car to a prospective customer after working hours. Betsy expressed her regrets that Jim was going to be late for supper, but she said, "Okay. I'll wait supper for you."

Jim went to the Poker Club meeting and just sat and watched the men play. He was astute enough to observe that most of the men had certain very-subtle habits that they would exhibit when they had a "good" hand, and certain other very-subtle habits that they would show when they were bluffing; he made a mental note of these idiosyncrasies. He also noticed that apparently none the men playing poker that evening were aware of the habits of the other players.

After about an hour of watching he decided he should go home. So he said goodbye to the group and departed. While driving home, Jim began forming a plan in his head on how he could make money by using the information he had just gleaned from the players. But for the scheme to work, he needed to be sure of how consistent the players were in manifesting their "tip off" mannerisms. So he made several visits to the Poker Club to observe the players, most of whom were regular participants in the poker games.

Occasionally he would have a legitimate reason for getting home late; he had actually demonstrated and sold a car to a prospective customer. On the other hand, Betsy started coming home late because the hospital had hired a new physician and had assigned Betsy as his nurse. The new doctor's name was Bradford Whitaker, but he chose to be called Brad by Betsy.

He was a single, handsome young man with a lot of charisma, and Betsy quickly took a liking to him. In fact she got to looking forward to those evenings when he requested her to stay late to help him tend to a patient, or to help him get better acquainted with the hospital and its management.

So between both of them "working" late more and more frequently, their time together for talking and lovemaking became less and less, and strangely enough, both of them were glad.

CHAPTER 48

Jim decided he needed some additional income so he could purchase items for their home. He believed the way to do this was to start playing poker. Knowing how Betsy felt about poker playing he decided to do his playing on the sly. So one evening after work he drove down to the Poker Club building and went in.

To increase the odds of making a significant amount, he lied to Betsy and told her he was demonstrating cars in the evenings that he wanted to observe the poker players in action.

After watching the poker players for several nights, Jim decided he had enough knowledge to accurately predict the betting habits of most of the players. So one evening he got into a game.

He was very careful to lose a hand every once in a while, so the other players would not get suspicious of his winning technique. Originally his plan was to win only a few pounds more than he lost. But his scheme worked so well that he began to slowly increase the amount he was winning each time he played.

Then to be sure the other players did not get onto his scheme, some evenings he would lose a considerable amount of money. His plan worked quite well and he put his winning into a separate bank account so Betsy would not find out what he was doing.

But while Jim was making more and more money playing poker, Betsy was getting more and more involved with Brad at the hospital. She was subconsciously convincing herself that she had not married Jim out of love, but out of pity. So Brad sensed that he was gaining Betsy's affections, and he used any and every excuse to have her work late with him.

In the meantime, Jim got a letter from his mother suggesting that Jim might want to come home for a visit. She said Bart had finally quit drinking, had turned his life over to the Lord, and had become the kind, thoughtful man he was when she married him.

Bart had suffered a mild heart attack, but he had recovered and was now back on the job. She also said he had told her he would like to see Jim so he could apologize to him for his drunken behavior, and to ask for his forgiveness as he was certainly not sure how long he was going to live.

Jim immediately wrote back.

“Dear Mom, I'm so glad that Dad has finally gotten right with the Lord. You can let him read this letter, or just tell him what it says: ‘Dad, I have completely forgiven you for what did to me and Mom. I pray that you and Mom will have a happy marriage from now on.’

How is Dad doing now? I pray he is still “healthy” and walking with the Lord?

Everything is going well; I am now a car salesman. Betsy is still employed at the hospital, so our income is sufficient for all our needs.

Well, I guess I should close this and get it in the mail. Please write and tell us how things are going.

Much love from Jim and Betsy.

P.S. We would certainly like to come to see you and Dad, and perhaps some day we will be able to afford a visit.”

CHAPTER 49

On the way to work one morning, it suddenly came to Jim that Betsy was not the warm, loving woman she had been when they got married; he sensed that Betsy's love for him was beginning to wane. So when he got home from work that evening, he asked her pointblank: "Betsy, I feel that there is something wrong; you don't seem to be the loving lady you used to be. Is there something I have done or something I haven't done?"

Betsy's answer was like a tidal wave; it swept over Jim and literally left him speechless. "Jim, I think I'm falling in love with another man. You seem to have put your work ahead of me and consequently I see very little of you.

"Our time together has become so insignificant that I feel like I have become a stranger in my own home. I have decided your love for me was based on puppy love and not on the kind of love that grows.

"The new man in my life is Dr. Bradford Wilson. He is so kind and thoughtful, and we have so much in common as we are both in the same profession.

"In addition to this, I have found out that you have been lying to me. On one of the nights you said you would be working late I drove down to the Poker Club instead of going straight home from work—and there was your car. I gave you the benefit of a doubt and thought you might be visiting with someone there about buying a car.

"But the next time you said you would be late, I checked at the Poker Club, and again your car was there. Tell me Jim, how many times have you lied to me about your being late because you were demonstrating a car, five, ten, fifteen times?"

