

**A  
FATHER'S  
LOVE  
JUSTICE AND FORGIVENESS**

**JEAN DEFRESE MOORE**

ISBN 978-1-63814-627-8 (Paperback)  
ISBN 978-1-63814-628-5 (Digital)

Copyright © 2021 Jean DeFreese Moore  
All rights reserved  
First Edition

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods without the prior written permission of the publisher. For permission requests, solicit the publisher via the address below.

Covenant Books, Inc.  
11661 Hwy 707  
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576  
[www.covenantbooks.com](http://www.covenantbooks.com)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved

“Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com>. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from The Message. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

The Living Bible copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved. The Living Bible, TLB, and the Living Bible logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked (NIrV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®, NIrV® Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIrV” and “New International Reader's Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica Inc.™

“Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.”

Parenthesis indicate a personalization of the scripture by the character.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Dedicated to my grandson Jackson who inspired this story.  
Thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who continues to be faithful in giving me the stories.

Then I heard the voice of the  
Lord saying, “Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?” And I said,  
“Here am I. Send me!”

—Isaiah 6:8

## CHAPTER 1



**R**eid sat on the train with his new wife watching the land move past. He knew he had done the right thing. God had told him so. But he had not told his father, or any of his brothers or sisters. He hadn't had time to do that. They had just been married six days. They would arrive in Harris shortly. He'd talk with his father then.

Reid had already decided; he would explain everything to his father alone. He'd give his father all the details. His father would be okay with what he had done. Dad would love her, even if she was an Indian.

His brothers and sisters didn't need to know why they had gotten married, but Reid prayed that they would accept and love his new wife. For the first time in his life he was happy that his sister Mary still lived back East.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid had met Chipeta his first year at the university. They had become friends and shared classes, considering the same field: law. Long hours together at the library studying had allowed time for them to get to know each other well. Both were quiet. Both were serious. And both had an underlying itch to change the injustice they saw around them.

Chipeta was the daughter of a Ute medicine man. She had lived among a band of extended family with her grandfather as head. Her group had lived on the reservation her entire life, and she spoke English well. The government had sent her to boarding school in

New Mexico to be educated. She had returned to the reservation in Utah understanding the white culture more than she understood her own. She had learned and done well at school and was one of few students that finished their studies there.

The wife of a missionary at the reservation had befriended Chipeta, and she had learned about Jesus from the white woman. Chipeta began listening to the stories from the Bible early in life. Missionaries at the boarding school had taught the students and had incorporated Bible lessons into the curriculum. She had read about Jesus, prayed to him, and listened to the missionaries. She had believed.

She also believed that Christianity and the Ute's beliefs were compatible. Both believed in a supreme creator. Both believed this creator made everything: land, animals, food, plants, and people. The Utes had a name for their creator: Senawahv. The Christians had a name for their creator too, or at least for their creator's son: Jesus. She believed in her people's god and had incorporated Christianity into that belief. She believed these gods were the same, and although her people did not worship God's son, she now did.

Chipeta was happy with the understanding she had of God, except her father didn't want anything to do with the white man. So Chipeta had not taken Jesus as her savior, as the missionaries had instructed her to do, out of respect for her father.

That changed just before her father sent her to school in Denver. She had given in to the Spirit and publicly accepted Jesus, following in believer's baptism.

She had gladly left home, with its morbid surroundings and lack of food. Her people were hunter/gatherers, not planters. But the government was forcing them to become farmers.

The older Noochew, the Ute People, as her people called themselves, held to old ways and would not accept the new way that was being forced upon them by the white man. She thought neither way of life was beneficial. Her people couldn't cling to old ways, and they couldn't fight the white man. If her people were going to survive, they would have to adapt and change.

Most of the young Ute women were able to choose their own husbands. But Chipeta had resisted. When she had not married as her father wished her too, he had begun to push young men on her, trying to force her into a decision. She had fiercely resisted all of her father's attempts to marry her off. Not only did these men not interest her, many had multiple wives.

The Mormon people had great influence in the area around her tribe, and many had been drawn into their religion. She thought this practice of having more than one wife disgusting. Her father had told her that if she was so against marrying one of their young men, she could just make herself useful fighting the white man.

After living at the boarding school most of her life, Chipeta thought anything would be better than the constraints put on her by the rules at the reservation.

So Chipeta's father had sent her to school to study white man's law. Her father thought that if Chipeta understood the laws their people now had to live under, then they might be able to overcome some of the restrictions put on them at the reservation.

Chipeta's father had told her that someone had to help her people. Someone had to understand the white man and learn their weaknesses. Then her people would know how to fight them. She agreed. She would learn everything she could about the white man. She planned to leave for the university and adopt all of the white man's ways.

She took the white man's language and religion, telling her father she was doing what he told her to do: understand the white man.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chipeta arrived in Denver and found only resistance to her race. She quickly began dressing and acting like the white girls at school. She had planned to do this anyway.

Chipeta now dressed like the white women; fixed her hair like the white women; and her speech was as good, or better, than most of the other students. But with her round face, high cheekbones, dark

skin, and dark hair, it was obvious to anyone who looked at her that she was Indian.

After a few weeks, others were still not associating with her but they were now leaving her alone. They had stopped making fun of her, had stopped pushing her when they walked past, and had stopped throwing things at her.

Maybe the young man in her class had something to do with that. She wasn't sure. He had befriended her early in their studies and had defended her against the bigotry she had experienced.

The young man was smaller than most of the other men—and quiet. He was barely two inches taller than she was, slim, had short curly brown hair, and looked younger than he was. But he always stood tall, unafraid. He never volunteered to speak and spoke in class only when called upon. But he always spoke truth and was confident of his answers.

One of the professors seemed to take great joy in calling on him for the most arduous questions. This instructor was arrogant and notorious for asking questions he thought no one in the lecture hall would understand or be able to answer. Others might not be able to answer the questions, but it was seldom true of Reid Britt. And because Reid could answer the hard questions, the instructor felt compelled to continue calling on him, often trying to stump him with trick questions or questions that had nothing to do with what they were studying.

When called upon by name, Reid would stand slowly and others would always think him timid or that he wasn't prepared with an answer. But once he was on his feet, he would raise himself to his full height and speak loudly and clearly, giving textbook answers to this instructor. Then he would remain standing, as if to challenge the instructor to question him further. He wouldn't sit again until he was instructed to do so. Chipeta thought he would make a good addition to the Noochew.

At the end of their second year at the university, Reid had received permission to return to classes late the next semester. He had asked Chipeta to keep notes for him and had told her he was

going home, to Kansas, to check on his elderly father. Then he would return.

This was unusual. No one missed class. The school administration never allowed absence without the student being deathly ill. Then a student was required to drop the course and retake the class the next term. No one missed weeks of school and return to complete the semester.

But, like Reid said he would do, he missed the first two weeks of class and returned limping slightly. When his classmates asked about his injured leg, he had replied, "I was shot." That was the only explanation he gave.

Upon his return, he asked Chipeta to come to his home and go over the notes with him. When she arrived, she discovered Reid lived with a much older sister and her family. The sister's husband, Thomas, was tall and slender, clean-shaven, with his hair slicked back and parted down the middle. He was also a medicine man, like her father. They lived in a large townhouse with lots of children and lots of activity.

Chipeta was welcomed by a few other students she had seen on campus. She learned they were his sister's children. None of them acknowledged that she was Indian, and she was treated like one of the family. All in the house were friendly, and Reid's sister seemed especially happy to meet Chipeta.

It didn't take Chipeta long to realize the sister couldn't see well. In fact, Chipeta thought she might even be blind. She was a small lady with long black hair pulled to the nape of her neck and twisted into a bun. She didn't exhibit the outward adornment that most upper-class women wore. There was no jewelry, ruffles or lace, no fine shimmering fabric. She wore only a plain ankle-length skirt and a simple blouse. Chipeta thought she was very beautiful.

Just a few months after Reid's trip to Kansas, Sarah and Thomas Stewart left Denver, moving to Reid's hometown of Harris. Reid and three of the Stewart's children remained in the townhouse with an older couple hired to care for the house and oversee the young people. Over the next few years, two more of the Stewart children

returned to Denver to attend the university. Chipeta was comfortable with everyone in the house.

Reid and Chipeta continued to study together. They saw each other only when studying or when in class. But they would always talk casually while they were together and enjoyed each other's company. When Chipeta had a question about Christianity, Reid would give her answers from the Scripture. He seemed to know the Bible well and live according to what he believed. Chipeta liked Reid, but both of them had their minds on their studies.

Chipeta and Reid received their diplomas from the university on the same day. When school began two weeks later, they were again in class together. This time at the law school. They were accustomed to studying together by now and continued to do this without considering any other option. This continued throughout law school. They studied for tests, worked together on projects, discussed legal matters, and proofed each other's papers. They playfully debated issues of disagreement and never got upset when they had a difference of opinion on a subject.

It was nearing the end of school, and both were ready to move on. Chipeta knew what her father expected of her. She was supposed to return to the reservation to fight for her people. Reid had no idea what he wanted to do. All he knew was that he would return home and do it in Harris.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chloe, Sarah's twenty-year-old daughter, opened the door of the townhouse to find Chipeta leaning on the banister of the steps. Her face was bruised, cut, and swollen, her dress torn and dirty. She was holding her side, and there was dried blood on her lip and on her sleeve.

Chloe yelled for her younger brother William and for Reid. William came and reached out to help Chipeta, but she pulled away and sank to the floor just inside the door. Her eyes were wide. She looked scared, but she said nothing. As Reid entered the room and

saw Chipeta, he ran to her. She was watching him, her eyes pleading with him for help.

"Oh, my goodness, Chipeta! What happened?" Reid asked as he knelt beside her. He touched her face softly; and she lost recognition in her eyes, swooned a little, and lost consciousness.

\*\*\*\*\*

William and Reid took Chipeta to a bedroom. Chloe and Mrs. Rowling, the housekeeper, helped Chipeta wash and change into clean clothing. Now, Chipeta lay in bed quietly with her eyes closed. Reid sat with her, waiting for her to talk to him and hoping Joseph would get home soon.

Joseph was Sarah's second oldest son. He was becoming an outstanding doctor, like his father and older brother, Joshua. Joseph put in long hours at the private hospital his father owned, where he was finishing his internship. Reid knew that Joseph would take care of Chipeta.

Reid also knew that Chipeta had fought hard. There were bruises on her arms where hands had held her. Her knuckles were bruised, swollen, and cut. Her fingernails were broken and had dried blood beneath them.

She rolled her head over and slowly opened her eyes. She looked at Reid but said nothing.

"Chipeta. What happened?" he asked.

She remained quiet.

"Joseph will be here soon. He's a doctor now. He can help you, but you need to tell me what happened," Reid said.

She still said nothing.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Joseph arrived, he asked Mrs. Rowling to come into the room and told Reid to leave. Then the doctor examined Chipeta's injuries. When Reid was allowed back into the room, Chipeta was

lying on her side, her face away from him. Joseph took Reid by the arm and pulled him back into the hallway.

“She’s been badly beaten. Probably by more than one person. She put up a good fight, but I think someone managed to force himself on her. She didn’t say, but from the location of the bruises on her arms where she was held, I imagine that’s what happened. She won’t let me look at anything except the injuries on her arms and face. She’ll be okay, physically, when she heals. But she’s not talking to me. I don’t know if she’ll talk to you or not. She’s an Indian. I don’t know enough about her culture to know how this will affect her.”

Reid sat with Chipeta that night. He had his books on his lap and tried to study, but his thoughts kept returning to Chipeta. He tried to pray for her, but his anger kept getting in his way. He couldn’t pray what he wanted to pray. What he knew he should pray: for her healing. So he let his anger come out and told God exactly what he thought about the men who had beaten her and what he wanted to do to them. Then his anger turned physical, and he struck the chair beside him with his foot, sending the chair across the room on its back.

Reid turned quickly to look at Chipeta again, hoping he had not disturbed her. She still lay with her back to him. He dropped to his knees beside her bed and prayed for her long into the night.

## CHAPTER 2



The next morning, when Reid arrived in the classroom, two of his classmates greeted him with scratched and bruised faces. These two had never been friendly to him and had been known to make fun of Chipeta. When one of them asked about Chipeta with an awkward sneer on his face, Reid lost control of himself again and punched the young man in the nose. Reid then turned to the other man and swung again, knocking him off his feet.

Both of these students were much larger than Reid, and the entire class was astonished that he was able to overpower them so quickly. The instructor came in and found Reid standing over the other two who lay on the floor, one with a bloody nose. The other would have a black eye before class was over. The entire class was watching. The instructor immediately sent Reid to the dean’s office.

That afternoon Reid stood before the dean and the disciplinary board. He wasn’t answering their questions, and they were quickly getting frustrated with this disrespectful and violent student.

It was six weeks to the end of the term, and they were openly discussing what to do with this young man. He had been a model student until now. Always well prepared, studious, respectful, and courteous. His grades were outstanding. But there was no place for this kind of behavior at their institution.

“Well,” the dean said, “if you’re not going to answer our questions, what do you have to say for yourself? You should defend your own actions. That’s what you’ve been trained to do.”

