

ADVENTURES OF A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR A

CHAPTER 1

The life of a Private Investigator is dangerous, exciting, beneficial, and sometimes surprising as Jim Barker was soon to find out.

He was sitting in his easy chair reading a novel and wishing for a job as his finances were getting low.

His wishing was brought to an end early one Monday morning when a lovely young lady came into his office. He immediately jumped out of his chair, introduced himself as Jim Barker, and said, "Good morning, ma'am, please have a chair and tell me your name and what I can do for you.

The young lady said, "My name is Jane Morgan and I want you to kidnap me."

Jim was momentarily rendered speechless by that kind of request, but finally he said, "Ma'am, are you joking with me?"

"Oh no, sir, I am dead serious. Do you still want a job from me?"

"Well, ma'am, if you can tell me a bit more about your request, I can decide whether or not I would be able to help you. And the more you tell me the easier it will be for me to know if I can."

"Okay, Mr. Barker, I will give you the whole ball of wax.

"My dad's name is Grant Morgan and he is a billionaire; but he is so tight with me that he squeaks when he walks. My mother was a beautiful lady who was very popular in stage shows. Dad attended one of her shows and was immediately struck by her beauty. So after the performance he went backstage and introduced himself. Mother already knew his name because she had seen an article about him in the newspaper. He had made a large donation to an orphan home here in the city, and was photographed and interviewed for the New York Times.

"He had the audacity and boldness to ask her for a date. Mom said she would be pleased to go on a date with him this coming Sunday night as she didn't have to perform on Sundays.

"So he said he would pick her up at her apartment at six o'clock that Sunday evening. He got out his little black book and got Mom's address and phone number.

"They had several dates and then one Sunday evening he took her to his elaborate home, and after a few drinks of wine he asked her to marry him. Mom gave it a little thought and realized that if she married him she would be fixed for life—and she had come to like him; so she said 'Yes' she would marry him.

"After a few more drinks he seduced her; then they decided to get a Justice of Peace to marry them the next day.

"After the wedding Mother moved her small amount of belongings into his mansion. They spent two days there in his home, and then he suggested they take a

honeymoon to Hawaii. She liked the idea so they flew to Hawaii and spent three weeks there; then they returned home.

“Mom went back to the stage-show building to resume her role. But she found out she had been fired because they had not heard from her for over three weeks; so they decided she had quit the show.

“Mom really didn’t care because now she could do as she pleased, and spend money like it was going out of style.

“But right after her marriage she missed a period and realized she was pregnant. She was thrilled about it and was sure Grant would also be pleased—but she was wrong!

“When she told him she was pregnant he got angry and said, “I don’t want any kids, they take too much time and responsibility. You’ll have to spend all your time feeding the kid, changing diapers, and watching over it all the time. Why don’t you get an abortion?”

“Mom was horrified. She said that was out of the question because it was murder; and besides all that, she wanted the baby.

“Mom said Grant threw his hands into the air and said, ‘All right, have it your way, and don’t expect me to spend any time taking care of the little brat when it is born or when it gets to be a teenager!’ And with that, he turned around and stomped out of the room.

“Well, Mr. Barker, I am that little brat, and ‘yes’ he never cared for me at any age. He did put me on a big allowance when I got to be sixteen—fifty dollars a month!

“My mother loved me and looked after me until she was killed two months ago in an automobile accident. And believe it or not, father is getting married to a young lady in two weeks.

CHAPTER 2

“Now here is my plan on how I will get the million dollars. You kidnap me and demand a million-dollar ransom. I’m sure he will pay it because when I meet his bride-to-be he won’t want it to look like he doesn’t care for me. And if you can pull this off, I will give you fifty-thousand dollars out of the ransom.”

Jim said, “Miss Morgan, if you will give me a few minutes I believe I can come up with a way to get you that money.”

In a five minutes Jim said, “Miss Morgan at what time do you have dinner? I believe I can come while you are eating and kidnap you then.

She answered, “Mr. Barker, we will have dinner at six thirty this evening, so I will try to look surprised when you appear at that time.” Jim made a mental note of the dinner time, and then continued explaining his plan.

“Miss Morgan, I will come to your home at dinner time, and walk in with a silk stocking over my head and a revolver in my hand. I will tell you to come over and stand in front of me, and I will put my gun in your back; then I will tell your father what he must do if he wants you to stay alive.”

So that evening at dinner time Jim showed up at Jane's house and slipped in through the front door. Then he quietly tiptoed into the dining room with his head covered with a silk stocking, and a pistol in his hand.

He cleared his throat and immediately got the attention of all those at the table. Then he said, “Miss Morgan come here and stand in front of me.” Jane did just as Jim had commanded.

Jim cleared his throat again, and then said, “Mr. Morgan, I’m kidnapping your daughter, and if you want to keep her alive, get one-million dollars in a certified check tomorrow, and put it in an overnight case.

“Then at midnight tomorrow night meet me at 4045 East Tenth Street with the overnight case in your car. There should not be any traffic at that time of night in that section of town.

“When you get to that address, I will be waiting in my car with your daughter. You will be able to see her locked in the back seat.

“Then I want you to get out of your car with the one million dollar check in the overnight suitcase. Set it down in the middle of the street, and then get back into your car.