Jim hung his head in shame and began his effort to undo the wrong he had done. "Betsy, I'm so sorry I have been lying to you, but I so wanted to make enough money for me to buy some special things for you and our home that we weren't able to afford. I also thought perhaps I could make enough money for us to go to Oklahoma so my folks could meet my sweet wife, and we could see first hand how Mom and Dad are doing—you remember Mom said Dad was not doing too well."

Betsy looked very surprised at Jim's answer and didn't really know how to respond to it, so they just looked at each other, each one wanting the other one to speak.

Finally Jim lifted his head and said, "Betsy, I love you with all my heart, and I can truly say that I love you more now than I did when I married you.

"I'll admit that I've lied to you, and neglected you; my plan was to get enough money so that I could quit playing poker, and quit having to lie to you.

"I now have several hundred pounds in another bank account, so I can quit playing poker. And I promise I will never play another game of poker without your permission, and I promise I will start spending a lot more time with you. Betsy,

dearest, what else can I do to make you love me again; what can I do to get you to stop seeing the doctor? And have you forgotten our vows to remain married until death separated us?"

"Jim, I'm so confused; will you give me a few days to try to get my thinking straight?"

"Yes, my darling, I will give you a few days to sort things out, but please hurry as I am so eager to restore our 'honeymoon' again."

Jim did everything he could to show Betsy that he really did love her with all his heart. He started taking her to the theatre, to amusement parks, on drives through the country, and on picnics.

Betsy was beginning to respond to Jim's attention, and also her conscience was beginning to really bother her. So she went to Dr. Wilson and told him that she could not continue her relationship with him—she was a married woman. Brad was very disappointed but he reluctantly agreed to end the relationship and to treat her as a nurse—nothing more.

Shortly thereafter Betsy went to him and asked him if she could take a two-month leave of absence. "My husband wants to go to Oklahoma to visit his parents; his dad has just recovered from a heart attack, and Jim has told me he wants to go visit his dad because he is afraid he may have another heart attack and pass away. He has not seen his dad or mother in almost two years."

Dr. Wilson opened his file drawer, pulled out Betsy's file, and examined it. "Betsy, I see you have been a very faithful nurse and have accrued a lot of leave time over the years, so if you want to take two months of that leave time, I will approve it for you. When would you like for the leave time to start?"

"I would like for it to start tomorrow, if that is possible."

"That will be just fine with me, Betsy."

He stood up and offered his hand to her. She took it a little reluctantly and then thanked him for the leave-time off.

That evening when she got home, Jim was already there. She rushed into the house and into Jim's arms. With tears in her eyes she said, "Jim darling, I have been such a fool, can you forgive me?"

Jim rightly suspected she had broken her relationship with Dr. Wilson.

He was very pleased and responded, "Yes, my Darling, I do forgive you; now can you forgive me for my wrongdoing?"

"Oh, Jim, I do forgive you. Can we now celebrate the renewal of our marriage vows?" Jim was more than willing.

Later while eating supper, Betsy said, "Jim, I asked for two months of leave and received it, starting tomorrow. Do you really want to go to Oklahoma to see your folks? If you do, I am willing."

“That would be wonderful, Sweetie; tomorrow I’ll see if I can get off work for that long.”

Jim approached his boss about taking two months leave; the boss said he could take the leave, but it would be without pay. Jim knew he had considerable money saved up, and he could do without his wages for that period of time. So he thanked his boss and said he would turn in his demonstration car in the morning.

That evening Jim and Betsy went to her parents’ house and told them of their plans. Her parents said, with a little reluctance, that would be fine and that they would look after their house while they were gone.

The next morning Jim drove his demonstration car back to the dealership, followed by Betsy. Then he took Betsy in her car to the Passport Agency to get her a passport. After that he took her home to begin packing.

Then he went to the bank and traded all of his pounds for American dollars. Finally, he purchased tickets on a steamer for the United States; then he went home to help Betsy with the packing. And in case they were needed, Jim made sure they had copies of Betsy’s birth certificate and their marriage license.

The next morning the Mitchells took Jim and Betsy to the pier to board their ship. After hugs and tearful goodbyes, the two walked up the gangplank and onto the ship. Shortly thereafter they were underway—bound for the United States.

START HERE CHAPTER 50

The weather was very pleasant the first three days of the journey, then the wind picked up to hurricane force and the waves became fifteen to twenty feet high. Consequently the ship rolled and pitched, causing seasickness in many passengers, including the Delaneys.

They remained in their quarters for several hours, too ill to leave their bed. But finally the wind subsided, the ocean became smooth, and Jim and Betsy were again able to move about on the ship. So they went to the dining room and sat down at a table.

Jim laughed and said, "I was beginning to think we were going to capsize out here in the middle of the ocean, and I knew we would never be able to swim to shore. I guess we had better pray that the Lord will get us safely to the United States." They prayed and He got them safely to their destination.

They completed their journey in eight days, arriving in New York on the first day of May in 1924. Because Jim was a returning soldier he had no trouble reentering the United States; and since Betsy was legally married to Jim, she automatically became a United States citizen.

They spent one night in New York then boarded a train for Oklahoma City and Triumph. They enjoyed the constant changes of scenery and the stops in towns along the way.

"Jim, your United States is certainly a lot different from England, and a lot bigger!"

"Betsy, it is not MY United States, it is OUR United States," Jim said with a laugh.