Reid replied, "I don't regret what I did. 'God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed.'"<sup>1</sup>

They were interrupted by a knock on the door. The dean's assistant opened the door from the outside to introduce Agent Don Prather of the Department of Justice.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen. I understand you have a problem," Agent Prather said, looking at the board and then at Reid, who stood tall before the men.

Unashamed, the law student was ready for whatever punishment they wanted to give him.

"You do realize that you have standing before you the son of one of the great men of the Justice Department?" Prather said.

Reid looked at the agent. *Why was he here? What did he want?*

The dean spoke. "Agent, we are in the middle of a disciplinary meeting. It really doesn't matter whose son this is."

Agent Prather smiled and continued, "This is a young man who comes from a family with a fine tradition of law and justice. A young man who, as a university student, served justice well in assisting with the capture of several members of an organized crime ring. I don't believe it would serve the school's good name to discipline him too severely. I don't believe his family—very influential, by the way—would appreciate it either. Why don't you gentlemen take a few minutes to discuss your discipline among yourselves. I would like to speak to Mr. Britt alone. May we use this room?" Prather raised his hand to indicate a door to the side. Without waiting for an answer, Prather opened the door and looked at Reid. "Come on, son."

The board sat in astonishment as to what had just happened. A total stranger had walked in and taken the student from them. They looked at each other for a moment, then the dean said, "Well, what are we going to do with him? Do you know who his father is?"

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:17.

The disciplinary board had finished their discussion and sat waiting for Agent Prather and Reid Britt to return. They were impatient busy men with much to do and ready to go home for the day. Hours passed before the door opened again. Reid walked back into the room with the same solemn look on his face that he had when he had left a few hours earlier. He stepped to the same spot he had stood previously and turned to face the board, saying nothing.

Agent Prather moved to stand beside Reid and smiled a knowing smile. "I'd be careful what you do to this young man. Your actions could turn around to bite you." Prather left the room.

The board had decided to give Reid a figurative slap on the hand. But even as Reid was receiving the judgment, one of the board members continued to openly call for expulsion. It had been decided, four to one, that Reid would be held on probation for the remainder of the semester. If any other incident occurred, he would be suspended for the rest of the term.

Reid thought this silly. He had less than six weeks left until graduation. While he was pleased that he had received mercy from the board members, he was prepared for and had expected much worse.

Any further action on his part could wait until the end of the semester. He knew where these boys would be immediately following the graduation ceremony. He was a patient man, despite his action that morning. Reid would watch these boys carefully, especially when Chipeta was around. If he needed to straighten anything else out, he could do it then.

\*\*\*\*\*

It had been an eventful day. Reid returned home to find Chipeta out of bed and dressed, sitting in the upright chair that he had kicked across the room the night before.

"I don't know what to do," she said, staring at the wall in front of her.

Reid told her, "You will stay here the rest of the semester, and we'll just go to class together. You won't have to be alone. Tomorrow

you will go to class with me. You will hold your head up, and you will finish the term.”

Chipeta thought again that Reid would make a good Ute.

Over the next few weeks, they stayed at each other’s side. Chipeta ate and slept at the Stewart home. They studied for finals together, and Chipeta quickly healed, both her body and her emotions.

\*\*\*\*\*

The last week of school Reid waited for Chipeta at the door. If she didn’t hurry, they would be late. This wasn’t like her. She was never late for anything. When Chipeta came downstairs, Reid thought she looked ill but she said nothing and seemed to feel better later in the day.

The next day she got sick during class and ran out the door. She returned a short time later to finish her test, apologizing to the law professor for being sick. The instructor had graciously allowed her to finish.

That night Joseph examined Chipeta again.

Joseph came to Reid, explaining that Chipeta was pregnant. She had indeed been raped the previous month, as Joseph had suspected. Chipeta had finally admitted it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid sat on the train remembering what God had said to him: *“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”*<sup>1</sup>

This child had a purpose. Reid didn’t know what that purpose was, but God knew. God had created this child, and Reid would care for it. *“Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both in our mothers?”*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colossians 1:16.

<sup>2</sup> Job 31:15.

Reid had picked up his Bible that night and had opened it to read beginning where he had left off the night before. He had read the account of Jesus’s birth. He had read how Joseph had taken Mary and the child that was not his. He read what God told Joseph.

Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph had not wanted Mary to be disgraced in public. Reid didn’t want Chipeta disgraced either. The angel had told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. Reid had talked to God, and God had told him also not to be afraid. The Spirit had come to Reid in a dream, telling him, *“Don’t be afraid to take (this woman) home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>2</sup> He was told to marry Chipeta. This was God’s child too, even though it was conceived through violence and sin.

*“When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”*<sup>3</sup>

Reid would follow Joseph’s example. He would allow Chipeta time to heal. They had the rest of their life to be with each other. He

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:19–21.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 1:20b (NIrV).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 1:24–25.

would love Chipeta and love this child as much as he would love any other child God gave them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid's nephew Joseph had made the arrangements, and the evening of Reid's and Chipeta's graduation from law school they were married. Joseph and Chloe were the only ones present to help them celebrate.

Now Reid and Chipeta were headed home, back to Harris, with the sure and certain knowledge that Reid's father would take them in.

## CHAPTER 3



Reid stepped off the train, cautious of who was watching. He hoped he wouldn't run into anyone he knew. He wanted to talk to his father before anyone realized he was in town.

It had been four years since he had been in Harris. He had come with Sarah; her husband, Thomas; and their four youngest boys. Four years since he had been shot while attempting to defend his home from criminals bent on stopping an injured miner; Reid's father; and Sarah's husband, Thomas, from testifying in court against the illegal activity taking place in management at the mine near town.

He had sat on the ground with a bullet in his leg, holding his injured father, watching the home that he had grown up in burn to the ground. Soon after this, he left Harris again, to return to school.

Now he would need to find his father's new house. It was behind his brother Cleve's home, that's all he knew. It shouldn't be that hard to find.

He looked at the stationmaster who stood on the platform. Reid didn't know this man. This was good. He didn't want a conversation with anyone right now.

Reid held Chipeta's hand as he walked to the stationmaster.

"I'm going to leave our luggage here. I'm putting it inside, in the corner. I'll be back for it later this afternoon," Reid told the man.

"You Marshal Britt's son? You look just like him." The stationmaster laughed as he reached to his own face with three fingers to smooth a beard that wasn't there. "Except for the gray hair and whiskers."

“Yeah, he’s my father. But keep my secret. My family doesn’t know I’m here. I want it to be a surprise,” Reid replied. He put his finger over his mouth, smiling at the man. “Shhh.”

Reid let go of Chipeta’s hand to move the bags. Then he took her hand again, and they began walking.

\*\*\*\*\*

Travis saw the couple coming when he stepped out the door onto his front porch. They were cutting across the open land from the railroad station. He watched them curiously and recognized Reid as they got closer. He knew it was about time for his youngest son to come home. That crooked smile came to Travis’s face as he watched them. Reid had found a wife.

As they neared, Travis stepped off the porch and began to walk toward them. When they reached each other, Travis put his arms out to give Reid a big hug, remembering the hug his grandfather had given him the day he brought his first wife, Ruth, home. Then he turned to the young woman.

“Dad, this is Chipeta,” Reid said. “She graduated law school with me.”

Travis replied, “Welcome home, Chipeta.” Travis reached out to take Chipeta’s hands in his.

Reid smiled. His father knew, and he had already accepted Chipeta into the family.

“We got married the same day we had the graduation ceremony,” Reid continued as he looked toward the house to see his sister Naomi watching from the porch. He waved to her. “Can we talk? Alone?”

“Sure.” Travis turned to Chipeta and asked, “Would ya like ta wash up? Naomi can help ya.” He pointed to his daughter.

Chipeta nodded.

Travis took her by the hand and walked with her to the porch. “Naomi, this is Chipeta. Would ya get what she needs ta wash up? An’ prepare the front bedroom for Reid an’ his new wife?” Travis smiled at Naomi, then at Chipeta. Turning to Reid, Travis said, “Let’s go ta the back porch.”

They walked through the house. Reid stepped out the door to see a very large dirty white dog lying against the wall.

“Ya ’member Bella, don’ ya?” Travis asked.

Reid smiled. “She’s gotten so big!” Reid’s eyes went wide, attempting to emulate her size.

There were four rocking chairs lined up in the shade on the large porch. Travis sat down, and Reid sat beside him, pulling the rocker sideways to face his father.

Travis sat staring at the trees as Reid told him about Chipeta. The thumb and index finger of Travis’s right hand were pinching and twisting his bottom lip. The same elbow resting on the arm of the rocking chair. He pulled his hand away and drew his lip into his teeth, making a smacking sound as he asked, “Do ya love her?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Are ya gonna be happy together?”

“I hope so. We’ve known each other for six years. We’ve always gotten along well. We’ve worked and studied together the whole time we’ve been in school. She’s a young Christian, but her heart is open. We’re both committed to making this work,” Reid replied.

“That’s important,” Travis said, smiling. “But ya is gonna have a hard time gettin’ some people ta accept her here, ya know that, don’t ya? There’s still some hard feelin’s toward Indians ’round here. An’ then there’s your sister Mary. I don’t know how she will take this.”

Reid nodded. “As long as you and the rest of the family accept her and support us, we’ll be okay. God is with us. I remember what you said about God being the center of a marriage. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’<sup>1</sup> We’re trying to keep him there in the middle.”

Travis smiled. This was the same scripture he had quoted to his oldest daughter, Sarah, when she had married Thomas.

“Okay,” Travis said. “Why don’t ya go get her an’ let me get ta know her. I’m gonna talk ta the family tonight. Ask Naomi ta come here too.”

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:33 ESV.

Travis asked Naomi to find out if the whole family could meet at Sarah's house that night. Then, knowing Sarah would say yes, Naomi was to tell her three brothers and their wives to meet there after supper.

Travis spent some time with Chipeta while Reid returned to the train depot to pick up their luggage.

\*\*\*\*\*

That evening Travis met with his oldest son, Cleve, and his wife, Jenny; Angus and his wife, Molly; his son, Luke; Sarah and her husband, Thomas; and Naomi. He told them that Reid had married a beautiful Indian girl who was educated and had adopted the white man's ways, including Christianity. He told them that Chipeta had a law degree, just like Reid and Cleve. He also told them that Chipeta was expecting a child. That was all of the story they needed to know.

Travis then asked if there would be any problems with this. No one spoke, but several shook their heads no.

Sarah was the first to speak. "I remember her. She came to the house in Denver just before we moved. After our visit here four years ago. She helped Reid catch up on his schoolwork. She was so sweet."

"Naomi has already met her too." Travis smiled at Naomi. "But I don't want ta scare her off by lettin' the whole bunch a ya at her all at once. So I thought ya might meet her one family at a time. Reid can introduce her ta ya in the next few days."

Luke said, "There's going to be some people in town that won't receive her well."

Travis nodded. "But we'll support them an' love her. She'll be accepted by us an' if we show God's love, an' continue ta show God's love, others will learn an' accept her too. Chipeta's already dealt with people who were ugly ta her at the university an' the law school just 'cause she's a Indian. Both a them know the difficulties they'll face."

Luke said, "Jesus told us there would be people following him from every nation, every people. He said, 'I have other sheep that are

not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."<sup>1</sup>

"He also told us, 'Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.'"<sup>2</sup> I'll go talk to Brother Nick. I'm sure he will help the people at church accept her."

Thomas added, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free nor is there male and female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

Travis smiled. Reid and Chipeta would have the family's support. The only one he was concerned about was his second daughter, Mary. But Mary wasn't here, and there was little hope she would return home anytime soon.

Mary had been kidnapped by Indians as a young girl. She had been carried across Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. She had been held captive for four months, until her father had found her and taken her home. She had witnessed horrible acts of violence at the hands of her captives, and it had taken years for her mind to recover.

Sarah and her husband, Thomas, were living in Denver with their children at the time. Travis was returning home with Mary, and they had stopped in Denver to switch trains. Travis had been sick when they arrived, and they had spent time at Sarah's home while he recovered. While there, Thomas and Sarah had helped Mary heal.

Mary later left Harris to attend school in Denver. She had returned home for a few years, after her mother died, to care for her youngest brothers and sister. Reid had been the youngest and had only been one year old when Mary began caring for him. Then, when Reid started school, Mary had followed Thomas's urging and gone to medical school in Chicago, at Thomas's alma mater.

She now worked at the hospital connected to the medical school and was teaching anatomy, focusing on the nervous system. She had assisted in a long study on the nerves and had taken the lead in the study when the director had suddenly died of a heart attack. Mary

<sup>1</sup> John 10:16.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 56:3a.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:28.

was now using the information gathered during that study to teach medical doctors the connection between the nervous system and the other organs of the body. Her specialty at the hospital was nerve injury recovery. She had never given the family any indication that she would return to Harris.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid and Chipeta visited Thomas and Sarah early the next morning. Chipeta received a warm welcome from Sarah, just as she had received years ago when they had first met. They shared breakfast, then rushed off to catch Cleve before he left for his office in town. At Cleve's home, they were received by Jenny's loving arms.

Cleve was the closest sibling by age to Mary. He had gone to Denver the same time Mary had, to attend school. He had also gone back East when he finished the university, to attend law school. He returned to Harris with a wife and children to set up his law practice. He was now the town's attorney and handled a large portion of the legal matters in the area. He had also been elected state representative for the district.