“I will get out of my car with a silk stocking over my head and a gun in my hand; then I will open the overnight case and see if the check is there. If it is there, I will take it, return to my car, and let your daughter out.

“Now hear this: If at any time you get the cops in on this kidnapping, I will kill your daughter instantly.”

Then Jim went out the front door with his gun in Jane's back. He helped her into the back seat, and said, Miss Morgan you were perfect in expressing fear in your face. Thank you.”

He drove to his apartment building and led Jane upstairs to his rooms. Then he fixed a drink for Jane and himself and took them to the couch where Jane was sitting and sat down beside her.

Now feeling he knows Jane well enough, he addressed her by her first name. “Jane, do you believe your father was convinced that you were being kidnapped by a professional kidnapper?” Jim asked.

Jane smiled and answered, “Yes, Jim, everything you did looked very professionally, and I want to thank you now for taking this job.

“And I really do believe that under the circumstances, Dad will do exactly what you told him to do.”

Then Jim said, “Jane, we will have a hard night tomorrow, so let’s go to bed; we will have all day tomorrow to get acquainted.

So Jim loaned Jane a pair of his pajamas, sent her into his bedroom, and told her “Good night.” Then he stretched out on the couch in the living room and went to sleep.

The next day Jim stayed at home with Jane, and they spent some time napping and watching the TV.

Finally, Jim took the liberty of telling Jane something about his life. It didn’t take him very long because he didn’t have much to tell. (He wanted to tell her he was falling in love with her, but he decided now was not the time.)

“I was brought up here in New York, and I went through Public School and New York University here. I graduated with a degree in Business Management, and immediate after I graduated I established my Private Investigator Business.

Jim looked at his watch and said, “It’s almost midnight, so let’s drive down to 1045 East Tenth Street and wait for your father.”

So they went down the stairs and over to the car that Jim had rented. Jane got into the back seat of the car, and they drove to the meeting place.

They had been there for only five minutes when Mr. Morgan drove up. He got the little overnight case out of his car and placed it in the middle of the street, just as Jim had told him to do.

Jim pulled the silk stocking down over his head, put on his gloves, and got out of his car with his gun in his hand.

He picked up the overnight case and opened it. The check was there, so he took it out and put the overnight case back down on the roadway. Then he walked back to the car and let Jane out. And when she started over to get into her father’s car, he jumped into his rented car and drove to his office and put the check in his secret wall safe; then he went home and went to bed.

CHAPTER 3

The next morning he got up and dressed. Then he went to the kitchen and got a doughnut to eat while he drove to his office. While he was driving a thought came into his mind: “Jim, you think you have fallen in love with Jane; now what are you going to do about it?” Then he answered his question, “I’m going to marry that lovely lady—if she will have me.” Soon he arrived at his office, still dreaming about Jane.

He had been there just a short time when the phone rang. He answered it and said, “Barker Private Investigator office, may I help you?”

He was very surprised to hear Jane speak, “Good morning Jim, how do you feel? And did you get the check into your safe? Incidentally I am phoning from a booth down town.”

Jim answered, “I feel fine, and I did get the check put into my safe. And I’m glad to hear that you are using a downtown phone booth. We have to be very careful for a while so your dad will not get wise to our escapade.

“Now if you need any money, just let me know and I will get the check cashed. And by the way, may I be a little nosey and ask you: Do you have a boy friend?”

Jane laughed and said “No, I do not have a boyfriend although I have had many chances to get one.”

“Well then, Jane, may I pick you up at six o’clock this evening and take you to Ruby’s Inn for dinner?”

“Yes, Jim, I would be delighted to go with you to Ruby’s Inn. I have eaten there several times, and the food has always been very good.”

Jim was so charged up about getting to spend the evening with Jane that he could hardly contain himself. He shaved again and put on his best suit. At five-thirty-five he got into his Cadillac, drove to Jane's home, and picked her up.

It was a twenty minute drive to the Inn, so they visited while they were driving along. Jim let Jane do most of the talking because he liked to hear her voice.

When they got to the Inn, they got out of the car and walked into the café. Over in a corner was a small table, so they walked over to it and sat down. Immediately a waitress came over and gave them menus. They both ordered a sirloin steak with all the trimmings, and iced tea to drink.

CHAPTER 4

While they were waiting for the meals to be brought to their table, Jim said, “Jane, tell me about your life: Where did you go to school, did you go to college, what sports did you like, and did you have a job?”

Jane smiled and said, “Jim, you are a very nosey gentleman, but I will answer your questions.

Jim laughed and said, “Jane, not only am I nosey, but I’m also a gentleman who believes in getting right to the point; may I be your boyfriend?”

Jane was a little stunned by Jim's question, but she quickly regained her wits and said, “Yes, Jim, you may be my boyfriend, at least until I get to know you better. And when I do, I will give you a definite “yes” or “no.”

Then Jim replied, “If you are willing, I will take you out for dinner Monday, Wednesday, and Friday until you make your decision—if that’s okay with you.”

Jane smiled and said, “That will be okay with me; and now for some answers to some of your questions. I went through Public School and College here in New York, and I majored in Business Administration. My favorite sport is football, and I have a job as Manager at Flo’s Clothing Shop at Broadway and 58th.”

Jim responded, “Jane, I thank you for your information, and I will be anxiously waiting for tomorrow to take you out for dinner. I’ll pick you up at six p.m. if that is okay with you.”