"I guess you're right, Jim; I am now a citizen of OUR United States!"

"And Jim, since your parents don't know we are coming, how do you think they will react when we show up on their doorstep?"

"Because Dad has gotten right with the Lord, I'm sure both of them will whoop with surprise and joy to see us. And I'm also sure there will be a lot of hugging and tears in the process. So don't you worry about it, Sweetie, I know they will love and accept you at first sight."

Betsy snuggled up close to Jim and whispered into his ear, "Jim darling, I'm so glad that we have renewed our 'honeymoon days;' I love you so very much."

Jim drew Betsy up very tightly to himself, kissed her on the forehead and replied, "Darling, I believe this is the happiest I have been since our first honeymoon, and I plan to stay on this second honeymoon as long as I live."

Betsy, drew her head back a little, looked up into Jim's face, smiled sweetly, and whispered enthusiastically, "Me too!"

They were still admiring the scenery when the porter came by and announced supper was being served. The couple then made their way to the dining car, and continued watching the scenery as they ate their meal.

By the time they had finished their meal, it had gotten to dark to watch the scenery so they made their way to the sleeping car, kissed each other goodnight, and climbed into their berths.

The next day was spent talking and watching the scenery.

They arrived at Triumph shortly before sundown, retrieved their suitcases, and walked the five blocks to Jim's home.

Upon arrival, they gently knocked on the door, and in just a moment Mary opened the door. She stood transfixed with open mouth and a look of disbelief on her face. Then she blurted out, "Jim, you're home!" and immediately grabbed him and gave him a big hug. She then turned to Betsy, reached out to her and said, "You're Betsy, aren't you?"

Betsy replied with a hug and said, "Yes, ma'am."

About this time Bart appeared in the doorway, paused, and a look of incredulity crossed his face.

"Jim, you're home!" and with tears in his eyes he hugged his son for the first time in many years.

The next hour or so was filled with laughter and much chattering. Finally, Mary asked, "Have you kids had any supper?" Their answer was "No." So off to the kitchen went Mary and Betsy to prepare a meal while the men continued their visiting.

Mary called from the kitchen, "Jim, don't you tell Dad too much stuff, because I want to hear all about what happened to you after you left home." To abide with Mary's wish, the men talked about current events and politics while the ladies finished preparing supper.

Then abruptly Bart interrupted his conversation with Jim and tears came into his eyes. "Jim, would you please forgive me for the mean things I did to you and your mother?"

"Yes, Dad, I have forgiven you completely, and I thank God for changing you back to the kind, gentle man you were before the demons got hold of you." With that declaration, Bart walked over to Jim, pulled him out of his chair, and hugged him, sobbing as he said, "Thank you, Jim, thank you Lord!"

After a few moments, Bart regained control of his emotions, released Jim, and returned to his chair.

"Jim, I am so grateful for your mother's prayers, and for her not giving up on me. I know it was her prayers that prompted the Lord to come to me in the middle of the night and bring me under conviction for the mean things I had done.

“I confessed my sins to the Lord and asked him to forgive me—and He did. Then a peace I had never known before came over me, and it is still with me. I no longer have any desire for liquor or any desire to hang out with the poker-playing crowd.

“Jim, it is so wonderful to be free from all of that sinful stuff. And your mom and I have been having the time of our lives—it is almost like we are having a second honeymoon. Can you understand what I'm saying, Jim?”

“Yes, Dad, I can understand. Not too long ago Betsy and I had a marriage crisis, but we were able to work it out and now we consider our relationship to be a ‘second honeymoon.’”

Then Mary called from the kitchen, “Supper is ready, come and get it!” In a few moments the foursome were enjoying a very tasty meal.

Jim said, “Mom, I see you haven't lost your knack for preparing meals; this is very delicious.”

“Well, Jim, I had the help of your lovely and talented wife. She had a big hand in the preparation of the meal.”

“Oh, Mom,” Betsy replied, “I really didn't do much toward the meal, but I thank you for your compliment.”

The two men moved back into the living room while the ladies washed the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen. When they finished, they joined the men in the living room.

“Now, Jim, please tell Bart and me about your adventures after you joined the army. I'm sure Betsy has already heard them, haven't you, Betsy?”

“Well I have heard some of the adventures, but I would like to hear the whole story in chronological order.”

So Jim began his narrative at the time of his enlistment and continued with it up through the time of his meeting Betsy.

Then he said, “You know I just realized something; if I hadn't gotten wounded I wouldn't have been sent to London, and then I wouldn't have met Betsy and married her. I never thought I would be thankful for getting wounded, but I really am!”

“Thank you for your story, Jim,” Mary said. “It was very interesting and informative. And I guess I'm a little glad you got wounded because I have taken a real liking to your Betsy.” She turned to Betsy and added, “Welcome to the rest of the family, Betsy, we now have a daughter to call our own, and we are so happy to have you.”

Betsy looked a little embarrassed and replied, “Thank you, Mom, I will try to be worthy of your love.”

Bart turned to Betsy and asked, “Betsy, would you mind telling us about your life—as much of it as you want to?”

“Well,” Betsy began, “my life has been pretty humdrum, but I will share what little there is that is that might be worth telling. I was born and raised in the outskirts of London. I am an only child of a missionary couple.