Cleve had been at school in Denver when Reid was born. When Cleve returned to Harris, Reid had been ten years old and timid. Reid kept his distance from Cleve, and Cleve had never tried to be friends. He was just too busy.

Cleve patted Reid affectionately on the shoulder. "You have a beauty there, Reid."

Just then Luke yelled from the door, "Is breakfast ready?"

As Luke entered, he saw Reid and Chipeta. Rushing to Reid, Luke gave his little brother a bear hug, picking his feet up off the floor in the process. Then turned with open arms to Chipeta. She stepped back, eyeing the big man with concern.

Luke laughed. "Okay, I won't give you a hug—yet. Hi, I'm Luke." And he stuck his hand out toward Chipeta.

Chipeta stepped forward slowly and stretched her hand toward Luke.

Luke took her hand and gently kissed it. "I promise, you will love me when you get to know me."

Luke was the outgoing brother. He was thirteen years older than Reid, but they had been close. Luke was a large man, tall and stout. He left for school in Denver when Reid was two years old and had returned when Reid was eight. They had bonded quickly, and Luke made a conscious effort to spend time with his little brother. Luke was now sheriff and was happy his brother was home.

The five sat at the table together. Cleve and Luke ate their breakfast while Reid enjoyed another cup of coffee. Jenny was up and down from the table as she served her husband and his brothers breakfast and as she ran after the children. Chipeta sat quietly beside her husband.

The meal was finished, and everyone still sat at the table visiting. Chipeta was warming up to them all. There was a knock on the door. Jenny answered to find the sheriff's deputy.

"Is the sheriff here?" he asked. Then the deputy heard Luke laughing in another room and pushed past Jenny. "Luke, there's a child missing out at the McCain farm. McCain's son said Douglas and Tom and that neighbor, John Hyams, and his boys were out looking all night. They've found no sign of him."

Luke stood up. "How old is the child?"

"It's the little one. He's maybe three, I think. The boy said he was outside chasing fireflies after dark and never came in. They went looking for him, and he had just disappeared."

"Reid," Luke said, turning to his little brother, "would you head home and ask Dad if he's up to the search? If he can track this boy, it'll save a lot of time."

The brother's father had been taught tracking as a youth, growing up in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia. Travis had been befriended by a Tutelo Indian when the Indian found him, as a small child, wondering along the edge of a flooded river looking for his drowned father. The Indian had taken Travis to his grandparent's house, and they had remained friends until the Indian's death.

After the Civil War, Travis had left the mountains and had ended up in Harris as United States deputy federal marshal. Later, he was hired as marshal and had retired seven years ago. He now lived with his daughter Naomi, a widow, and her young daughter, Ruth.

## CHAPTER 4



**R**eid and Travis were headed for the search party at the McCain farm, bringing the dog with them. Travis shook his head as they rode up. There were people everywhere. They could have destroyed any tracks that Travis might have been able to see.

Luke met his father, grabbing the bridle, then stepping to the side of the horse to assist his father to the ground if needed. Travis slid off the horse and reached down to scratch Bella on the rump. She had done well on the long trip to the farm.

Luke didn't like having to ask his father to do this. His father was too old to be out trampling in the fields and forests. But Luke knew his father was also the best chance they had at finding the boy quickly.

Luke explained to his father where the child had last been seen and the locations that had been searched during the night. He told his father that the child was barefoot.

Travis replied, telling Luke to keep the men behind him when the tracks were found. He didn't want anyone getting ahead of him and destroying any more signs of where the child might have gone.

Travis started walking the edge of the yard, searching for any sign of the child. The dog ran a circle around Travis, and Travis snapped his fingers and pointed to the ground. The dog was instantly at his side.

"Reid," Luke said, "stay with Dad, would you? Be there in case he needs help."

Reid nodded.

Luke went back to the other men, giving instructions. Travis could hear the child's father yelling at Luke. The child's father had expected the sheriff to bring a large number of men to help search the wooded area near their home. But Luke had not done that. He had only brought an old man and a kid. The father was mad, Travis could tell. Travis knew that Luke would try to reassure the father that the former marshal knew what he was doing. He was an excellent tracker. Travis turned away and went back to looking at the ground.

Travis made several circles around the barnyard, each time getting wider and wider. Luke returned to stand beside Reid, watching his own father work. There was nothing but boot prints. No sign a child had ever been there. He started tightening the next few circles and found a few partial prints.

Travis stopped to look around. The opening to the well shaft was low to the ground, maybe eighteen inches. There was nothing over the top except a couple of thin boards.

"Luke," Travis said loudly. "has anyone checked the well?" Travis pointed toward the shaft.

Several men ran in that direction. One left and returned with a lantern, which he tied to the end of a rope.

Travis turned back toward the barn, still looking at the ground. There was nothing but dirt. This area was walked over several times a day by multiple people. There were tracks on top of tracks. Travis stood separating them in his mind.

"They've searched the barn, haven't they?" Travis asked.

Reid was the only one who heard him and trotted over to ask Luke. Luke was watching the search at the well.

Travis entered the large barn and walked through it to the other side. Luke came around the side of the barn.

"Dad, some of the men are starting to wander into the trees again. I can't keep them here."

"Let them go. He went this way. See this." Travis pointed to a dirt print of two little toes that looked like a couple of ovals in the dirt. "The child doesn't weigh enough to leave much of a mark on this hard ground. We're gonna have to look for other signs."

Travis walked the area slowly and carefully. He was ignoring the men at the well who were now irritated that they had wasted time looking into the deep, dark hole. The child's father was organizing the group to head back into the trees again. Travis's attention moved into the open wheat field. Reid and Luke followed.

The sun rose further into the sky, and the day was getting hotter. Travis kept wandering first one way and then another. But Luke knew he wasn't just wandering. He was seeing something. He wasn't going in circles searching anymore. It wasn't a pattern, but it was getting further and further away from the buildings.

They were now a distance away from the barnyard, and Luke could tell most of the men in the search party had gone their own way. None had trusted the old man's ability or Luke's word that his father could find the child.

They walked for some time, Reid and Luke following their father. Bella started barking and ran toward the trees near the creek. She stopped, her nose at the base of a tree behind some weeds, the long hair on her tail swishing as the tail swayed gently back and forth.

Luke picked up speed and ran ahead of his father to find the muddy boy, backed up against a split tree trunk with a scared look on his face. His overalls were off and lying in a heap next to him. Luke could tell he had been crying.

Luke put his hands out to pick the child up, but the boy let out a few short screams, shaking his head and pulling away. Luke drew back. This child was scared and didn't want to be picked up. Luke wouldn't force him. He would wait for his father, who had a natural way with children.

As Travis and Reid arrived, Travis grabbed Luke's arm and used Luke to steady himself as he lowered himself to sit on the ground in front of the boy. He saw the boy's swollen foot stuck out beside him. That's why he hadn't come home; he had hurt his foot.

"Hi, I'm Travis. What's ya name?" Travis said.

The boy didn't respond. Travis kept talking to him gently as Bella pushed against Travis, almost knocking him over. The boy smiled.

"This is Bella." Travis pulled the dog to him, hugging her briefly. "She's big, ain't she? Did ya pet her?"

The boy nodded.

"Do ya want ta pet her 'gain?"

The boy nodded again.

Travis pulled the dog between them. "Go 'head, we can both pet her."

After a little more talk about the dog, Travis asked, "Are ya ready ta leave?"

The boy nodded, but Travis could tell he could cry again at any moment. If this boy was three years old, he had just turned three. He wasn't very big.

"What's ya name?" Travis asked again.

"Doey."

"Joey. Well, it's nice ta meet ya, Joey." Travis smiled at the boy.

The older man turned around to Luke and extended his hand, indicating for Luke to help him up. Then he put his hand out to Joey. Joey took it, and Travis reached down to pick the child up.

"This is Luke. An' that's Reid. I'm their father. Ya pa's has been lookin' far ya."

When Travis mentioned Joey's father, the boy began to whimper and buried his face in Travis's shoulder. Travis held the boy, trying to comfort him.

"Dad, look." Reid pulled one of the boy's legs out a little, revealing a few red stripes across the leg and an almost healed bruise that matched the stripes. He had been spanked across the legs hard enough to leave marks.

As they started slowly walking back toward the wheat field, Travis asked the boy why he had left the house in the dark. Luke caught up carrying the boy's overalls, which were dirty with creek water and still damp in spots. Travis kept talking to the boy.

Finally, the boy said, "Don' want 'pankin'."

"Whose gonna give ya a spankin'?" Travis asked.

"Pa. Pee my pan's."

Travis looked at the britches Luke held. He now understood. Joey had been spanked for wetting his pants, and then he had done

it again. He went to the creek to wash his overalls so he wouldn't get another spanking.

As they walked, the boy relaxed in Travis's arms. He had fallen asleep. Travis passed the child to Luke and pulled Joey's drawers down a little. There were more red marks and bruising on his butt. The child got spanked regularly. Travis shook his head slightly. This was more than a spanking for a child this age.

They continued walking slowly through the large field. It was past midday; Travis was tired. When he stopped to rest, Luke passed the sleeping child to Reid and offered an elbow to Travis. Luke's father shook his head. He didn't need help, just to rest.

The three men arrived at the farm and went straight to their horses. Luke helped his father on, placing the child in front of Travis on the saddle. Travis turned the horse and started toward town, Reid right behind him.

Luke walked toward the men standing on the other side of the yard. The men saw Travis riding off with the child, and the boy's father ran toward the departing men, yelling at them to stop.

Luke turned him around. "I want to have a talk with you." The sheriff took the man by the arm and escorted him into the house.

Travis and Reid rode straight through town and to the doctor's office. Reid jumped from his horse to get Thomas. Travis sat on his horse with the child. They were now talking about horses.

Bella had flopped onto her side on the porch. Her tongue was hanging onto the floor as a puddle of slobber formed beneath her mouth.

Reid returned with Thomas, and the doctor reached up for the boy. Travis told Joey that Thomas would help his hurt foot feel better. The doctor would also give him something to eat. Joey would stay with Thomas until the sheriff came for him.

Joey was happy now. As Thomas carried the boy into his office, Joey waved and happily told Travis, "Bye-bye." Travis waved and turned his horse to go home.

## CHAPTER 5



Sunday came, and Travis was still tired following the search for the child two days before. He wasn't use to walking for hours through fields anymore.

In his younger days, that was all he had done, walking the field behind the plow from sunup to sundown. When he had become deputy marshal, he still worked the fields, pushing himself harder to get more done in less time. He quit doing that when he started working as deputy full time. Luke had been eleven years old then. It was just about the same time Mary and Cleve had left for Denver. That was a long time ago.

Travis rode to the church with his feet hanging off the back of the wagon, his five-year-old granddaughter, Ruth, sitting beside him. The two women sat on the seat with Reid.

Cleve and his family were already there. Angus, Molly, Thomas, and Sarah arrived soon afterward with their children.

The women attached themselves to Chipeta as other families arrived. More women came to greet the small group that stood with Chipeta. A few women spoke a casual word of greeting to her, but no one seemed friendly. Other people said hello to those they knew, but most ignored Chipeta.

Some eyed her suspiciously as they walked past. A few gave the three women with Chipeta a scornful look and kept walking, saying nothing. Many of the women returned to their husbands, pointing and telling of the *woman* that stood with Sarah.

As the Britt extended family entered the church, people already seated whispered. The group separated to find seats. When Reid and Chipeta sat down, the family who sat in front of them moved away.

Brother Nick came to give Reid a greeting and gave a friendly welcome to Chipeta, patting her hand as he held it.

The service started, but there seemed to be an air of resentment in the room. Everyone felt it. The singing wasn't spirited like it usually was. The deacon's prayers were mundane and lifeless, void of the Spirit.

As was his custom, Brother Nick asked everyone to stand as he read scripture.

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.<sup>1</sup>

The preacher proceeded to give a powerful and moving sermon on who would be in heaven. Near the end of his sermon, he asked the question, "If you can't stand with every person that loves the Lord here on earth, why would you expect God to allow you to stand with them in heaven?"

Then, as he was walking the center aisle to the exit door to greet the people as they left the church, he prayed an authoritative prayer asking forgiveness for the sins of his congregation, the sins of the Lord's people, and the sins of the town. He prayed all people would be united through Christ and not show favoritism, or hatred, or unforgiveness toward others, especially other children of God.

Sarah stopped to talk to Reid and Chipeta as others exited the church. Travis knew what she was doing. She was giving others time to leave so that Chipeta didn't have to look into their faces. By the time Sarah finished telling Chipeta her story, the church was empty. Brother Nick stood at the door with a smile, waiting to greet the four remaining parishioners.

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 7:9.

That afternoon Travis took his usual nap. He had begun taking naps when he was a deputy marshal. Late nights at the saloons and early morning rounds left little time to sleep at night. Travis had continued this habit after he retired.

Reid needed to talk with his father. He now paced the porch impatiently as he waited. Then, finding his wife napping too, Reid decided to walk to the old home place.

He cut through the overgrown path in the trees, and it seemed to take no time to walk the short distance. Reid looked at what was left of the burned house and barn. The chicken coop and smokehouse were gone. Some of the fences were still standing. Weeds had taken over everything, and saplings were poking through the burned-out floor of the house. Reid laughed. The privy hadn't been touched by the fire.