Jane answered, “That will be just fine, Jim.”

So the next evening Jim took Jane to dinner; and then after dinner he took her to the big city park. They got out of the car and strolled around in the park, admiring the many different flower beds and the rose bushes. And all the time Jim was wondering if he could kiss Jane without her being insulted by his bold advancement. He finally decided he was going to find out what her response would be. However, he decided that it would be better if he had her in the car before he tried the kissing.

So after a half hour of walking, they went back to the car. Jim was a complete amateur when it came to kissing, so he didn’t know how to set the stage for kissing Jane. Finally he gave up trying to figure out how to go about kissing her, so he just blurted out, “Jane, may I kiss you?”

Much to his surprise, she just leaned over and gave him a good kiss right on his lips. He didn’t really know how to respond, so he just put his arms around Jane and gave her a long kiss.

Then he said very softly, “Jane, I love you and I have loved you every since you spent a day and night with me after I had kidnapped you. Will you marry me?”

Jane said, “Jim, I want to be sure that I am getting the right gentleman before I marry him. So let’s continue with our scheme of dating Monday, Wednesday, and Friday until we are both sure we are meant for each other. Is that alright with you?”

Jim answered lovingly, “Yes, my darling, I believe that we want to be sure that we will love one another until ‘death doeth part’”

After two months of courting, they were convinced that they could keep a marriage alive and be happy as long as they were on this earth.

So the next day they went to a Justice of Peace and got married. Then they went to Hawaii on a two-week honeymoon.

They had a great time, but after two weeks they were ready to get back to New York and get a house to live in. They had plenty of money from Jim's savings account so they bought a mansion in the rich part of town and moved their belongings into it.

Then Jane went back to Flo’s Clothing Shop and resumed her job as Manager; and Jim went back to his Private Investigator office, ready to help someone.

Jane’s dad was so busy entertaining his new wife that he made no effort to keep up with Jane. As far as he was concerned she did not exist anymore.

CHAPTER 5

Jim had hardly gotten his office straightened up when a couple with despair on their faces came into his office. Jim stood up to meet them and introduce himself; and then the wife introduced herself and her husband: "I am Mary Skidmore and this is my husband, John."

"What may I do for you folks?" Jim asked.

Mr. Skidmore immediately answered, "Mr. Barker, our eighteen-year-old daughter Angela, has run away, and we want you to find her and convince her to come back home."

Jim said, "My fee is five hundred dollars per day if I don't have to leave the city; but if I do have to leave New York City, then I will also have to have payment for my traveling expenses. Now do you still want me to search for your daughter?"

Mr. Skidmore replied, "Mr. Barker, I am a wealthy man so I agree to your terms. Now when can you begin your search?"

"I can begin my search tomorrow, but first I need to ask you some questions because your answers will help me in my hunting."

Mr. Skidmore said, "Ask away, Mr. Barker, and we will do our best to answer all of the questions."

"First two questions: When did your daughter run away, and what motivated her to do so?"

The Skidmores' looked at each other, and then Mr. Skidmore said. "She ran away at some time in the night; so we called all her friends and the police. None of them was able to give us any help.

"Now as to why she decided to run away; we had a very stormy argument with her yesterday. We were trying to talk her into going to college to get a degree in something that is in demand, secretaries for instance. But she said she didn't want to sit in an office and take commands from a boss. She said she wanted to go to a School for Acting.

"Well, she had been the lead actor in her high school plays as she is pretty and has a talent for singing and acting. But we tried to convince her that there is no certainty in acting and she might have a lot of trouble making a living.

"She responded by pitching a fit and declared we had no legal right to try to tell her what she could do. Then I told her she was not to leave the house for a week for her misbehavior. At that she stormed upstairs to her room.

"The next morning we called for her to come down for breakfast; but we got no response. So we went up to her room to see why she didn't come down to eat.

"We were shocked to see that her bed had not been slept in, and a lot of her clothing was missing. That was when we decided to call her friends and the police. But unfortunately they were of no help. So we came to you for help"

Jim spoke up and said, “Sounds like she is very determined to get a job acting; so maybe she went to Hollywood to see if she could get a part in some movie. What do you think about that idea?”

Mr. Skidmore said, “I agree with you, Mr. Barker; so would you be willing to go to Hollywood, find her, and bring her back home? My wife and I have jobs that prevent us from going to look for her.

“Yes, we would be happy to go after your daughter” Jim said, “I will get things ready today, and tomorrow my wife and I will head for Hollywood on a plane. I truly believe we will be able to find Angela rather quickly, and when we do I will give you a call. So could you give me your phone number and address, please?”

Mr. Skidmore pulled out his billfold, took out a business card, and handed it to Jim, and said, “The card has both our home phone number and my office number; so you should be able to contact one or the other of us at any time, day, or night.”

Then the Skidmores shook Jim's hand, thanked him, and walked out of his office.

CHAPTER 6

Jim called Jane and told her about the situation with the Skidmores and what his plans were. He then asked her if she would like to go to Hollywood with him.

She promptly said, “Darling, I would be thrilled to go to Hollywood with you; I have always wanted to visit that place and see how they make their movies. So I will pack for us tonight so we can be ready to leave at whatever time you get a flight. Thank you for calling, Sweetie, and I will see you at dinner time.”