“They had spent several years in Ethiopia when Mom got sick. They moved back to London, and a couple of years later I put in my appearance. Being the only child, I guess you could rightfully say I was a little spoiled,” Betsy said with a laugh.

“I liked to care for wounded animals and birds so I decided to become a nurse. My parents were delighted at my choice and saw to it that I got my nursing degree.

“When I finished my schooling I went to work at one of the best hospitals in London, and as you know, that is where I met Jim. And as they say, ‘The rest is history.’”

About that time the clock struck ten and Bart said, “I hate to say this, but I must go to work in the morning, so I’m going to bed. It has been a very delightful evening.” He excused himself and strode off to their bedroom.

Jim spoke up and said, “Now I think I’ll take Betsy and go to bed also. I’m pretty tired from all the travel and I know she must be also, right Betsy?”

“Yes, Jim, I’m certainly ready to go to bed.”

Mary said she was also ready to go to bed, so the three trekked off to their respective bedrooms.

In the next few days Jim and Betsy had some long and serious discussions about what they should do: go back to England or remain in Triumph. They finally decided to remain in Triumph if Jim could find a good job.

Fortunately, he was able to get a good-paying job at the Ford dealership as a salesman and Betsy got a job at the local hospital. Immediately they moved out of Jim's parents' house and rented a nice cottage at the edge of town.

Betsy quickly wrote Brad and said she was resigning because she and Jim had decided to remain in the United States. She closed her letter by telling him that she appreciated working with him over the years.

Things went well with Jim and Betsy. In fact they were doing so well financially that they bought a very nice home on the outskirts of Triumph. Also they kept up their relationship with Jim’s parents. The world looked great for some time; then they got heart-breaking news. Betsy parents had come down with the Flu and had died as a result.

By correspondence Betsy got her parents’ home and possessions sold and received the money for them. She had her parents buried in their home church cemetery and had appropriate headstones placed on their graves.

Betsy mourned greatly over the death of her parents, and Jim tried his best to console her. Gradually the grief slackened and she was able to function almost normally again.

CHAPTER 51

The following winter a Flu epidemic broke out in Triumph and all four Delaneys came down with it. Unfortunately, Jim was the only one of the four that survived. So he had the heart-wrenching task of burying his parents and his wife. By the grace of God he was able to do so. Following the funerals, Jim settled the affairs of his parents and then sold their homestead.

At a loss as to what he should do he numbly continued in his job as a car salesman, and each night he went home to an empty house, and wept. "Oh God, why did you let this happen to me? Why did you take my wife and my parents, I loved them so much?" Jim did not get an answer to his question and he began to have hard feelings toward the Lord.

His career as a car salesman careened downward as time passed. Finally, Jim got so discouraged and so depressed that he went to his boss and resigned. His boss was surprised at Jim's decision and tried to talk him out of it, but Jim was steadfast in his resolve.

He had become bitter and his attitude was not conducive to good salesmanship; so his boss accepted his resignation.

"Now what do I do?" Jim asked himself. "Where do I go and what do I do to get through this grieving agony?"

Finally he decided to leave Triumph; he thought getting away from it might lessen his grieving agony. So he sold his home, bought a new car, and headed out for "nowhere" with nothing but his clothes, his rifle, and his pistol.

All sorts of thoughts swirled in his head, including a temptation to end his misery once and for all. However, despite his anger toward the Lord, he still feared Him and was afraid that his suicide would condemn him to hell.

He headed west, traveling aimlessly. He slept in his car; and each night was filled with troubled sleep and nightmares, and each day was filled with depression and self pity.

Finally the thought came to him, "I'll go see Eldon and Dolly, and perhaps they will be able to help me out of this pit of darkness."

Just making the decision was a help to Jim; now he had an objective to strive for and a hope that somehow Eldon and Dolly could help him. So he altered his route and started for the ranch.

CHAPTER 52

Upon arriving there, he received a very warm welcome from the Clarks, and they were very sorry to learn of Jim's loss of his parents and his wife.

After Jim had told them about his bereavement and his anger with the Lord, he felt better—like a heavy weight was taken from his shoulders.

Then he went to the stables and found Smokey there, and much to his surprise Smokey seemed to remember him.

So Jim tried to get him to obey some of the commands he had taught him, and much to his delight, Smokey responded correctly to them. Then Eldon spoke up, "Yeah, every week or so I put him through all the commands because I figured one day you might be back to see us."

Jim mounted Smokey and rode around the ranch much the same way he once rode the ranch checking on the status of the cattle. He did enjoy his ride and noticed a decrease in his depressed attitude. Finally, he rode back to the corral, unsaddled Smokey, removed his bridle, and stored them in the barn; Eldon was waiting for him.

After a short period of small talk, silence prevailed for a while. Then Eldon cleared his throat and said, "I'm sure you need a job, Jim, but unfortunately, I can't put you to work. We had a severe drought both here and in Johnstown. Consequently Herman sold off almost the entire herd and let most of his hired hands go. I'm really sorry about this, Jim. But I understand there are a lot of ranches in Wyoming and you might be able to get on there."

Jim was quiet for a while as he let the bad news soak in. Then he said, "I understand your position, Eldon, and thanks for the information about the ranches in Wyoming. I guess I'll just make my way on up there to see if I can get on at one of them."