Reid remembered how hot and consuming the fire had been that night as it took everything. He thought about the fear he had for his father's safety.

One of the gunmen that started the fire had challenged his aging father to a gunfight as everything burned around them. Reid remembered seeing his dad fall to the ground. But the gunman had gone down too.

Reid thought about how frightened he had been as he struggled, with a bullet in his own thigh and unable to stand, to get back to his father who was lying on the ground. That was the first time he had ever seen his father show pain. It was the only time he had seen his father show pain.

Reid smiled. He had thought his father had been shot, but he hadn't. He had thrown himself to the ground to avoid the other man's bullet and had hurt his already painful shoulder. But he hadn't been shot.

His father's shoulder had been injured during the Civil War, and there had been continuing pain since then. The pain grew more severe as the years passed, until Thomas had examined it and offered treatment. The treatment was ongoing. The pain would return if the treatment stopped.

God had protected his father that night. He had emerged victorious. His father had called it a miracle from God. He had managed to outgun the younger man even with a bum shoulder. There was no doubt in Travis's mind that God had intervened.

Now Reid prayed that God would intervene on his behalf and keep him safe through what was to come.

When Reid returned home, he found Travis sitting on the back porch. Reid learned fast that the back porch was his father's favorite spot at the new house. This made sense, since his favorite spot at the old house had been the front porch. His father loved the outdoors.

"Dad, I've got to go to Topeka about a job tomorrow. I don't know how long I'll be gone. I'm going to leave Chipeta here, if that's okay. If she went, she would just be sitting in the hotel room by herself. She would be better off here with the family," Reid explained to his father.

"What kind a job are ya lookin' at?" Travis asked.

"Well, I've already got the job," Reid said, softening his voice to almost a whisper. "This is kind of an orientation, maybe some training with it. I agreed to the job several weeks before school was finished, before I knew about Chipeta." Reid hesitated. "I'm not supposed to talk about it with anyone, but I'm telling you and trust you won't tell anyone else. No one. Not Chipeta. Not Luke."

Reid's father looked concerned. "What kind a job is this?"

"It's with the Department of Justice, and that's all I'm going to say. Pray for me, Dad. I'll be going to Topeka a lot, and Chipeta can't come with me. I know she won't like that, but there's nothing I can do. It will be safer for her here. And she can't know about this. I'm going to tell her I'm working for Doyle and Heathfield, and I have to travel to take care of their business."

"Ya will be lyin' ta her," Travis said. "That's not a good way ta start a marriage."

"I know. But she can't know about this. I agreed on the terms of the job before I knew she was pregnant, before God and I talked about the marriage. I talked to God about this job too. This is important work. Somebody's got to do it, and well, I wasn't married when I agreed. Oh, Dad." Reid stopped and leaned back in the chair.

He put his arms over his shoulders, locking his fingers behind his head, squeezing his head with his arms, his eyes shut. "I'm telling you too much. You can't even let Cleve or Luke know." Reid dropped his arms, looking at Travis. "Please, Dad. I can't talk about it. Just pray for me and take care of Chipeta."

"It's dangerous, isn't it?" Travis asked.

Reid nodded. "Very dangerous."

Travis got up, and Reid stood too. Travis turned to hug his son, holding him as he started praying. "The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."<sup>1</sup>

Travis continued to hold his youngest son and continued praying until five-year-old Ruth came running through the house yelling for her grandfather, "We're home, Grandpa."

Travis quickly wiped his eyes and sat down. He grabbed his granddaughter, took her into his lap, and hugged her. He scraped his beard across her face making her giggle.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 121:7-8.

## CHAPTER 6



One week turned into two, and two weeks turned into four. There was no word from Reid.

Chipeta left the house only when Travis or Naomi was with her. She had no place to go anyway.

Reid had told her to hold tight to his father. His father was a godly man and would take care of anything Chipeta needed. Right now all Chipeta needed was Reid.

She didn't understand why he wasn't writing to her, why he was staying gone so long. He had said he would only be gone a week, two at the most. Travis didn't try to make excuses for Reid. He just kept telling Chipeta to be patient and pray for his safe return.

She would often sit with Travis on the back porch, and Chipeta watched her father-in-law. There would be times it seemed his mind would leave him and he would sit in his chair looking to the trees with his mouth moving slightly. But there would be no sound. If he was doing this and someone talked to him, it seemed he wouldn't hear them until they would touch him. Then he would jump slightly and laugh, surprised by the touch.

She didn't understand that he was praying.

He would read his Bible but stop often to rest his eyes. Sometimes, when he did this, he would close his Bible and hug it to his chest. She didn't realize it, but he was praying then too.

Her father-in-law was a caring and affectionate man. He hugged his grandchildren every time he saw them, even the older boys. None of them seemed to mind. He hugged all the women in the family, and the men would sometimes get a hug too. Chipeta wasn't used to

this. Her family was close, but they weren't affectionate. She liked her husband's family, though, even if she didn't always understand why they did what they did.

Papa would often sing softly to himself as he worked or when he sat on the back porch. The singing was beautiful. His voice was amazing for such an old man, and the songs were comforting. When she listened to the words he sang, she realized he was celebrating his God. They were nothing like the singing at the tribal celebrations on the reservation. But they were songs to his God, like her people's songs were a celebration of their god.

Chipeta had started calling her husband's father Papa, like Thomas and Sarah did. She didn't know why, but it just seemed to fit him. And he seemed to like it when she called him that.

Papa was an old man, much older than her own father. Her father was closer to Thomas's age, no, maybe Cleve's. She wasn't sure. But Papa received the respect due him for his age, not just from his family but from almost everyone in town.

Papa's son Luke and the medicine man, Thomas, would both visit Papa often. They both seemed more concerned about him than his other children. Luke would show up a couple of times a week and do nothing but sit on the porch with his father and rock.

Thomas came by once, sometimes twice a day. They would disappear into the bedroom together and stay a short time, then Thomas would leave. But there were also days she knew Travis visited the doctor at his office. Conversation was friendly and casual when Thomas was there. But it happened so often. Chipeta wondered if there was something wrong with her husband's father. The others seemed to know about these visits, and they didn't seem to be concerned. It was strange.

She wanted to get to know her husband's family better.

When Chipeta would sit next to Papa on the back porch, he would often reach over and take her hand. He would close his eyes, like he often did, and just rock gently and hold her hand. His touch was comforting.

She had felt the scars on his left hand and had seen the hand swell to the point he couldn't move it. His fingers were gnarled and

twisted. He had never spoken of it or indicated that it was painful. She didn't know why it didn't bother him.

Chipeta thought he would make a good addition to the Ute people too.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid returned home excited about the job he had gotten with a prestigious law firm based out of Topeka. The firm had branch offices all over the state and into Missouri, Oklahoma, and Nebraska. He told his family it was the job of a lifetime. Cleve agreed; it was a great opportunity for a young lawyer just starting out.

That night Reid apologized to Chipeta for not contacting her during his time away. He told her that he was assisting one of the top lawyers and had to stay with the man constantly. He had no time to himself. He explained that this would be his job until he gained enough experience and the firm was ready to let him handle business himself. He told her this job would mean he traveled with this senior partner constantly. This part of the job would only last about a year or so. After that, they could be together much more and he wouldn't have to travel as much.

Chipeta didn't like this, but she understood and agreed.

For the next few months Reid stayed close to home. He made three short trips to Topeka and returned with papers to work on at home. He spent most of his days at Cleve's office, studying the law books and researching cases for his boss.

Chipeta's pregnancy was beginning to show. Jenny brought her the cradle that Travis had made for his first grandchild born in Harris.

Little Ruth was looking forward to having a baby to play with. Sometimes Ruth would stay with Chipeta when Naomi was away from home. Sometimes Ruth would stay with Jenny and her children. Naomi's daughter would start school in the fall.

Chipeta had begun doing most of Naomi's chores at the house, and Naomi was spending more time working at Thomas's medical clinic.

## CHAPTER 7



Christmas was upon them, and Chipeta enjoyed the festivities with the large family. She had never celebrated the birth of Jesus. There had been stories and songs at school and at the reservation mission, and she had been invited to a few meals at the Stewart's home in Denver during the Christmas season. That was all she knew of Christian celebrations. This was the first time she had experienced the joy and love of family sharing gifts, meals, and stories.

Sitting in the Stewart's large house on Christmas day, Travis had talked about Christmas growing up with the grandparents that raised him on "my mountain," he called it. It made Chipeta feel closer to him, knowing he had been raised in the mountains like she had been. Listening to him talk, he must not have had much more growing up than she had on the reservation. But he talked joyfully and was thankful for the little he did have.

She did have her parents growing up, until she left for boarding school at age eight. He didn't have his parents, and he never attended school. But he had still been happy. She realized she had a lot to learn about being content with what she had and about being a Christian. He was probably the man to teach her.

She started thinking of her life here, compared to what she had at the reservation. She was certainly happier here. Even if she didn't have any friends in town, she had lots of friends within her husband's family. And she didn't have to go to a mission to hear about Jesus. Her new family talked openly about him.

Most evenings Papa would read the Scripture to everyone at their house after supper. If Luke was there in the evenings, he would

read the Scripture instead of his father. Sometimes, when Luke wasn't there, Papa would say he was tired and would ask Reid to take the Bible. Papa would close his eyes and listen. He always had a smile on his face.

Just a few nights ago Papa had read about contentment from the book of First Timothy. Chipeta was impressed by what he read.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires.<sup>1</sup>

Chipeta smiled. Papa and Naomi didn't have much, but they seemed happy. Chipeta knew that Naomi's husband had died in an accident five years earlier. Yet she seemed content to live quietly with her daughter and her father.

The other members of the family seemed to have plenty of money and lived in large houses. There was plenty of food, and the horses were well cared for. Some of the men even had automobiles, something rare in this area. But the family grew their own food and killed their own game. And they didn't spend their money foolishly. They were generous to others.

The night Papa had read from First Timothy Chipeta had decided to be happy, whatever her circumstances. She turned her attention back to the others and their stories.

Thomas was talking of the finery in the celebrations in St. Louis where he grew up. He said he didn't miss that at all. He was much happier with his wife and children and the loving people he now shared his life with.

Jenny told of Christmas with her family in Cincinnati, and Luke spoke lovingly about the last Christmas their mother had been alive.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 6:6-9a.

She and Reid had never talked about his mother. Chipeta never realized Reid's mother had died when he was just a baby. She didn't know he also had a sister that had died along with his mother. Papa had a sad sort of happy look on his face as Luke spoke. Chipeta wondered if he still missed his wife.

Then Sarah talked of the one Christmas that she spent alone with her great-grandfather. Papa had been away at war, and her mother and brothers had died. It was the first Christmas she was blind. It seemed to bring a somber mood to the room. Even the children who sat listening remained quiet.

Then she said, "But it was just a few months before Papa came home." And she rose from her seat and went to hug her father. "That was the happiest day of my life." And turning toward Thomas, she added, "Sorry, love, but it was." Everyone laughed as Thomas made the saddest face imaginable, then his face broke into a big smile.

Chipeta smiled too. She was learning a lot about the family tonight. She didn't know that Sarah had a different mother, or that Papa had lost two wives, or that he had also lost two sons along with the daughter Luke spoke of earlier.

As the night went on, Cleve said something about his "first father" and Luke said something about the Christmas Mary and Papa had not been with them.

Chipeta knew she had a lot to learn about this family.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid was almost asleep that evening, lying in bed next to Chipeta. She broke the dark silence and asked Reid about things said at the family gathering. Reid had never talked about his family, but then she had never talked about her family either. Neither of them was a talker. They could both go for hours without saying a word and be happy. But if they were going to learn anything about each other, if she was going to be a part of this family, she needed to know.

Chipeta said, "Reid, what happened to Sarah? Why is she blind?"

Reid rolled over to look at his wife in the dark. "Her home was attacked by deserters during the war. They burned the house, and she was caught in the basement. She was there for two days before Dad's grandfather found her and dug her out. When she recovered from her injuries, she was blind."

"Oh, poor thing. How old was she?"

Reid sighed. "I think about nine or ten."

Chipeta was quiet for a minute then asked, "What happened to Papa's hand?"

"He was in a fight with a guy that was trying to use a whip on him. This guy was cruel. He had some kind of metal stuck in the whip, and when Dad grabbed the whip to stop it from hitting him, the metal cut the palm of his hand."

"Has it looked like that since it happened?"

"No. It healed and was okay for years. As Dad started getting older, it started doing something funny. Thomas says it's the result of the muscle weakening and pulling on the cartilage between the bones. I don't know, something like that. I don't understand it. But there's nothing can be done about it."

"So what do Papa and Thomas do in the bedroom every day?" she asked.

Reid laughed softly. "Dad has a bad shoulder. Thomas takes care of it so it doesn't hurt. You're full of questions tonight, aren't you?"

"And the only way for me to get the answers is for you to tell me," she said playfully.

"Well, I won't be able to give you many answers. It's hard for me to keep up with everything that's gone on in the family. I'm the youngest. Everything happened before I came along. But there was this man in town a few years ago, Daniel Elshout. He works for Cleve now at his office in Topeka. He wrote a book about Dad. I don't have a copy, but I'm sure Sarah does. Maybe Cleve has one too. Why don't you ask to borrow one of them? It's a good read. Makes Dad out to be this fabulous hero here in town, across the state really. I guess he was, but he was just Dad to me. I heard this government

guy once in Denver say Dad was 'one of the great men of the Justice Department.'"