Jim called the airport and asked if he could get a non-stop flight to Hollywood, and fortunately the answer was, “Yes, we have a non-stop flight to Hollywood at eight a.m. tomorrow morning.” Jim got two reservations for the flight, thanked the lady, and hung up the phone.

Jim and Jane went to bed at their usual time, but they got up a little earlier than usual the next morning. They went through their routines like they were going to work; but instead of going to work they went to the airport, got their tickets, and boarded the plane.

In about five minutes they were instructed to fasten their safety belts in preparation for the flight. In about five minutes more the plane turned around and taxied to the runway. Then the captain got clearance, reved up the jet engines, and in about ten seconds they were airborne. Five hours later they landed in Hollywood airport.

They walked down the steps to the concrete runway, and then over to a taxi. They asked the driver to take them to a hotel that was close to the lot where they made movies. He said, “Okay,” and started out to the road that led to the City of Hollywood. About thirty minutes later, they arrived at the hotel “Starlight Starbright.”

They got an apartment with a bedroom, living room, bathroom, and a clothes closet. So they hung up their clothes, went back outside and over to the lot where the movies were being filmed.

To get in where they could look around for Angela, they had to buy two fifty-dollar tickets. Jim said, “That is by far the most I have ever pay for a movie ticket, but if it will help us find Angela, it will have been well worth every dime of it.”

They gave their tickets to the lovely lady standing by the admittance door, and she opened it for them.

They walked in and began a circle on the concrete sidewalk that went past the various offices. They made quite a lengthy walk, but to no avail. So they stopped a young man who was cleaning the sidewalk, and asked him where the office of the boss was. He pointed it out so they walked over to it and went in.

The man behind the desk greeted them and asked them if he could be of help.

Then Jim said, “We are looking for an eighteen-year-old girl named Angela Skidmore. She would have come here sometime this week.”

The gentleman said, "Let me look through my record book and see if her name is in it." So he pulled the record book out of his desk and began thumbing through it.

In a moment he said, "Aha, here it is. She came in early this week and asked for a job in some movie.

"After I interviewed her I had to tell her that she needed several months of teaching and practicing in acting before we would be able to hire her for any role; she was very dismayed, and said she had to have a job very soon as her funds were about to run out.

"So I gave her the name and address of the State office for the unemployed, which is only a few blocks away at 1024 43rd Street. She wrote down the address, thanked me, and left."

"Thank you, sir," Jim said, "we'll go check with them."

They left the office and walked the few blocks to the Unemployment Office and went in. A lady behind a desk asked if she could help them. So Jim told her they were looking for a Miss Angela Skidmore from New York.

She looked through her record book and said, "Yes, we found Miss Skidmore a job in the "Best In The West" café at 802 43rd Street which is just down the street to the north."

They thanked her, walked down to the café, and went inside. Jim asked a waitress if they had an Angela Skidmore employed there. The lady said, "Yes, she is in the kitchen scraping the dishes before she places them in the dishwasher. If you would like to see her, I'll go get her."

Jim said they would certainly appreciate it if she would bring her out for them.

In a few minutes the waitress appeared with Angela, and she had a questioning look on her face. Jim introduced Jane and then himself; then he told her why they had come to see her.

Then Jane added to Jim's story; "Angela, Honey, your parents are worried sick about you, imagining all sorts of misfortunes you may be suffering. Your father is blaming himself for your leaving because he was so tough on you by quarantining you for a week.

"But Honey, you must realize that your parents love you very much and want the best for you; and they want you to be happy, and to love them. So will you let us take you back to your parents in New York?"

Angela threw her arms around Jane's neck, hugging her and sobbing, "I am so sorry that I got mad at my parents, and stupidly ran away from home. But I have learned some very important things since I have been here in Hollywood; and you can bet that I will never do such a stupid thing again. And I thank you so very much for coming to get me to take me back home."

Jim said, “Sweetie, we will catch a plane tomorrow morning and take you back home to your mom and dad. And I will call them when we get back to our room, and tell them we have found you, and we will be bringing you home tomorrow.”

Angela then told the café owner thanks for hiring her, but she was going to go back to her parents. The owner said he understood and wished the best for her.

Jim called the Skidmores and told them they had found their daughter and would bring her home tomorrow. Then they all went out to a café and had dinner.

After they had finished eating, they went back to the hotel and to the Barker’s room. They were all tired from the many events of the day. So Jim and Jane went to bed, and Angela bedded down on the couch.

The next morning they went to the café and got breakfast. Then they went back to the hotel, packed their suitcases, caught a taxi, and rode to the airport.

Jim got tickets for the three of them on an eight o’clock flight back to New York.

They got back to their home city about three p.m., and Jim immediately took Angela to her home.

When they got there she walked up to the door and rang the door bell. Immediately the door opened and Mr. and Mrs. Skidmore were standing there with their arms opened for their daughter.

Angela was crying as she grabbed her parents and said, “Please forgive me Mom and Dad, I was a fool to run off to Hollywood; can you forgive me?”

They continued to hug their daughter, and Mr. Skidmore said, “Darling, we forgive you, and we are so glad to have you back with us.”

The Skidmore’s shook hands with the Barker’s and thanked them for bringing their daughter home; then Mr. Skidmore told Jim to mail him his bill

Angela thanked the Barker’s and told them she was so thankful they had come after her.