"Let's go into the house and get something to eat before you go; and we have something to give you before you leave." They made their way into the house and Dolly soon had a meal prepared.

After they finished eating, Eldon handed Jim a document and said, "Jim, I'm giving you ownership of the horse trailer and Smokey, and I know he will be of some comfort to you; you two were a perfect match. Let's go out and put the trailer hitch on your car and hook up the trailer."

Dolly followed the men outside and watched while they put the hitch on Jim's car, hooked up the trailer, and loaded Smokey. Then Jim turned to Eldon and Dolly and hugged them. And with tears in his eyes, he said, "Goodbye, Eldon, and goodbye, Dolly. I'll never be able to thank you enough for your love and your help." With that, Jim climbed into his car, waved and drove off, wiping away the tears as he departed.

CHAPTER 53

Jim had decided a long time ago that if he ever had the chance, he would visit Yellowstone National Park. “Now,” he murmured, “I have the chance, and I’m going to go there.”

He had a vague notion as to where it was, so he started in that direction. The next town he came to, he stopped, gassed up, and asked the owner if he knew how to get to the Park. The owner very kindly handed Jim a map showing him how to get to Yellowstone Park.

After a day on the road, he again stopped for gas and food for himself and for Smokey. He inquires about the remaining distance to the Park and learned that he should be able to arrive there in another day; so he again spent the night in the car.

The next morning he had an early breakfast at the local diner, fed Smokey, and then set off for Yellowstone Park.

Just before sunset he arrived at the southwestern park entrance. He stopped and asked the ranger where he could spend the night. The ranger pointed to an area a short distance away, so Jim drove to it, got Smokey out of the trailer, and rode him around for about ten minutes, just to keep him limbered up. He then fed Smokey and tied him to the trailer.

Next he had a cold-camp meal of jerky and a can of peaches, and then he climbed into his car and went to sleep.

At daybreak the next morning he again had a meal of jerky and canned peaches. When he had finished he asked the ranger if he could ride Smokey into the park.

The ranger said it would be okay but he should stay on the roads and be back out before sunset. So Jim made the most of it and toured just a small section of the park. He was surprised when he came upon a big geyser just as it was blowing water and steam high into the air; he later learned it was called “Old Faithful.”

After Old Faithful ceased blowing, he rode back to the entrance and engaged the ranger in a conversation.

“Sir, are there bears in the park?”

“Yes, young man, there are many bears in the park along with buffalo, elk, deer, wolves, and many other wild creatures. Sometimes the bears get too friendly with visitors and we have to capture them and take them to the back side of the park.”

“Just how do you go about doing that?” Jim inquired.

“Well, it isn’t as hard as you might think,” the Ranger said; then he went to some length to explain the procedure to Jim.

When he finished, Jim said, “Thank you for that explanation, sir, and your story was very interesting and informative. And by the way, I am leaving the Park today and continuing my search for a job on a ranch. Wish me luck.”

“I wish you Godspeed, Jim, and I hope you will find just what you are looking for. And just in case you have not heard, sometimes the ranch houses are located somewhere within a forested area. Apparently the ranchers like the protection from the wind and from blizzards so they survive the winters by living inside a bunch of trees; and needless to say, this makes the houses harder to locate.

“Thanks for that information; I will certainly keep it in mind while I am doing my searching; and it has been good to make your acquaintance.” With that declaration, Jim loaded Smokey back into the trailer, waved, and drove away.

CHAPTER 54

A day later, Jim was at the edge of a forest. He got Smokey out of the trailer and attached saddle bags of provisions to the saddle. He also put his pistol in a saddlebag and his rifle into its scabbard.

Then after a moment of indecision, he mounted Smokey and started into the forest to see if he could find a ranch house, or perhaps even better, a small settlement.

Jim had ridden for about an hour when suddenly a flock of birds flew out of the underbrush and spooked Smokey, caused him to jump sideways and unseat Jim. Then in a panic, Smokey began to race through the underbrush dragging Jim along by his boot wedged in the stirrup.

Jim called out "Whoa, Smokey! Whoa Smokey!" But to no avail; Smokey just kept racing through the trees and brush. And in a few seconds Jim was beaten unconscious as he was dragged through the brush. Finally, Jim's foot slipped out of the boot, but Smokey continued his panicky run.

An Indian maiden who was picking berries heard the sound of Smokey's approach and looked up to see him running by with a saddle on his back and a boot hanging from a stirrup. She quickly mounted her pony and soon caught up with Smokey who was now exhausted. She took his reins and started for her village.

She rightfully assumed the rider was somewhere back up the trail, injured. So she rode the short distance to her village, and tied Smokey to a tree. Then she got her brother and a travois, and started back up the trail.

They soon come upon Jim lying in the brush and bleeding from multiple wounds. They dismounted, examined Jim closely, and discovered he had a broken leg.

They carefully loaded him on the travois and made their way back to their camp. Then they carefully moved Jim into her tepee and onto a layer of blankets. The maiden then cleaned Jim's wounds and stopping the bleeding. Once she had accomplished this, she splinted his broken leg.