Oh no, Reid wasn't paying attention. He had just said too much. He had mentioned the Justice Department. He hoped Chipeta wouldn't remember that comment later.

Reid thought he needed to talk more now. He needed to give her something else to think about. He didn't need to stop talking, leaving his last words "Justice Department" on her mind. But now he couldn't think of anything else to say.

His wife rolled over and put an arm around him. "I'll do that."

The conversation was over, but now Reid couldn't sleep. He lay awake thinking how close he had come to spilling everything to Chipeta. If he had told her about the agent at school, she would have asked what the man wanted.

The Department of Justice had wanted a single man, not one tied down by a family. They didn't want someone who would be thinking of his wife and children. If he died doing this job, it would leave them alone, with no one to care for them. The people at the Department of Justice knew a single man would be bolder in his actions, less caring of the consequences.

Reid would have to watch what he said closely. He would have to be more careful on the job too. He didn't need to say anything about Chipeta or anyone else in his family. He didn't want anyone he worked with to know about Chipeta.

Reid also didn't want Chipeta to know his real job. She didn't need to worry about him. She had to care for herself and the child while he was gone. She was an Indian living in the back country of Kansas, among white people. Many still held hard feelings against Indians. She had enough to worry about.

Chipeta lay in Reid's arms until he was sure she was asleep, then he slipped out of bed, grabbed a blanket, and went to the porch to pray.

Reid understood the danger of this information getting out. If the wrong person found out he was connected to the Department of Justice, not only would his mission within the department be in danger, he would bring that danger home. His family, Chipeta, the

baby, and his father, would be in danger. Naomi, Ruth, everyone in the house would suffer. Sarah, Cleve, and Angus all lived close too. Everyone knew they were related.

They had already experienced one attack on the family—four years ago, when their home had been burned. Reid didn't want that to happen again.

He felt sick thinking about what could happen. "Father, protect my family. Protect my Chipeta and the baby, oh, Lord, and Dad and everyone else."

Reid was overwhelmed by the thought that the people in his family could get hurt. He prayed long into the night, asking God for protection again and again. He asked for understanding and patience from his wife.

He stopped when he remembered Psalm 46:1, "*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*" Yes. There would be trouble. Then Reid prayed he would remain strong through the trials and do his job well.

He prayed, "Keep me safe, Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent, who devise ways to trip my feet."<sup>1</sup>

If everything went according to plan, he would infiltrate a human trafficking pipeline across the state and maybe the country. He would be able to track the pipeline back to its source, to its origin and the men that operated this ghastly group of murderous and enslaving thugs.

It was a bold mission. One that had been in the planning stages for years, waiting on the right person to take the role that he was stepping into.

---

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 140:4.

## CHAPTER 8



Just after Christmas Reid left for Topeka. He told Chipeta he would be gone a while, giving no specific time, and told her not to worry. He told her they were involved in what would be a long and difficult case being tried in a federal court just over the Missouri line. He would be there until the trial ended and might have to go straight to another trial, depending on how long this one took.

He hoped he would be back in time for the birth of their child, but this absence could not be avoided. He told her to make sure his dad contacted him if he wasn't back in time. Chipeta accepted these circumstances like any good Indian wife would do and followed instructions.

Reid knew this was just a scouting trip. He was to make contact with another agent who was also undercover. Reid was to be introduced to some of the lower level members of the criminal's local organization.

Reid didn't have the cruel demeanor of most of the other gang members, and he could only pretend so much. So he was to be introduced and the leader of the local organization would be encouraged to hire him only as a messenger. This part of his assignment was only supposed to last a few weeks. He should be able to be home for the birth of his child before he left on the next portion of his mission.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chipeta now stayed to herself. She didn't want company, didn't want anyone to see her grief caused by Reid's absence. Travis tried to

comfort her and keep her company, but it just made her miss Reid more.

\*\*\*\*\*

The sheriff walked past Chipeta in the house and had stopped to kiss her on the cheek. Then he continued through the house and found his father on the back porch, just where he thought the old man would be. Bella was lying against the wall beside the door.

Luke saw that his dad had his coat on, bundled against the cold. He intended to be out here a while. Luke closed the door to keep the warmth in the house and sat down next to his father. The sheriff closed his eyes and leaned back in the rocker, his head over the top of the chair looking up to the ceiling, saying nothing.

Travis looked at his son a moment, then turned back to continue looking at the trees. It was several minutes before anyone spoke.

“Found a young woman in the pond at the Odom farm. She’s been dead a long time. Can’t tell who she is, but there haven’t been any reports of missing girls around here,” Luke said. “I’ve never seen anything like this. I see no way to identify her.” Luke continued to rock with his eyes closed.

Luke’s father looked at him again. Then he reached over and patted Luke on the arm a few times and drew his own hand back.

“It’s rough when somethin’ like that happens. Is the town gonna bury her?”

Bella got up and lumbered around the porch a moment, then came to Luke and sat beside him. She laid her chin on his leg and looked at him with sad eyes. Luke looked down at her and gave a soft chuckle as he put his hand on her head.

“Yeah, they’ll bury her. She was murdered. Someone tied a sack of rocks to her to make her sink. Odom drained the pond, that’s when he found her.”

They continued to sit and rock in silence.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid walked through the double doors of one of the brothels in Dodge City. He had met with the marshal on the road outside of town, just as he had been instructed to do. His “trainer” would make contact with him. All he had to do now was observe and wait.

Reid ordered a beer and sat at the only empty table there was. He took a sip. Ugh! That was awful. How did people drink this stuff? He continued to sit and watch, taking a sip every so often.

Scripture came to his mind. “*See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness—indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.*”<sup>1</sup>

Yes, the people in here were arrogant. The liquor made them bold and sure of themselves. These people were truly captive to their selfish desires.

He needed to blend in. He had to at least look like he was drinking. Reid looked at a sign on the wall: “*The Carrying of Firearms Strictly Prohibited.*” Reid laughed. The majority of the men in this room had at least one gun. Some had two. He had his pistol and a rifle.

The pistol that hung on his hip was uncomfortable. He had always known how to use one. His father had taught him when he was very young. Until he started practicing with the pistol last summer, he hadn’t used one since before college, except to teach Sarah’s daughter Chloe how to shoot. He’d never worn one on a regular basis and wasn’t accustomed to it.

He was a natural with the pistol, though, like his brother Luke. Fast as well as accurate. But the rifle he carried would be his preferred weapon. He looked the cowboy type, so the gun at his side and the rifle in his hand fit his persona well. He hoped he would be able to keep his weapons as he developed his cover within the organization.

One of the scantily-dressed girls walked up behind him and ran her hand across his shoulders. “Well, you’re a fresh one.” She got right in his face. “Ever been here before? Want me to show you around?”

<sup>1</sup> Habakkuk 2:4–5.

Reid sat frozen. "Just waiting for someone."

"That could be me. I've been waiting too."

"Sorry, not interested," he replied.

The girl turned to eye a rough-looking man standing near the bar. She shrugged her shoulders, and the man gave her a stern look. Reid saw him nod. The girl turned back to Reid.

This was Reid's introduction to the control the men in the organization had over the girls. Reid had read about this behavior.

The girls were pushed to make contact with their "clients." The girls were not allowed to take no for an answer. If they did, they would probably be punished. The girls had to continue to push the men until drinks were bought and their services paid for.

"I'm Rose. What's your name, sweetie?" She twirled a curl in his hair.

He kept his eyes on the table. "Red Crowder."

"Red?" She laughed. "There's nothing red about your hair."

"There was when I was a baby." Red smiled back at her.

She slipped into his lap and picked up his beer, drinking almost half. Reid smiled. This was the trick. He could order beers and get other people to drink them. That's how he could get past drinking them himself.

They sat flirting, and Red ordered more beer and then a whiskey. Prohibition was in effect statewide in Kansas. It had been most of Reid's life. But these "private clubs" sold the illegal stuff, bootlegged from across the state line. He was supposed to ignore this and concentrate on finding out about the girls that were being held and used against their will. He wasn't supposed to intervene. He was just supposed to observe and remember.

The girl with him was acting drunk. Reid didn't know if she was or if she was putting on a show. He needed to act too. She picked up a half empty glass and flung herself into Red's lap, spilling the drink all over his shirt and pants. He smiled and swayed with her movement. Leaning his head over her neck, he slid out of his chair onto the floor, laughing.

## CHAPTER 9



Chipeta opened the tin canister and discovered there was no flour. She had not realized the can was empty.

Yes, she did. Naomi had made biscuits that morning and had told Chipeta she had used the last of the flour. Chipeta had forgotten.

She wished she had remembered sooner. Papa had left a short time ago headed to the gunsmith's shop. He could have gotten flour in town and brought it back with him. She would change her plans and do without it today.

But the more she thought about it, the more determined she became. She would not let the attitude of the people in town stop her from getting what she needed at the store. She could deal with their attitude. Mr. Montgomery was a nice man. He had never said anything ugly to her or indicated that he would not serve her, even though in the past she had always had one of the Britts with her when she went to his store. Papa had told Mr. Montgomery that she would be coming in and anything she needed was to be put on his account. She grabbed her wrap and moved to the door.

It was cold outside and the wind was blowing hard. She thought briefly about borrowing what she needed from Jenny or Sarah, but she was now even more determined to take care of her family herself. She didn't need to rely on others to help. It wouldn't take that long to walk to town if she cut across the open field. But her expanding belly would slow her down some. She set her sights on town; her pregnancy didn't matter. It was a short walk. If she was at the reservation, she would walk much further than this just for water.

She pulled the heavy wrap around her head, crisscrossed it over her stomach, and began walking. As she passed the sheriff's office, she met Luke coming out the door.

"Good morning, sister of mine," the sheriff said happily.

"Morning, Luke," Chipeta replied with a smile. Yes, she had grown to love Luke, just like he said she would when they had first met.

"Where are you headed?" he asked.

"Mitchem's store. I need flour."

"I'll walk with you, if that's okay," Luke said.

"Sure, I'd like the company," she replied. "Luke, I've wondered. Why is Mitchem's called Mitchem's when the owner is Mr. Montgomery?"

Luke laughed. "Yeah, that's strange, isn't it? Mr. and Mrs. Mitchem used to own it, but they died years ago. Cecil Montgomery worked for the Mitchems for years before they both died. The Mitchems only had one son, but he was never interested in the place. He left town years ago. Their son is the one who accidentally shot Dad. You know, the story in the book."

"Oh. Was Papa really as forgiving as the book made him out to be?" Chipeta asked.

"Probably, knowing Dad. I was only five when it happened. I don't remember much. I do remember visiting Dad at the clinic while he was recovering. I didn't realize it at the time, but Mary fussed at me later. Apparently, I jumped on Dad's lap and hurt him some. But he didn't get on to me. He just took the pain and forgave me then and there. So, yeah, he probably forgave Jon Mitchem just as easily. Dad always had a soft spot in his heart for that guy. Here we are." Luke opened the door to the mercantile and followed Chipeta in.

Chipeta made her purchase while Luke made small talk with the owner, then he picked up the small sack and walked with Chipeta a few blocks.

"I'm headed to the judge's office, so I'll give you this." Luke handed the sack to Chipeta. "What are you making? Do I need to come sample it tonight?"

She laughed. "Of course. You can if you want to. I'm making dumplings."

Luke kissed her on the cheek and turned with, "I'll be there late. After supper. Save me some."

Chipeta really liked Luke. She understood why he was her husband's favorite brother. They were so different. Where one was talkative, the other was soft spoken. One was people oriented; the other didn't care if there was anyone around. One was big and outgoing; the other, small and quiet.

But they also had their similarities. Both were fair-minded. Both interested in the law. Both strong-willed, determined, and hardheaded. When either of them focused on a project, that was all they did. Both were patient with others, but neither would allow a prolonged interruption from anyone. Both loved Jesus, and they both demanded justice. They complimented each other well.

Chipeta knew that Luke was thirteen years older than Reid, and she had thought it strange that they were so close. Luke had left for school in Denver when Reid was only two. He had returned when Reid was eight years old and had been there when Reid had broken his arm. They bonded that day.

Her brother-in-law had told her the story. Luke had been back from Denver less than a week. He had been repairing the fence behind the barn. Reid had come to him, timid and talking so softly Luke had to ask him three times what was wrong before Reid spoke loud enough for Luke to hear him say, "I fell on my arm."

Reid hadn't said it hurt, but when Luke touched it, Reid had squeezed his eyes together, and Luke knew it did. Luke also knew the arm was broken.

There was no doctor in town, and Luke hadn't known what to do. Their father had been out of town and due back the next day. So Luke bandaged the arm the best he knew how and stayed with Reid until their father returned and could set the arm.

That was also the day Luke realized Angus and Naomi weren't paying any attention to their younger brother. Neither knew about the injury until Luke told them. Even when they saw Reid bandaged

and sitting in their father's chair on the porch, they still weren't interested and didn't ask what happened.