CHAPTER 7

Jim went back to his office, put every thing in order again, and waited for another client; Jane resumed her job as manager of Flo's Clothing Shop.

On his second day after returning to his office, he got his first client a few minutes after he had arrived at his office.

He was a middle-aged fellow named Horace Bradley. Jim knew him slightly as he had met him in a golf tournament a few years ago. Mr. Bradley had remembered Jim from that tournament; and he had been impressed with Jim because he had said he was a Private Investigator; and then he had given Mr. Bradley his business card.

They shook hands and then Mr. Bradley told Jim that he needed his expertise in finding missing people, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Then he said, "Jim, I have a very difficult job for you; my son and his wife, Brad and Joan, are apparently lost in the coldest part of Alaska. I got a radio message from them two days ago, and every thing was going just fine. But since then I have been unable to contact them.

"Would you please go up there and see if you can find them? They had food supplies for several days with them, but if they are unable to get back to civilization, sooner or later they will run out of food.

"I tried to talk them out of going to such a godforsaken place, but my son is a writer and he wanted some pictures that would raise the value of the book he is writing.

"My wife and I have been praying they will get home without any trouble, and maybe they will choose their next trip to be to a warmer place."

Jim said, "Mr. Bradley, we are so sorry to hear of the plight of your son and his wife, and we will be glad to fly up there to see if we can find them.

"Jane and I both took flying lessons; and when we got our licenses, we bought a four-passenger plane to fly when we were going to go a long distance.

"So here's what I will do; I will buy a set of snow skis that are easily attached to the wheels of a plane, and when we get to an area where there will be snow all the time, I will attach the skis.

"If you will please give me your phone number, and I will give you mine. That way we can stay in contact with each other. Our phone number is 915-370-7477."

Mr. Bradley said, "Our phone number is 915-539-4623."

Jim pulled out his little black book and recorded the number. Then he said, "I will get the plane serviced, and while they are doing that, I will go to the hardware store and buy a set of skis for it.

"While I am gone, Jane can pack our suitcases with winter clothing so we won't freeze to death when we get to Alaska!

"And as soon as they let us know the plane is ready, we will drive down to the airport, take care of the paper work, and head for Alaska."

A few minutes later the mechanic who examined and tuned the plane called and said it was ready. So Jim and Jane loaded the trunk of their car with their suitcases of clothing and food, climbed into their seats in the car, and sped to the airport.

When they got there, Jim called Mr. Bradley with the phone in the plane. They could hear each other quite well; and Jim told Mr. Bradley that he would call him periodically while they were on the trip to be sure that they could continue to communicate over long distances.

Then Jim went into the airport office and filled out the necessary paper work. When he finished, he went outside and climbed into the “Flying Angel” where Jane was waiting. He started the engine; revved it up, and the plane began moving; they were headed for Alaska!

CHAPTER 8

Their cruising speed was about two hundred miles per hour, so they had to spend the night in North Dakota. The next day they gassed up, flew to Washington, and spent the night there. Jim kept his word and called Mr. Bradley and told him they were in Birmingham, Washington and were getting their plane ready for snowy ground, and they would soon be off to look for their loved ones.

In the Washington airport the following morning the ground was covered with three inches of snow. So Jim installed the skis he had purchased on the wheels of the plane, got a detailed map of Alaska, and marked the area where the Bradley's were believed to be stranded.

Then he called Mr. Bradley and gave him an up-to-date account of what they were planning to do. He thanked Jim for the message and said they were continually praying that all would go well.

After breakfast, they rechecked their medical suitcase to be sure they had everything needed to treat frostbite, broken bones, etc. Then they put into the plane's storage compartment an armload of woolen blankets, two waterproof sleeping bags, and two pairs of knee-high waterproof boots. They also put in some jerky, apple and oranges, heating cans, four gallons of drinking water, a box of matches, and a box of six flares.

They figured that the Bradley's had all of the necessary survival materials, but they were preparing for a possible bad storm in case they encountered one.

Then Jim went into the airport office and filled out the Form telling where they were going and when they expected to be back.

Then he walked out to the plane where Jane was seated, and climbed in beside her. He started the plane and let it idle a few minutes to warm up the engine and the inside heater.

When the inside heater had warmed sufficiently, he reved up the plane motor, and it began skidding down the runway on the skis. In just a few seconds they were airborne and flying northeast on their way into Alaska.

The weather report on Jim's radio was for a partly cloudy sky, a high temperature of thirty five degrees, and a low night temperature of twenty degrees below zero.

Jim speculated that in about two hours they would be within the area where they thought the Bradley's would be. The two hours would give them enough daylight to see the snow on the ground as they flew around in smaller and smaller circles looking for a tent where they believed the Bradley's would be staying.

They had circled the area three times before they spotted the tent; and in the snow near the tent there was a large, word HELP stamped in the snow.

Jim landed close to the tent; and as soon as the plane stopped, Joan came rushing out.

Jane opened her door, jumped out, and embraced Joan who was shedding tears. When she got control of herself, Joan said, "We have been praying for someone to rescue us. Brad twisted his ankle yesterday and is not able to walk on that leg."

Jim also gave Joan a hug, and then the three walked over to the large tent and went inside. Brad was lying on a cot, and when he saw Jim and Jane he hollered, "Praise the Lord, our prayers have been answered!"