Jim's wounds got infected and he began to run a high fever, moaning and delirious. Frequently the maiden applied various herbs and bark extracts to his wounds, mopped his brow with water, and moistened his lips.

Finally, after three days Jim's fever broke and he regained consciousness. He opened his eyes to see the maiden leaning over him wiping his brow. He weakly asked, "Who are you?" The maiden answered, "I am Fawn, the daughter of Chief White Buffalo"

Jim was surprised at the maiden's ability to speak English, so he asks another question: "Where did you learn the white man's language?"

Fawn smiled and answered, "I attended a mission school for several years and learned how to read, write, and speak the white man's language."

After a few moments of silence, Jim said, “Thank you for saving my life; and now, could I please have a drink of water and something to eat? I am as hungry as a bear!”

Fawn laughed and answered, “I will get you something to eat and drink; but for now you just lie still—you have a broken leg.”

Jim slowly lifted himself on his elbows and looked down at his splinted leg. “Did you put my leg in the splints?”

“Yes,” Fawn replied, “I put your leg in the splints, but I had the help of my brother, Little Deer.

Fawn left Jim but soon returned with a jug of water and a plate full of venison and greens. She propped Jim up on a roll of blankets then handed him the plate. Jim was still very weak, so he allowed Fawn to feed him.

He thanked her and resumed his lying-down position and said, “I believe I need another nap,” and with that he closed his eyes and was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER 55

He awoke the next morning feeling almost human again and with some of his strength back. Fawn brought him another meal which he devoured ravenously.

Two days later he asked for a pair of crutches so he could walk around a bit. So Little Deer fashioned a pair of crutches from tree limbs and helped Jim get up to try them out. Jim was able to walk only a few feet, and then he had to return to his bed.

But he tried walking each day and gradually increased the distance he could walk. Finally, he was able to get around in the camp on his crutches.

In a few weeks Jim's leg mended enough that he was able to walk without the crutches, and with only a slight limp. Also, he was able to once again ride Smokey; so he rode back to the spot where he had left the car and trailer. Unfortunately they had been stolen. Very disappointed, he made his way back to the village.

Jim made friends with members of the tribal council and learned that the tribe had special privileges because many of the braves were descendents from families that had men serving for the North in the Civil War, and they had been outstanding on the battlefield.

As a result they were given credit for saving a company from annihilation; consequently their tribe was granted the privilege of keeping its various customs and laws.

Jim set about winning the acceptance of the tribe members by putting Smokey through his various tricks, and it favorably impressed all but one man—Grey Fox. Grey Fox was secretly in love with Fawn and very jealous of Jim because she was giving him so much of her time.

Consequently, Grey Fox kept trying to think of some way to get rid of his rival. The opportunity was on its way.

CHAPTER 56

While Jim was recovering from his accident, he fell in love with Fawn and wanted to marry her. She was willing to become his bride, but unfortunately for Jim, the tribal custom was that a white man had to become a tribe member before he could wed an Indian maiden; and to become a member he had to pass a rigorous test as specified by the tribal council.

Grey Wolf was a member of the council and he insisted that he be permitted to specify one certain feat in the test Jim would have to pass. He was finally granted that privilege and he designated a feat he was sure Jim would fail.

Jim was to go into the wilderness and remain there for twenty-one days. He would be furnished a hunting knife, flint rocks, and a rope. He could take no food with him—he had to live entirely off the land. And at the insistence of Grey Wolf, at the end of the three weeks he would have to return with the head of a bear.

Jim was devastated by the news about the test, but he was determined to go through with it because he was madly in love with Fawn.

The evening that Jim got the rules about the test he set off to begin it, carrying the three permitted items. As he made his way into the forest, his brain was churning trying to devise a way to survive and secure a bear's head.

After about a half hour of concentrated thought, Jim had formulated a plan. He would somehow kill a young deer or elk for food for himself, and also use the remainder as bait for the bear. So the next morning he put his plan into action.

He built a small "hut," with branches, near the edge of a stream close to the tracks of deer and elk. He made it just large enough for him to squat inside and dense enough that he could not be seen.

Then just at sundown he enclosed himself within the hut with his knife in his hand. Unfortunately, no suitable game came close to his hut for three nights, so he sustained himself on wild berries.

But on the fourth night he didn't have to wait very long for the animals to begin appearing.

The first to appear at the stream were several old deer and elk. Then a young deer appeared and made its way to the stream just a few feet from where Jim was hiding. He waited until it was drinking deeply from the stream, then he burst from the hut, pounced upon the deer, and slashed its throat.

Jim was pleased with his kill and set about dressing out the deer. He then threw the non-edible parts into the stream where they were quickly carried downstream.

He carried the carcass back to his campsite and suspended it from a tree with his rope. Then he cut off a piece of meat he was going to eat, put a peeled branch through it, and held it over a fire in a shallow pit to cook it.

After he had eaten his fill of roasted deer and berries, he thinly sliced several pounds of deer meat and dried it over the fire to make jerky. Then he used the remainder of the meat to make the bait to lure a bear into his “hanging” trap.

He suspended the carcass about five feet high on a tree branch near his hut. His plan was for a bear to come to the carcass and stand on its hind legs in an attempt to get the meat. When the bear was standing up trying to get at the meat, Jim would sneak up behind it and cut its throat.