Luke had gone in the bedroom to check on Reid that night and had found him running a fever. Luke had been concerned, again not knowing what to do. So he had set up the rest of the night holding Reid beside him on the sofa as the boy slept.

The next day Luke held Reid as his father pulled on the arm to set the bone. Reid had buried his face in his big brother's shoulder as Luke held to him tightly. But Reid never made a sound.

After that, Reid had come to Luke when he needed something, even if it was just attention. Reid had followed Luke around as Luke worked on the farm, and Luke had taught him how to repair the plow. They had fixed fence together and worked the small field together. When Luke went into town, Reid would go with him, riding behind his older brother on the horse.

Then Luke was elected sheriff and moved to town when Reid was ten. Reid had asked him not to go. Luke had explained to his little brother that he now had a job to do and would be in town. Reid could see him every day before and after school. But that hadn't happened. Luke would get busy, and he wouldn't be in the office when Reid stopped by.

So Luke had made a conscious effort to spend time with Reid, knowing his brother needed companionship. The boy didn't have a mother, and his fifteen-year-old sister Naomi seemed distant toward him. Angus was sixteen and couldn't be bothered by a little brother he considered a pest.

Their dad spent time with Reid when he was in town, but he was gone often in his duties as federal marshal. It was a dangerous period of time, and the marshal service was being called upon often to track down and either kill or capture outlaws that were murdering innocent people and robbing trains and banks. And their father had been one of the best.

Luke had tried to spend at least one afternoon with Reid every week. But as Reid got older, he had more and more chores put on him. Then, as Angus and Naomi left for school in Denver, Reid picked up their chores at home too. Suddenly Reid didn't have time

to spend with Luke in town, so when Luke could, he would go to the farm and help Reid with the chores. But that didn't happen as often as Luke would have liked either.

Reid had always been quiet and never demanded attention; he would just show up and hang around. But as Reid entered his final years of school, he stayed to himself more. He concentrated on his work at home and his studies. And since there was no one else at home, he spent a lot of time with his aging father who retired two years before Reid left for the university in Denver.

Now, as Chipeta walked home, her thoughts were of her husband. He hadn't been gone long, but it would probably be a long time before she saw him again.

Chipeta began to question herself. *Why couldn't her husband take just a few minutes every couple of days to drop her a note to tell her where he was?*

Chipeta was mindlessly walking as she thought of Reid. She hadn't turned into the field and had continued to walk beside the ruts in the road. The wrap had fallen from her head, revealing her long black hair braided down her back.

Papa had told her that he liked her hair that way. That was how his first wife had worn her hair. And his wife's hair had been as black as Chipeta's.

Two young men on horses came up behind her. One of them veered to the side before she saw them. They were now on each side of her.

"Look, it's a Injun."

"She can be my squaw." And the other man pushed his horse into Chipeta, causing her to stumble and fall against the other horse.

The second man pushed his horse into her also, and she stumbled further, this time hitting the ground beneath the first horse. The horse's hoof brushed her hip as it stepped over her, knocking her further to the ground.

"Please, leave me alone," she said as she picked herself up, still holding the flour.

"You cooking something?" The man was turning his horse back toward her.

She backed up a few steps and again said, "Please. Leave me alone."

"She talks good for a squaw," the first man told his companion. "I could use a woman to take care of me."

"I'm married," she said. "Please."

One of the horses came close, and the man put a foot out and pushed Chipeta to the ground again. This time she went down hard, and the flour sack flew from her hands, busting open on the ground.

She got up and started to run, but the horses were on her quickly, and one of the men pushed her in the back as he rode past. She fell forward hitting the ground hard. It knocked the breath out of her, and she lay on the ground a moment, then tried to get up. The horses were on top of her, and again, one of the men put his boot on her shoulder and pushed her down. She rolled over, and the wrap fell from her, exposing her protruding belly.

One of the men was off his horse. He grabbed her to make her stand, but she didn't have the strength. He held her up, and her weight fell toward him. He slapped her across the face, then shoved her sharply, and she hit the ground roughly again.

"Dirty stinking Injun," he said as he got on his horse and rode off. The other man followed.

Chipeta now lay on the ground, trying to catch her breath, trying to recover from the brutal attack she had just experienced for the second time.

She tried to get up but had trouble standing straight and stumbled a few steps. Then she stopped. Her shoulder ached, her hip hurt, her face stung, and her stomach cramped. She grasped her belly and started moving slowly toward her families' homes. Then she felt moisture running down her legs.

She stopped, knowing what was happening, and a twinge of panic set in. It was too early. This didn't need to happen for a few more weeks.

She changed directions slightly, now heading the short distance to the medical clinic.

She was in real pain when she reached the steps of Thomas's clinic. She tried, but she couldn't make it up the steps and collapsed at the bottom.

"Thomas," she tried to yell but didn't have the breath. "Naomi."

She lay on the steps, still trying to get their attention. "Thomas. Thomas."

She must have been loud enough because Thomas stepped out the door and stopped. "Chipeta!" he whispered and jumped down the steps, going to his knees beside her.

"Naomi!" he yelled, "Naomi, come here."

Together Thomas and Naomi helped Chipeta inside and began caring for her.

Naomi called the sheriff's office on the telephone. The deputy found Luke at the courthouse and Travis at the gunsmith's shop. The two arrived at the clinic together.

\*\*\*\*\*

Hours passed as Luke and Travis sat at the clinic praying. They had both seen the busted flour sack and Chipeta's wrap on the road. Luke had stopped to pick the wrap up.

Finally, Luke spoke. "Dad, can you follow the horse's tracks out there on the road?"

"Probably. But it's more important that I be here with Chipeta right now. I don't wanna leave. Luke, you know how to do it. You don't need me."

"Yeah, I can," Luke conceded. Then he asked, "Do you know how to get in touch with Reid?"

Travis didn't answer.

Luke asked again, "Dad, do you know where to find Reid?"

"No."

"Well, I can send a message to the law firm. They ought to be able to get in touch with that lawyer he's with."

Travis got up and walked to the window, looking out. "No, it won't do any good," Travis said as he turned back into the room, looking to the door that separated him from his daughter-in-law.

“Why? Why wouldn’t he be able to tell Reid what happened?”

Travis looked at his son a moment, then softly said, “Because Reid don’ work far that law firm. He works far the Department a Justice. From what he told me, he must be doin’ undercover work. It’s too dangerous ta try ta contact him. We could get him killed.”

Luke looked shocked. “Oh, Jesus. Help him.”

## CHAPTER 10



Thomas came into the outer office several hours later. He looked at Travis and shook his head, explaining that the baby never had a chance. It was too small and wasn’t breathing when it was born. Nothing Thomas tried helped. Chipeta had bled more than she should have, and nothing he tried had helped her either. The bleeding had finally slowed on its own. He wasn’t sure if she would survive. They would just have to wait and pray.

Word spread quickly around town. Few people liked the Indian wife of Travis’s youngest son, but most were shocked when they heard about the attack. While they didn’t want the Indian in their town, they also didn’t want her harmed.

Cleve had been in court and hadn’t heard the gossip. Luke was waiting for him when he returned to his office.

Cleve asked, “Did you get in touch with Reid?”

“No. Dad said there was no way to get in touch with him.”

But Cleve knew John Doyle personally, so when Luke left the office, Cleve sent a telegram to Doyle.

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke decided it was time to get the men that had attacked Chipeta. He looked at the road where Chipeta was attacked and didn’t see anything unusual in the hoofprints, nothing that would help him distinguish these horses from others. The tracks were beginning to fade, blown by the wind where there was dust. It had been hours since the attackers rode through this area.

Luke didn't see a sign of anyone else on the road after them. Luke followed the tracks directly onto Wayne Averett's ranch land.

As Luke arrived at the ranch house, the foreman, a man named Conner, came to greet him.

"Afternoon, Sheriff," Conner began. "What brings you out this way?"

Luke was in no mood for pleasantries. "Did you have some men in town this morning?"

"Yeah. AJ and that buddy of his. What did they do?"

"Where are they now?" the sheriff asked, ignoring Conner's question.

"I sent them out to fix fences on grazing land to the south." The foreman asked again, "What did they do?"

"A pregnant woman was attacked on the road outside town. I followed the tracks here." Luke's face was hard. His anger had been growing since he stepped into the saddle back at Thomas's clinic. The more he thought about Chipeta and what had happened to her, the angrier he became. So far, he had been able to control it.

Conner looked at him suspiciously. "Did she say it was my guys?"

"No, she's not saying anything. She may never be able to tell us. The doctor doesn't know if she'll survive and the baby didn't live."

Conner was shocked that two of his boys could have done this. He looked at Luke for a moment, then said, "Let me get my horse."

\*\*\*\*\*

The two found the cowboys about an hour later. AJ saw them coming and recognized the sheriff from a distance.

"That squaw squealed on us," he said as he pointed his friend toward the riders.

"Nah. She wouldn't have known who we were."

AJ took his work gloves off and checked the position on his pistol.

Conner spoke as the two got closer. "AJ, Walt, did you mess with a woman on the road this morning?"

AJ spoke arrogantly, "She was just a squaw walking home to cook somethin' for her Injun. All we did was push her."

The other cowboy spoke. "She complaining about that flour sack that busted?"

Luke got off his horse. "You need to come into town with me."

"Over a Injun! Not happenin'," replied one of the cowboys.

Luke walked over to AJ and reached to grab his arm. AJ slapped it away.

Luke pulled back and let all his stored-up fury rage through his arm, and he backhanded the man across the face. AJ fell from his feet. The other cowboy picked up a hammer and came at Luke. The sheriff saw what was happening from the corner of his eye and backhanded Walt across the face too. He went down.

AJ was up and running at Luke. Luke saw him coming. He grabbed AJ by the shirt and lifted him into the air, throwing him into the side of the wagon that held supplies. He turned to Walt and kicked him back to the ground as he was trying to rise.

Turning quickly, Luke drew his gun and pointed it at AJ. The cowboy froze. AJ's hand was on his gun, and it had almost cleared the holster. Keeping his eyes on the man at the wagon, Luke pointed a finger at the one on the ground and said, "Don't try it. You will lose."

All the cowboys had heard of the sheriff's speed with his gun, but now these had witnessed it, including Conner. Stories would spread quickly, and all the cowboys would keep their distance for a while. Then the renewed respect the cowhands would have for the sheriff would begin to fade, and things would go back to the way they had always been.

That's the way it worked. A continuing cycle of respect, relaxation, complacency, then another incident would happen and the sheriff would receive respect again. But right now Luke didn't care about any of this. He sought justice for Chipeta.

Conner said, "If I find out you boys killed that woman and that baby—"

"It was an Injun!" AJ broke in.

"It was my brother's wife," Luke said sternly.

Conner turned in shock to look at Luke. "Reid's wife?"

Luke nodded. His jaw was set, and anger still showed in his eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was after dark when Luke arrived at the jail with the two cowboys. Cleve was waiting on the porch and followed Luke inside, watching as Luke locked the two in a cell.

Cleve said, "Is that them?"

"Uh-huh."

The brothers were standing outside the cell talking, looking at the men behind the bars.

"Has Chipeta been able to identify them?"

"She doesn't have too. They admitted what they did. I have a witness to their confession."

"Good. This will be simple then. 'When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,'"<sup>1</sup> Cleve said.

Cleve turned to walk into the outer office. Luke followed, pulling papers from a file cabinet and then sitting down at his desk to complete the paperwork that would set justice in motion.

"I sent a message to John Doyle. He's looking for Reid. The company is big. I'm sure he doesn't know everyone that works there. But he'll find him," Cleve said.

Luke stopped and closed his eyes a moment, then looked up into his brother's face. "He won't find him." Luke sighed.

"Well, he ought to be able to. Reid's one of his employees. Somebody's going to know where he is."

Luke stared at his brother.

Cleve saw Luke's concerned expression. "What's going on?"

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 21:22-25 ESV.

Luke asked the deputy to leave and waited until the door was closed. He got up and looked out the window to see the deputy walking away. He remained at the window as he talked to Cleve.

"Reid doesn't work for Doyle. He's doing undercover work for the Department of Justice. We can't mention this to anyone, especially Chipeta. Dad said the work is so dangerous we could get Reid killed if we tried to contact him. Dad said if anyone found out who Reid really was, it could endanger everyone in the family. Neither Reid nor Dad think Chipeta is strong enough to handle the stress and keep herself under control. And now, after what happened this afternoon, I don't think she would be able to handle knowing the truth either. It would be too much for her. We're just going to have to pray for Reid's safety and Chipeta's healing. That's all we can do."

"How long have you known about this?" Cleve asked apprehensively. Cleve knew that in the past their father had told Luke things and Luke had kept the secret for years. It had never bothered Cleve that Luke knew things he didn't—until today. Now it bothered him.

"Dad told me this afternoon."

"So..." Cleve was thinking about the situation. "Dad's probably known all along." Cleve somehow felt relieved that Luke had not known until today.

"Yeah. And he's kept it to himself and never given us any indication he was worried about Reid," Luke said. "He keeps too much to himself."

Cleve replied, "He's a strong man. We all tell him stuff, and he never shares any of it with anyone."

"Yeah, he does. You know he talks to God about all of it."

Cleve nodded. That was true.