Jim introduced himself and Jane to the Bradley's and then they sat down with Joan on the other cot.

A little later Jim went out to the plane, called Mr. Bradley, and filled him in on all that had happened. He also told him that they were planning to be home in four days.

Mr. Bradley said, "Thank you Jim, we were praying earnestly that you would find the kids, and find them okay. And thank you Lord for answering our prayers!"

After Jim hung up the phone, he grabbed a suitcase of food and went back into the tent. Then he said to his wife, "Jane, my beloved, would you help me get something out of the suitcase for the Bradley's and us to eat? And after we have eaten, you two can tell us what happened to you after your radio went dead."

So Jane passed out some jerky, buns, and apples for everybody, and Joan passed out some hot coffee in Styrofoam cups.

As soon as they had finished eating, Brad told his story about their misfortunes.

"Well, I guess the first disaster was when the radio battery went dead, so we couldn't call for help. And the battery in the snowmobile went dead about the same time, so we couldn't drive back to civilization. Then a little later I twisted my ankle so we couldn't walk back to Washington. So we just prayed a lot harder for the Lord to send us some rescuers; and praise His name, He did!"

Then Joan spoke up and said, "We even considered me walking down to Washington for help and leaving Brad here. But I dropped that idea very quickly because if Brad died from starvation or freezing, I would want to go to heaven with him." She laughed a little and said, "I know it sounds foolish, but I was absolutely sincere about the idea of going to heaven with him."

Brad said very humbly and quite sincerely, "Thank you darling, for your special loving and caring for me."

After a moment of silence, Jim said, "Let's get every thing packed and start flying back to where it is a bit warmer." The other three agreed with Jim's suggestion, and began carrying the various items to the plane.

Then Jim suggested to Brad that when they got back to Washington, he have the Flight Company retrieve their snowmobile; he thanked Jim and said he would certainly do so.

In about fifteen minutes they had everything loaded but Brad. Then they helped him hobble out to the plane and get into one of the rear seats.

Joan got in beside him and closed the door. Then Jane and Jim got into the front seats, closed their doors, and Jim started the motor.

He let the cabin warm up several degrees, and then he revved up the motor and the plane began to slide along on the skis, gathering speed. And in a few seconds they were airborne, and the heat from the heater began to feel like spring weather.

Brad said, “Oh, how good that heat feels; and Joan, if I ever again suggest a trip into the Arctic Circle, have them put me into a home for the mentally ill”—and everyone laughed.

The flight was uneventful and they reached the Washington airport just before sundown, and immediately Jim suggested taking Brad to a doctor.

But Brad vetoed the idea and said, “I can hobble around until we get back to New York. And then if my ankle is not yet feeling okay, I’ll have Joan take me our family doctor.”

He said that in a tone that made it quite clear that he wasn’t going to change his mind. So they parked the plane on the Airport’s parking lot, got a taxi, and rode to the nearest hotel. They got their rooms and then went to the hotel’s restaurant and ate supper.

The next morning Jim got up early and went after a pair of crutches for Brad; and while he was gone the men at the Service Station serviced the plane.

Then when he returned he went straight to the hotel and gave Brad his crutches. And after Brad did a little hobbling around in the room he felt able to walk with the crutches; so they all went to the hotel café and had breakfast,

After breakfast they went back to their rooms and Jim and the ladies started repacked their suitcases and getting them ready for reloading in the plane. And while they were packing, Brad hobbled to the Snowmobile Agency where he had rented the snowmobile, and paid them the cost for having to go after it.

When he got back to the hotel Jim and the ladies had everything packed and into the plane. So they all went out and climbed into the plane, and in just a few minutes they were airborne and headed for New York.

They spent two nights in hotels; and the third day Jim called Mr. Bradley and told him they would be back in New York about five o’clock in the afternoon. He added that he would call him again when they were near the airport so he could meet them when they landed.

He called him five minutes before his time to land, and Mr. and Mrs. Bradley were at the unloading dock when they landed and got out of the plane.

In a few minutes there was hugging and wiping tears among the Bradley's, and then they all thanked Jim and Jane.

Nothing was said about the expenses because Jim knew he would have to figure up the expenses, mail a copy to Mr. Bradley, and then he would receive a payment check.

CHAPTER 9

Jane came home from work one evening and found a letter from Brazil in their mail box. She was puzzled for a moment, and then she remembered that her sister, Lillie Morrison, and her husband, John, were living in Kibosh, Brazil. John was an engineer working there for an oil company.

Jane hurried into their house, pulled out the hand-written sheets, and read them.

“Dear Jane,

How are you and Jim doing these days? We are doing just fine; both of us are well and very busy. I am teaching English to the kids in the school here in Kibosh, and John is very busy helping Conoco Oil Company develop new fields of petroleum. And usually they are drilling in the forests where the trees and brush make it almost impossible to walk without using a large sword to cut the brush.

Yesterday John was walking through the brush trying to decide where they were going to drill next, and he came upon a small clearing with an old house in it.

He walked through the grass and up to the door of the old house. He was very surprised to find that the door was still there. So he opened it carefully, walked in, and found the remains of a furnished house.

He walked from room to room and came into one where there the boney remains of two people were lying in what had been a bed.

He examined the skulls of the two and found what appeared to be holes made by a bullet. And apparently whoever did the shooting was looking for something, judging from the way the rooms had been ransacked.