Unfortunately six days went by and no bear came for the meat. Then Jim decided the meat was now too rotten and he needed to get some fresh meat.

So he again crouched in his hut and waited for the right sized deer or elk to come near enough for him to kill it.

The third night he successfully killed a young elk. As he still had plenty of jerky, he just skinned the elk and suspended it on the branch five feet high. Then he again began a vigil. Four nights later he successfully killed a bear and removed its head. Then the next day he returned triumphal to the Indian village, and was warmly greeted by all except Grey Fox; he was outraged at Jim's success.

CHAPTER 57

Grey Fox did not give up easily. He had one more chance to get Fawn for his bride, even though she didn't care for him at all: He would insist on carrying out another tribal law which said that if two braves desired the hand of the same maiden, they could fight to the death with knives, and the maiden had to marry the survivor. So Grey Fox challenged Jim to fight, confident that he could kill this white man he so despised.

The day for the fight came and a member of the counsel drew a circle in the dirt in the center of the village. The combatants had to stay within the circle or they would get a lash from a whip in the hand of a counsel member.

A few moments later the fighters appeared. Grey Fox was wearing his war paint in alternate black and red stripes from his hairline down to the middle of his chest; and he had his hair in a braid with a feather in it. Jim was clad only in his buckskin pants and boots.

The counsel man placed Jim and Grey Fox back to back in the center of the circle. At the edge of the circle, the chief lifted his hand for a moment, and then dropped it, signaling for the combat to begin. Immediately Grey Fox turned around and made a slash at Jim; but Jim was fast and instantly put his hand-to-hand combat training into action.

He grabbed Grey Fox's right wrist with his left hand, swung him around while blocking his legs, and wrestled him to the ground. Then he twisted the knife from Grey Fox's hand and held it at his throat while pinning his body to the ground.

Grey Fox gasped for air and said, "Kill me, kill me!" Jim considered doing so, but he refrained and freed him instead. Grey Fox then staggered to his feet and shambled his way to his tepee. The next morning, in shame and disgrace, he mounted his pony and rode away; he was never seen again.

As Jim had rightfully won the right to marry Fawn, she and other women of the tribe began preparations for the wedding ceremony. However, to be sure that the wedding would be legal, Jim rode Smokey the few miles to the Mission and asked the preacher there if he would conduct a civil wedding ceremony for him and Fawn on the following Sunday. The preacher readily agreed to do so for a nominal fee of ten dollars. Jim was elated and rode back to the village to give the good news to Fawn.

The idea of having only a civil ceremony did not meet with the approval of many tribe members. So Fawn agreed to have some traditional ceremonies in addition to the civil ceremony. There would be three traditional ceremonies initially and then the civil ceremony would follow.

The wedding day arrived and the ceremonies began, each accompanied by special songs sung by the tribal members.

The first ceremony was the Vase Ceremony, and it was to insure there would be harmony and union in the marriage.

A special vase filled with herbal tea was handed to Fawn. She took a sip, and then handed the vase to Jim who took a sip. Then they each held the vase and drank from it simultaneously. To complete the first ceremony, they washed their hands in the tea, and then poured the remainder onto Mother Earth.

The second ceremony was the Fertility Ceremony. This ceremony was a basket filled with food and herbs that would insure the ability of the couple to bring forth healthy children. Jim and Fawn each took a handle on the large basket and carried it to the tent that would be their home. Then they went back to do the Fire Ceremony.

Firewood had been placed in two small piles near a much larger pile. Jim and Fawn were handed torches with long handles, so they could each light a small pile of firewood near the large pile of firewood.

Once they got the small piles of firewood burning, they used their torches to move the two small piles of burning wood up against the large pile of unlighted firewood to set it on fire. This showed the spirits of Jim and Fawn were going to be united into one spirit within the Great Spirit.

When the fire had consumed most of the wood, the preacher stepped forward and motioned the couple to stand in front of him. Then he quickly read a civil wedding ceremony, pronounced Jim and Fawn “man and wife,” and told Jim he could now kiss the bride. After a brief kiss, the preacher had them turn around and face the people. Then he announced, “May I present Mr. and Mrs. Jim Delaney.”

Many of the tribal members filed by the couple, nodded their heads, and smiled. Finally, the greeting procession ended; and Jim and Fawn made their way to their new tepee to begin their three-day honeymoon.

CHAPTER 58

After the honeymoon was over, Jim decided to share with Fawn some very important events in his life.

“Fawn, I would like to tell you about something that occurred while I was recovering from my wounds. An angel appeared to me in a dream and said, ‘Be not afraid; I bring a message from the Lord. You will recover from your wounds and receive an infilling of the Holy Spirit, and in due time you will begin to serve the Lord in a special way. Fawn will become your bride and she will help you in your ministry.’ Then the dream ended.

“I have pondered this dream many times, but I am totally convinced it was from the Lord. And while I am on the subjects of religion and the Lord, I am going to tell you about my salvation experience and what I learned about the Holy Spirit.

“My mother was a devout Christian and took me to church regularly. Then during a revival when I was twelve years old, I felt a strong urging to go forward at the preacher’s invitation. So finally I overcame my fear and went forward and accepted the Lord as my Savior.