## CHAPTER 11



**R**ed stood against the wall watching the six men discuss his future with the organization. The other undercover agent was rather high in the business. He had influence with the others. He was also rough, demanding, and cruel. He had no patience with the girls he watched over or with mistakes made by the men under him.

They finally decided Red would be tested. He was to take a shipment of cash east, to a small town near St. Louis, and make contact with the organization there. He would then escort a group of new girls to a yet to be specified destination. Another experienced and trusted messenger would go along, just to watch and assist. But Red would be in charge. They would see how he handled himself and would then decide if he would continue. Reid knew what would happen if he failed. They wouldn't let him live to explain why he had not successfully completed what he was ordered to do.

Reid heard the Spirit speak. *"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared."*<sup>1</sup>

Reid silently said a thank you to his Lord, and he reached his hand out to take the package of cash that was being handed to him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chipeta healed slowly. She wouldn't talk about what happened, wasn't saying much at all. Her thoughts were on Reid. Why hadn't he come? She needed him right now.

He had cared for her when he was home, during her pregnancy, and had talked of loving the child like it was his own. Now she wondered if he was just interested in the child and not her.

Thomas had told her the baby was a boy. Reid would have loved to have had a son.

Chipeta couldn't decide how she felt. One moment she was happy this child was gone. It wasn't Reid's baby. It belonged to that horrible man that had attacked her. The next day she would cry over his loss. It was her child too. And Reid had wanted it.

Papa had buried the child next to his daughter. He told her that when she was ready, he would take her to the graveyard, next to the church, to visit the grave. Right now, she didn't think she would ever want to go.

Sarah and Papa sat with her often. Sarah cared for her needs and spoke lovingly and gently to her. Papa would sit and hold her hand. He would pray for her and read the Scripture to her. Both were there for several hours every day. The others came for short visits.

Jenny had cried the first time she came to visit, telling Chipeta of the child she had lost at birth. But Chipeta thought that was different. She hadn't been attacked, causing her labor to begin. She had carried the child to term. And Jenny's child had been Cleve's also. It was conceived through love and was wanted by both its parents.

When she was well enough to go home, Thomas took her in his automobile. She had refused to get in the horseless carriage until now, but he had told her it was more comfortable than a wagon. He was right.

\*\*\*\*\*

Red helped the girls out of the wagon telling them to stay close and not to talk. He could tell the girls were scared; he would handle them as gently as he could. He prayed none of them would cause a disturbance. He didn't want to be rough with any of them. They walked with him to the train station platform, and he told them to stand against the wall till they got on the train.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 23:20.

The man with him followed at his heels like a bulldog puppy, snorting and puffing, with a sour snarl on his face. Nobody had told Red this guy's name, so Red decided just to call him Shadow, because he stayed so close all the time.

The trip was uneventful for the most part. The girls did what they were told. Shadow sat and watched but didn't move and didn't talk.

There was one incident. Two young men wanted to sit and visit with the girls, but Red shooed them away several times. The last time he followed them to their seats and spoke with them further.

Shadow couldn't hear what Red said, but the boys eyed Red strangely and didn't get out of their seats again. So whatever Red said had worked.

Reid sat on the train silently praying for the girls and himself. And he praised God, thanking his Lord that there had not been, and would be, no problems.

When he stepped off the train, he quoted scripture to the girls. "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you; but will rejoice over you with singing."<sup>1</sup> Hold fast to the Lord, ladies."

Red turned to look at Shadow. He hadn't heard Red speaking to the girls and didn't look like he was paying attention to them.

Red delivered his "cargo" on schedule without any problems, and he was told to wait. He found a table and sat down while Shadow entered a room in the back of the building with two men.

Red sat at the table waiting for his shadow to return. He knew the conversation was about him. It was taking a while. Red sat back and crossed his arms. He could take a nap. He closed his eyes.

Three other men came to sit with Red. They introduced themselves and made small talk. Red just listened a few minutes, then closed his eyes again.

"Hey, kid," a voice at the table said.

Red opened one eye.

Tucker fanned a stack of cards, looking for someone to play with. He eyed Red carelessly. "You ever play?"

"Uh-uh." Red shook his head slightly.

"Well, it's time to learn." He passed the deck to the man beside him and said, "Here, Otis, you deal."

The man shuffled the cards and set them in front of Red.

"Split the deck," he said.

Reid reached over and picked up a portion of the cards and lay them to the side.

"Annie up." Tucker said.

Reid just looked at him.

"Throw in a ten."

Reid took out a wad of cash and peeled a bank note off, tossing it on the table.

"Wanna shuffle," the man said.

Red shook his head.

The man shuffled and slid one card a piece, face down, to each of the three men who sat with him at the table.

Reid watched the other men to see what he needed to do. He picked up the corner of his card and looked at it, like the others had done.

Another card slid across the table to the man called Pearce. The card was face up, black number eight.

Tucker got a four.

Reid got an eight also.

Pearce said, "Hit me." And another card went to Pearce, a six.

Another card to Tucker, then he laid all three of his cards face down on the table.

Reid tapped the table with his index finger. A card came at him, a two.

Pierce got a four and tossed all three cards onto the table. He said, "I'm busted. What have you got, boy?"

Reid got another card and laid all his cards on the table—twenty-one.

<sup>1</sup> Zephaniah 3:17.

Tucker said, "Boy, if you ain't the luckiest critter alive. First time out, and you win." He pushed the bank notes toward Reid. "You sure you never played?"

Red shook his head again.

"Okay, let's raise the stakes a little," Pearce said. He put a twenty on the table.

It didn't take Reid long to understand the rules of this game. Then he began watching the dealer.

Six hands out, of which Red had won four, and Pearce had won two, Red said, "Okay, I get it. But if you want me to continue with this game, Otis is going to have to stop pulling from the bottom."

"There's no cheating here," Otis said calmly.

"Yes, there is. You've got the low cards on the bottom, and when you shuffle, they don't move. Everyone that has won a hand has gotten at least one of them. When the hand is over and you push the cards back together in your hand, you open hand shuffle them and you look at the cards. You shuffle face up, then you put the low cards on top so when you flip the stack they are on the bottom. When the cards are split, you always split them again and leave the low cards on the table."

Otis got a scared look in his eyes, and his eyes turned to Tucker. Tucker grabbed him by the throat and shoved him and his chair across the room. The dealer fell backward. He scrambled to his feet, backed up a few steps, then turned and ran from the room. Tucker followed.

Pearce smiled. "You've got a sharp eye. Sure you've never played before?"

Red shook his head. "Simple game. Not hard to see what's going on."

Just then the Shadow walked through the room, and Red collected his winnings and got up to follow him out.

## CHAPTER 12



Weeks passed, and there was no word from Chipeta's husband. He had said he hoped to be back for the child's birth. But the time it was to be born had come and passed. There was still no word from Reid.

Chipeta had lost all interest in, well, everything. A few of the church ladies had come to visit and attempted to become friends, but Chipeta wasn't interested. These ladies had cared nothing about her before she lost the child, why should things be different now?

People had brought food when she had first returned home. Many would drop food off with Naomi, and she would bring it home. Those people weren't even coming to see her. The ones that came to the house seldom stayed long. It was a nominal expression of friendship. She was indifferent to them.

Chipeta had not begun going to church again. What was the point? She received more comfort from being with Papa or Luke when they read Scripture than she did meeting together with *those* people.

Brother Nick came often and was friendly and talkative, like he always was. He gave Chipeta attention and included her in the conversations, but she knew he came to visit Papa. He was Papa's friend from way back, when Sarah was a little girl.

There had been a hearing at the courthouse in Summerville, to determine the punishment inflicted on the two cowboys that had attacked her. Cleve was representing Reid's and Chipeta's interests. Luke asked Chipeta to attend saying that if she was present, her attackers would likely get a harsher sentence. Chipeta refused to go. It didn't matter. If they weren't around to assault her, there would be someone else. That was the life of an Indian off the reservation.

Chipeta began thinking of her family in Utah. Life on the reservation wasn't as bad as she believed it had been. At least, living with her band of Utes, she was safe.

Naomi continued to go to work at the medical clinic, but she now took Ruth to stay with Jenny all the time. This left Chipeta alone with Papa.

When Chipeta worked in the kitchen, Papa would come and say, "What are ya makin'? Do ya want some help?" She didn't want help. She wanted to be left alone. She knew that by offering to help, Papa was offering his love, but she felt she didn't deserve love with Reid missing. It was different, the love of her husband and the love of his father. Without Reid's love, the love of others didn't matter.

Sometimes, when she sat with Papa on the porch in the evenings and he was reading Scripture, she would begin to cry. Papa would put his Bible down and hold her. When he found out she was crying because Reid was missing and not for the loss of the child, he seemed to grieve with her more. He would sometimes get tears in his own eyes and would often pray fervently for his youngest son to return safely. She knew that Papa missed Reid too.

Papa didn't leave the house during the day any more. He stayed close to Chipeta. Sarah would come for long visits, and Papa would wait for these visits to go to the gunsmith's shop. Sometimes he would bring guns home with him to repair. She knew Papa had things to do, and she was the reason he had changed his habits.

Papa would encourage her to go to the stables with him. Sometimes she would go with him because she knew it made him happy. Other times he would refuse to go without her, so she went with him then too. She had given up and did what Papa asked, anytime he asked her. She didn't have the strength to resist him and wanted him to return to his own activities.

Months passed, and the spring nights were still cool. She went to the gardens with Papa and helped the younger children with the planting. This is what she would be doing if she was on the reservation.

Reid wasn't coming home. There had never been any word from him. She began to think that he was intentionally staying away

because of her. The baby was gone. So now Chipeta believed that Reid didn't want her either.

Late one night, when Chipeta couldn't sleep, she wrote her father a letter. It was the first letter she had written him since before the attack while at law school. She told him where she was and that her husband had left her and had not returned. She didn't tell him about the baby.

She told him she now had a better understanding of the white people's hatred for Indians. She was ready to come home and begin fighting for her people, but she needed help. She knew her husband's family would not allow her to leave.

The next day she walked into town alone to mail the letter. Papa had told her he would walk with her or they could take a buggy. But she had insisted on walking alone. It was the first time she had stood against her husband's father.

It seemed to make Papa happy that Chipeta left the house alone. Papa was always with her, watching her. Did he not trust her? Did Papa want her gone too?

\*\*\*\*\*

The hall was dark. There were doors on both sides. Every once in a while someone would come out one of the doors and leave.

Red watched the doors. He never came upstairs. He was just a messenger. There was no reason for him to come here. But now he had been sent to make a delivery in a room he had never been to before. He headed for the room at the end of the hall, knocked on the door, and turned the knob.

"Lookin' for Malachi," he said.

The man with his back to the door stood up and turned around. "Yeah?"

"I got a package from George."

"George Washington?" the man replied.

He got the password right. Red handed him the package and waited for the reply. Red looked the room over quickly and backed up to the wall beside the door. He watched as the man opened the end of the box he had just received and looked in. He sneered. Red could tell he wasn't

satisfied with the content. He dumped whatever it was into a drawer and then refilled the box with the contents of another drawer. He sealed the box and handed it to Red. Red turned and walked out the door.

But Red Crowder wasn't leaving the same way he came. He looked the hall over quickly and opened the door to the left. It was a private stairway that led to the basement, and it was dark inside.

Red moved slowly and quietly until he came to the first landing. There was one door on this level. He slowly turned the knob, checking inside to make sure it was safe, and stepped through the opening. Inside, he found a young girl curled in the shadows of the corner.

He walked to her without speaking and picked her up. He threw her over his shoulder. Red hiked her once or twice to get her weight centered on his shoulder and carried her into the dark stairway. He moved down the stairs until they got to the basement.

There were brick pillars holding up the building above and a dirt floor below Red's feet. It stank of moisture and mildew. Turning the corner to the left, he opened a door and entered a dark tunnel. He closed the door behind him and barred it. There was no light. It was blacker than the time he had gone into the mine back home.

Red carefully measured out eleven steps, he set the girl down on the floor of the cold passageway. Turning to the right, he reached out and took hold of a lantern. Red lit the flint starter, and light filled a small area of the dark enclosure.

Taking a knife from his boot, he cut the leather straps that held the girl's hands and feet. Then he took the gag out of her mouth. She started to whimper.

"Shhh. I'm taking you to safety, but you have to be quiet," Red whispered. "But whoever listens to me will live in safety and will be at ease, without fear of harm."<sup>1</sup> That comes from Proverbs. Do you believe in Jesus?"

The girl nodded.

Red wrapped a blanket he had picked up off the floor around her and took her by the hand. They started moving quickly through the tunnel, the girl running to keep up.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 1:33.

A little further through the tunnel, Red said, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."<sup>1</sup>

They moved for seventeen blocks and came to stop at another door. Red opened the door, and they entered a dimly lit finished basement. The room had flooring, painted block walls, and machinery for heating the building.

Red pushed the button on the elevator and waited, still holding the girl's hand. Red opened a metal grate door and closed the grate behind him. Then he pushed the button for the fourth floor.

When they got off the elevator, Red waved to an orderly walking down the hall. Then he said hello to a nurse who called him by name.

The girl was following quietly. She didn't know where she was or what this man was doing. All she knew was that she was not where she had been and she was happy about that.

Red stopped at a desk where a nurse sat reading a patient's chart. He stood there until she looked up and smiled at him.