He was curious about what that person was looking for, and wondered if they had found it; but judging from the way the house was ransacked, he doubted that they had.

Then on a hunch he went outside and started walking around the house. When he got to the back of it he stopped and slowly looked over the yard.

He noticed there was a lone tree in the yard, so he went over and examined it. On the top of one of the larger branches he saw what looked like it had been a slit, but the bark had grown back over it.

He took his knife and carefully scraped off the bark to reveal what was under it. And when he got through the bark he could see a little silver box. He carefully pried out the box and then pried it open—and there was a layer of paper that was old but not torn.

So he carefully opened the paper and saw it was a hand-drawn map with what looked like a trail drawn on it. And on either side of the trail various objects had been drawn—objects that looked like mountain peaks, trees, streams, and a cave.

John put the paper carefully back into the silver box, put the box in the pocket of his work clothes, and made his way back to the current oil well site.

That night he came home and put the silver box in our wall safe. Then he told me there were two skeletons in that old house, and one of them was probably of the man who had put the map in the tree branch—but never got a chance to use it. So he concluded the cave probably still had in it something of great value.

Now my dear sister, here is the real reason I have written you. John thinks there still must be something of great value in that cave; and here's the reason why: The person who drew the map went to great lengths to hide it because it shows the way to find the cave. And obviously he didn't want anybody to find the map because it would enable them to find the cave and get whatever is in it.

John has the highest respect for your husband, and he believes that Jim can figure out where the map starts and how to get to the place where it ends; perhaps at a cave where there is a treasure chest. And he said if Jim finds it, and there is treasure in it, he will give half of it to him.

So my beloved sister, talk this over with Jim and then call and tell me what he has decided; my phone number is 325-926-2004.

We love you both, and we will be anxiously waiting for your call.

Lillie

P.S. The reason I sent you this letter instead of calling, is because I was afraid I might not remember to tell you something important!

CHAPTER 10

Jane could hardly wait for Jim to get home, and she had a little trouble refraining from calling him. But she did not have very long to wait; Jim walked in about ten minutes later.

She rushed to him, threw her arms around his neck, and said, “Jim darling, I received a most important letter from Lillie, and I want you to sit down and read it.”

She handed him the pages from the envelope, and he sat down in his favorite chair and began very carefully reading them. About five minutes later, Jim finished reading the letter and then looked up at Jane.

“Jane, has your sister gone loco? Why in the world would we make a trip to Brazil on the odds of a hundred to one that we could find a box full of jewelry?”

“My beloved husband,” Jane said, “where is your desire for adventure? Have you lost it? We have plenty of money now, so why don’t we go to Brazil to my sister’s and have a great adventure looking for that cave full of jewels!”

Jim spoke up and said, “Okay, okay, I’ll go. And I believe when we get there, we should rent a four-wheel-drive Jeep to take us for our little adventure. Then if we have to take to shallow water, the Jeep will keep going with no problem. Jane, what do you think about that idea?”

Jane thought it was a good idea so she began packing while Jim called the airport and got the reservations for the trip.

CHAPTER 11

Two days later they were at Lillie's home hugging and gabbing. John was still at work.

After the welcoming was finished, Jim told Lillie about their idea of getting a Jeep for the adventurous trip.

Lillie answered, "I think that's a good idea, and I know just the place to get one: Fred's 'Transportation for Rent;' and it's located on Highway 40 and Pine Street."

Jim said, "Lillie, if you will make up a list of what we will need on the trip, Jane and I will take your car and go down to Fred's. Jane can drive our car back here and I will follow her in the Jeep.

Once Jim got back to Lillie's, he could no longer stand the suspense. So he looked at Lillie and asked, "Lillie, have you had a copy of the map made yet? I'm assuming the original map is so old that it would tear very easily."

Lillie answered proudly, "Yes sir, Jim, in fact I've had five copies made: one for each of us four, and one to be left here in our wall safe with the original hand-made map."

Jim laughed and said, "I can sure tell you and Jane are sisters. You both are very smart and very pretty; and Lillie, I'll bet you are very sweet, just like my Jane."

That prompted Jane to say, with a big smile, "Jim really has a way with women; this I know from first-hand experience."

Lillie smiled and said, "Thank you Jim, I appreciate your compliment.

Then she said, "Forgive me for changing the subject, but would you two like something to eat? I have not had supper yet, and unfortunately John is back in the wilderness again helping his company find some more oil."

Then she continued, "I can make three ham and cheese sandwiches in just a jiffy. Would that be alright?"

Jane looked at Jim, and he nodded his head; so she said, "That would be just fine, Lillie, and I'll help you make the sandwiches."

CHAPTER 12

After they had finished their sandwiches, Jim showed his impatience just a little and said, "Lillie, can I look at the map now?"

Lillie smiled at Jim's impatience and said, "You certainly can, Jim."

Then she went to the hidden safe, got out three copies of the map, and laid them on the dinning table.

They all pulled a chair up to the table, and each one took a copy of the map. Jim and Jane examined the maps slowly and with a lot of interest.

Then Jim said, "Lillie, I know you have studied this map, probably a lot, so can you tell us what you think about it?"

"Well, Jim, I have concluded that the line is a stream, and the little drawings here and there are natural landscape objects. He probably put them on the map to help him relocate the cave he had found by accident.