“I was baptized, became a member of the church, and I was taught about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. However, I never asked the Lord to give the infilling to me. I guess I was afraid that if I did, I would have to conform to certain so-called religious doctrines that I thought were wrong.

“But now I am ready to surrender my life to the Lord and to ask Him to fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can carry out any ministry to which He may appoint me.

“Today I am going to go out into the woods to pray and to ask the Lord for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. If I receive it I will know my dream was true; if I don’t receive it I will assume the dream was just a dream. Do you understand what I am saying, Fawn?”

“No, I do not understand completely. I received the Lord as my Savior when I was a child in Mission School, but I received no teaching about the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you can tell me about Him when you return from the woods, because I want to be with you in any ministry the Lord might call you to.”

Greatly relieved and heartened by Fawn’s reply, that evening Jim took a jug of water and a blanket and went into the woods. He located a small clearing and put the blanket and jug on the ground. Then he got down on his knees on the blanket and began to pray.

After he finished his prayer, he reviewed in his mind the teachings and scriptures about the Holy Spirit to which he had been exposed as a youth.

Finally, he summoned up the courage and asked, “Dear Lord, please fill me with the Holy Spirit; I want to be empowered to carry out any ministry you might have for me.”

Immediately the Lord answered Jim's prayer. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon him and he began to shout, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, praise you Lord!"

Then he fell face down on the blanket, overcome by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The peace that passes all understanding permeated every fiber of his being, and his heart became filled with a joy that has no bounds. Finally, he fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER 59

The next morning, still aglow from his experiences the night before, he went back to the village and joined Fawn in their tepee. He told her all about what he had experienced the night before; Fawn was transfixed by his story.

When Jim finished she asked excitedly, “Do you think the Lord would do for me what He did for you?”

“I’m sure He will if you are sincere in your asking.”

Then she said, “I’m going into the woods tonight to meet with the Lord and the Holy Spirit.”

At dusk that evening she went several yards into the forest, knelt, and prayed for several minutes, and then asked the Lord for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. A few minutes later she received the infilling of the Holy Spirit, coupled with God’s precious peace and love.

She sang praises to the Lord until she finally became overcome by the Holy Spirit and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning she awakened and rushed back to her tent and told Jim about her experience; he rejoiced with her.

Then she told Jim she wanted to tell the villagers about their experiences, but Jim persuaded her to wait a while before doing so.

“Fawn, if we tell them about our receiving the Holy Spirit now, they will think we have lost our minds. We must wait for the Lord to give us clear directions as to what we should do and when we should do it.” Fawn reluctantly agreed to wait.

As time passed, Jim and Fawn studied their Bible regularly and prayed for the Lord’s guidance. They were both amazed at how clear the scriptures were since they had the Holy Spirit to guide and teach them.

CHAPTER 60

Finally, after six months of study and prayer, they felt led by the Holy Spirit to share some of their experiences with Fawn's parents and her brother.

They began by reading a few scriptures to them and then explaining their meaning and significance. At first the trio showed little interest, but as time passed they began to take an interest in what Fawn and Jim had to say about God (the Great Spirit in the sky), and about His only begotten Son.

Jim and Fawn were encouraged and continued their praying for salvation for Fawn's family. They also taught them pertinent Bible verses about God's love, heaven, hell, and eternity.

Then one evening during a teaching session, Jim asked them individually if they would like to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

He explained to them that if they accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, after death they would be assured of having a Paradise in which to spend eternity.

He explained that Paradise was a place where there is no pain, no suffering, and no bad things—just peace and joy forever! And to the delight of Jim and Fawn, they all three said they would like to be saved.

So Jim led them through a special prayer and then he asked some pertinent questions which they answered promptly and correctly. Then he embraced them and said, “You are now saved, and have become a member of the family of God.”

Next Jim explained to them what the Bible said about the need to be baptized in water. They all said they understood this, and they were anxious to receive the baptism; so they all went down to the river and each of them was baptized by Jim.

Fawn's family was excited about their experiences, and began to share with others their experience; and some of them showed an interest. As a consequence, the chief suggested that Jim begin holding a weekly session of teaching in the counsel tepee.

And finally all of the village had accepted the Lord as their Savior, and had received the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 61

A few weeks after the marvelous movement of the Holy Spirit, Jim began to feel that he and Fawn were to carry the message of Jesus to others. Fawn had received from the Lord the same leading, so they concluded that they were to reach out to others villages.

So the pair began traveling by car to the surrounding villages, and speaking to the people about Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord was with them, and it was not very long before people who heard their teachings began to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as their Guide.

The Lord was with them in a mighty way, so Jim and Fawn spent many years taking the Gospel to the surrounding tribes. Then one day after they had become rather old, they started on a trip to a distant village to teach the Gospel.

Unfortunately, they got caught in a blizzard several miles from their destination. They had only two blankets in the car, which were not nearly enough to keep them from being overcome by the cold. So they huddled together, wrapped in the two blankets, and slowly drifted into a peaceful sleep.

They did not survive the cold, and a day later a search party found them dead in each other's arms with a look of serenity on their faces. On the seat next to them was Fawn's Bible, opened to John 3:16. "For God so loved the world...."