"He probably wanted to store some valuable things inside the cave, things he didn't want anybody else to have.

"And the little box that John found in that tree branch covered with bark indicated to me that the man was killed and never had a chance to get any of the treasure out of the cave."

Jim put his finger on the map and asked, "And what did you say you thought this line is?"

Lillie answered, "I think that must be a stream or river because it wanders around. And if it had been a path, wouldn't it have been straighter?"

"I think you're right," Jim said, "and I think the beginning of the river on the map is somewhere near the house where the skeletons are; and of course the end of the river is not shown on the map."

Then Jim said with anxiety, "I think we should hurry up and get ready for the search; the ladies agreed.

Two hours later they were ready to travel; they had the Jeep loaded with all the items they thought they might need.

And since it was almost noon, they made some sandwiches they could eat while traveling.

Jane sat in the front seat with Jim, and had a copy of the map fastened to a clip board on her lap. And she said to Jim, "Looking at the map on my lap will enable me to more accurately tell you where we are in reference to the location of the cave."

Jim pulled up onto Highway 40 and started driving south. His theory was that the highway would intersect the river, and at that point they would get off the highway on the left hand side of the river, and start travelling west along it.

In just a few miles they came to the river; so Jim pulled off the highway and started going west on a dirt road that seemed to be running parallel to the river.

After they had travelled about five miles they spotted the two mountain peaks that were on the map. And they got excited because they felt sure they were going the right way to get to the cave.

Unfortunately the road ended at that point; so they continued following the river, driving through short brush and grass. Then they came upon a pile of huge stones about one-hundred-feet west of the stream. On the map these stones seemed to be just a very short distance from the cave.

So Jim stopped the Jeep and told Jane to get the binoculars and start looking for the cave opening. He told her to look carefully because the opening to the cave might be very small. Then he put the Jeep into slow-drive so it would ride smoother and that would enable Jane to hold the binoculars steady; and thus she could see better through them.

Jane looked at the mountain side for about five minutes; and then she hollered, "I see a very small hole in the side of the mountain!"

Jim stopped the Jeep and everybody climbed out. Then Jim grabbed a shovel and hoe, and started up the side of the mountain toward the small opening; the two ladies trailed along behind him.

When they had climbed about a quarter of a mile, they came to the small opening Jane had spotted.

Using the shovel and hoe, Jim soon had an opening that he could easily crawl through. So he took the flashlight and started crawling into the hole.

He had crawled about thirty feet when his flashlight revealed a small wooden chest. Jim crawled the few feet further to the small chest, grasped the leather-strap handle, backed out of the cave, and held up the small chest.

And when the girls saw what he had found, they got very excited—but Jim didn't. He was very calm as he pried loose the two snappers, and opened the lid of the chest. Then when he looked inside it he got just as excited as the girls; the chest was full of beautiful gems.

Then Jim said with a big grin, "Well, ladies, what do you think the jewels will be worth?"

They tossed a value back and forth and finally agreed on one: one-hundred-thousand dollars.

Then Jim said, "If we get to keep these gems we will be on a par with a very wealthy society."

The girls giggled and said, "Won't that be nice?"

CHAPTER 13

They drove back to Kibosh and took the treasure chest to a jeweler and had the jewels evaluated. After he had examined them very carefully through a microscope he said, “These jewels are genuine, and I would say their value is at least two million dollars.”

They looked at each other and cheered loudly—the value of the jewels had exceeded their hopeful dreams.

Jim thanked the smiling jeweler, and handed him a hundred-dollar bill.

Then they took the jewels in the dilapidated chest to a judge and told him how they had found them.

He told them that since the chest was obviously very old, and the person who had hidden the jewels was undoubtedly dead, they could legally keep the jewels. They thanked him and joyfully and went back to Lillie’s home.

Lillie contacted John and told him to come home immediately because they had something special to show him.

In about thirty minutes John arrived, they showed him the gems, and then told him about their experience in finding them. Needless to say, John was overjoyed.

Then the four of them sat down at the table and discussed what they would do with their share of the money once the gems were sold.

Jim said, “Jane and I have talked about this, and we are going to invest our share of the money in some good and secure bonds. Then when our children start going to college we will have enough money to send them to a good one. And after they graduate, we will be financially able to help them start a business of their choice.”

John spoke up and said, “That sounds like a very good idea, Jim, and if Lillie will agree with me, we will initiate a similar plan;” Lillie nodded her head in agreement.

The next day Jim and Jane sat down at the table with the Morrison’s, and carefully laid the jewelry on a large towel, and divided it in half. The Barker’s put their half in a small overnight case, thanked the Morrison’s for all their hospitality, and then took a taxi to the airport. Thirty minutes later they were aboard a plane and headed for home—very rich and very happy.

AFTER WORDS

Jim went back to being a Private Investigator, and Jane resumed her role as devoted wife; and in the next ten years she became mother to three girls. They all grew up, got educated, and married. Then they provided Jim and Jane with six little grandchildren for them to love and to spoil.

Lillie became an elementary teacher for a year in the school near their home, and John went back to searching for petroleum. Then Lillie gave up teaching and over the subsequent twelve years she gave birth to two boys and two little girls. Their children became educated, married, and provided Lillie and John with eight little grandchildren to love and to spoil

THE END