"Evening, Margaret. Would you tell Dr. Britt I'm here?" Red turned and walked into a nearby office. Then he turned to the girl.

"I'm going to leave you here. The lady that will come to see you is a doctor. She's going to make sure you're okay, and she's going to document any injuries you have. We need this information for the police. Then she'll take care of you and get you home. Don't tell anyone I helped you. If you do, I can't help any more girls. Okay?"

The girl nodded slightly.

Red leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. As he got to the door again, he turned back to her and said, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

And he left.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 91:1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4:19-20.

## CHAPTER 13



Reid had gathered plenty of information about the organization. He was good at what he did. Others had taken him into their confidence and had used his quiet and serious demeanor to their advantage.

He had started in Dodge City, and thankfully, no one there had recognized him. That was his initial concern. Dodge City was too close to his hometown, and he looked too much like his father. But God had been gracious and he had not seen anyone he knew, and as far as he knew, no one had seen him.

From there he went to Reastown, Missouri. Here, he met his “cargo” of six girls and delivered them to Nelson Paw, Nebraska.

He should have been able to go back to Kansas at this time. That was the plan: to return to Topeka for debriefing, to go home for a few months, then to return to the organization to make deeper connections.

But things don't always go as planned.

Just outside Nelson Paw, he had witnessed the senseless murder of one of the organization's couriers at a private club. Reid stood frozen watching the brutality. He managed to keep the contents of his stomach until he was left alone to clean up the killer's mess. Then he vomited until he thought his stomach must be inside out.

He was too new to this job, and now he had seen too much. The local boss wasn't willing to turn him loose with this information.

So he was paired with a killer named Hogan. A large distinguished-looking man with slick black hair and a thick mustache. Hogan always wore a gray fedora and often added a rumpled over-

coat. He walked with a slight limp and carried a walking stick. On top of the walking stick, the silver head of a wolf.

Red and Hogan got along well together, despite the fact that the larger man was a cold killer. Reid thought Hogan must have been a father in another life because he treated Red well and taught him patiently, often calling him son.

It wasn't too long after this matchup that Red was present when two clients were hung. Reid got sick to his stomach again. He was scared the first time this happened in front of Hogan, thinking his partner would end the relationship then and there. But he hadn't. Hogan had called him a green kid, thrown a dirty bar towel at him, and told him it would get better.

It hadn't. Reid got sick every time he witnessed a killing, and every time Hogan would laugh at him quietly and give him time to recover.

They had traveled back into Kansas and Missouri; into Illinois, Iowa, and South Dakota; then to several smaller towns in Minnesota; and then to Minneapolis. This is where they parted ways. Hogan was taken on as a bodyguard at the organization's headquarters in the city, and Reid was sent to Chicago.

Reid had one mission in Chicago: to pick up money at the private clubs and deliver it to the boss. Not the local boss, but the big guy, the head man within the nationwide organization. The private clubs served as drop-off points for state businesses.

The drop-off for Kansas was the Pink Lady. This also became Reid's primary contact point. He found a table against the side wall and made it his home. He watched the girls and the customers and the gang members.

He observed gambling, abuse, drug use, drunkenness, violence, and theft. He kept everything he was learning in his head, no pencil, no notebook, no little scraps of paper shoved into his pockets. Nothing for anyone to find and discover Reid was keeping track of them.

Reid was now immune to the hostility men had for each other. He understood his father better though. His father had been able to see anything and keep his composure. Even though he was a godly

man, he could look on evil and tragedy and the expression on his face wouldn't change. But Reid also understood the pain pulled at his father's heart.

His father had been through war. He had seen the most awful side of humanity and had come out on the other side stronger. Reid prayed he could do the same.

But the brutality against women was another thing. Reid couldn't stomach this, especially the violence toward the girls who were new. The young ones who never intended to end up in a place like this. The ones that had no idea a place like this ever existed.

His job was to observe and report. That was all. He knew he didn't need to get involved with any of these people, but something had to be done. Some of these girls wouldn't survive until the end of his mission, much less until arrests were made.

Reid would talk to them, when there was nothing else for them to do, while they waited for a "client" to walk in the door. After just a few casual words to them, many would seek out his table by the wall. He never touched them, so their pimp didn't mind the talking, as long as there was no one in the place they needed to approach.

## CHAPTER 14



**B**ut when Reid met Josie, he knew he had to do something. She was just twelve years old, but she was made up to look much older and dressed in the scantiest outfit Reid had ever seen.

The girl was obviously embarrassed and didn't know how to act. She stayed in constant trouble with "Mama," the woman that was charged with caring for the younger girls. But the day Mickey Sullivan hit her with his fist, Reid had enough.

He watched for the opportunity to get her out, but it never came. She was getting slapped almost daily, and there was something going on behind the closed door. She would come out bruised and crying. And she was still expected to pretty herself up and make money by offering herself to the clients. Reid knew if he didn't get her out soon, she wouldn't survive.

Late into the night Reid saw Sullivan and one of his goons take the girl into the back room that was used for storage. Reid decided to follow.

Crouched on the floor and peering around a small crate, he watched as they put a rope around the girl's neck. The other end had been thrown over a ceiling beam and tied to a column of bricks. Reid knew that the only way to save this girl was to either not be seen by the men or kill them.

Sullivan's thug was a big guy. He made two or three of Reid. There was no way he could take this guy on in a fight.

Reid decided to try a diversion. He took matches from his pocket and lit straw packing that was hanging out of one of the crates. It caught on fire quickly. Reid moved to the other side of the room.

It didn't take long before smoke filled the air, and the flames could be seen licking the ceiling. The two men moved to cover the

flames, and Reid swiftly cut the rope holding the girl. He grabbed Josie around the middle with one arm, put his other hand over her mouth, and began to run.

Reid was a small man, like his father. When he picked her up to run, her feet were just a few inches from the ground. He couldn't move fast enough. He dropped her to the floor but kept his arm around her as they moved. Josie stumbled, and Reid kept picking her up from the floor. She stumbled again, he picked her up, and a few seconds later he had to pick her up again.

Just as they slipped through the door that led to the street, Sullivan discovered the girl missing. Reid heard him yell, but Sullivan was too involved in fighting the fire to chase them.

Reid had to let go of Josie on the street so they wouldn't attract attention. He told her to keep quiet and keep walking, but he still had to drag her so that she would keep up with him.

They turned a corner, and he stopped to talk to Josie.

Reid knew Josie was scared, and he knew they needed to get out of sight. But he spoke patiently and gently to her. "Listen, I'm going to get you out of here, but you've got to be quiet and move when I tell you too. I can't keep dragging you. Can you run?"

She shook her head, not talking. He could tell she was scared, too scared to know what she was doing.

"Yes, you can, and do you know how I know? God said, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'<sup>1</sup> Right now he is giving you the strength to run," Reid explained patiently.

Reid put his arm around her like she was his girlfriend, and they began walking quickly through the dark streets.

They moved forward two blocks and into another alley. Reid tried turning the knob to a door in the side of a building. It didn't move, so he kept walking turning left at the next intersection.

This was a busy street, full of underworld activity at night. If they could make it two blocks, there was another entrance to the tunnels below the city.

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:13 (NKJV).

Reid ripped a coat off a drunk lying asleep on the street and wrapped it around Josie's meager clothing, hiding her appearance and giving her protection from the cool night wind.

They kept walking and neared the entrance to the tunnels. Reid scanned the area. He didn't see anyone he knew. No one was looking. He opened the door and pushed Josie inside.

It was totally dark. Nothing could be seen except the black. Josie held to Reid tightly as he began to move through the pressing darkness. He ran a hand high on the wall, feeling with his fingers for something, sliding his foot in front of him, looking for the unseen wall.

His foot bumped. There it was. He continued to run his hand over the wall and felt something with his fingertips. It moved and fell to the ground with an echoing thump. Then he heard the faint bump, bump, bump as it rolled on the floor.

"Whoops," Reid said softly, trying to lighten the atmosphere. "I dropped it."

He got down on his hands and knees, trying to find the object he knocked from the wall. Finally, he found it, set it upright and lit the flint.

It was a small carbide lamp. "We've got to move quickly," he told Josie. "This thing won't last long, it's almost empty."

And he took her hand again and started trotting into the darkness.

The lamp had gotten dim and was flickering. They were barely able to see twelve inches in front of them when they arrived at the door leading to the hospital and safety.

In the office, Reid reassured Josie she was safe and then asked, "Do you believe in Jesus?"

Josie nodded.

Reid said, "'The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.'<sup>1</sup> Hold tight to Jesus."

Then he opened a drawer in the desk and took out a portable electric light, kissed her on the forehead, and said, "You'll be home soon." Then he left.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 18:10.

Reid moved through the tunnels more carefully. Each time he came to a door, he checked to see if it was unlocked. Those that were unlocked, he left alone. Those that were locked, he unlocked. He passed the entrance where he and Josie had come in, checked one more door, and exited through the third door past the one they had used.

He entered the basement cautiously, walked up the stairs that led to the street and stepped out into the night. He had gotten another girl out successfully.

Reid walked the few blocks toward the Pink Lady and turned down the alley headed for the back door.

“Did you and that little girl have fun?”

The question came from the dark at the end of the alley.

Red squinted his eyes to see who it was, “Who is that?”

“Well, did you?” Mickey Sullivan stepped out of the shadows.

“What are you talking about?” Red asked.

“You and Jo. Did you just leave her down there?”

Red asked again, “What are you talking about, Mickey?”

“I saw you take her out of the basement. I know you started that fire.” Sullivan was moving closer with each word.

Reid stood firm. “I don’t know what you are talking about. What fire?”

Sullivan was about ten feet away and getting closer. If Reid had any chance to escape, he needed to run now. He turned and took off down the alley and around the corner, mixing with the crowds of people on the street.

At the intersection, he slowed down so he wouldn’t attract as much attention. He crossed the street, turned north, and passed the Blue Rooster. He turned east, and as he passed the next alley, something hit him over the head. He stumbled, dazed, and fell forward.

## CHAPTER 15



Cleve had spent two weeks at the state capital, then he had gone home for two weeks. This was the routine during the state legislative sessions. Now, after three months of this, he would be able to go home and stay awhile. Just as soon as they voted on two amendments associated with the prohibition act that had been passed years ago.

They had taken a three-hour break for lunch, and Cleve had nothing to do. He sat at a table in the dining room of the Executor Hotel finishing his lunch alone and reading *The Capital News*. Daniel Elshout had just left to return to their Topeka office.

A nice-looking older man in a gray suit stepped to the table.

“Mr. Britt? May I speak with you?”

Cleve indicated a chair with his hand.

The man extended his hand in the polite greeting that was expected among the state and federal employees around the capital.

“I’m Barrett Batterton. I’m special counsel at the Department of Justice.”

Cleve was now very interested. He stood up and shook the man’s hand. Then sat back down, waiting to find out what this man had to say. The man sat in the chair next to Cleve instead of the one across the table that Cleve had indicated.

“I don’t know how much you know,” Batterton said softly. “So I’m going to start at the beginning. I know your brother Reid. He works for the DOJ.”

Cleve nodded, and Batterton knew that Cleve was aware of this.

“There was an incident about a week ago in Chicago. We lost contact with your brother. I personally think he has been compro-

mised. But I can't confirm it. Then, just a few days ago, we received word that another agent within the organization has turned dirty. We know he knew Reid was DOJ. We haven't gotten any other information on your brother. I just thought you ought to know. I'm sorry."

"Did this other agent know who Reid is? Did he know his name?" Cleve asked.

"No, I don't think so. All he knew was his cover name, Red Crowder."

Cleve nodded. This was good. He wouldn't have to worry about the family being attacked.

Cleve had read about the criminal activity that spilled over into the families of those that crossed the lawless. He had been praying for his family's safety since he found out Reid was working for the Department of Justice.

Batterton continued, "I was the one who made the decision to recruit him. I knew he'd be good, and he has been. He's smart, honest, and can hold his tongue well. But he has a way with words if you listen to him. His contact in Denver says he is an outstanding singer too. And he can preach. Our guy was observing when Reid sang at the chapel on campus, says his voice is amazing. Apparently, he was a regular there at the chapel, at least from the way the students reacted when he stepped on the stage. Our guy decided to go back when he spoke and said he could really talk too.

"And the kid's not scared of anything. He stepped right into the role we asked him to play and he's good at it. Did you know he had an almost perfect score on his exit exam? Nobody does that! If it hadn't been for the incident in the classroom, he would have probably been named valedictorian."

Cleve interrupted, "What incident?"

Batterton suddenly got a look on his face that told Cleve the other man knew he had said too much. But the DOJ special counsel had to continue now. "Reid got in a fight. No, I don't guess it was a fight. Reid was the only one who threw punches. Took two guys out. Big guys. In front of everybody. Then Reid wouldn't talk. Wouldn't tell anyone why."

"I didn't know about that," Cleve said.

Cleve felt like he was being told about a total stranger. All he knew about Reid was the quiet, timid baby brother who stayed away from people. Cleve didn't know of his intelligence, or of the bravery, his role-playing skills, or the aggressiveness he was being told about. He didn't know that Reid could sing and sure didn't know he could preach.

"Yeah. I kind of gathered that from the look on your face." Batterton changed the direction of the conversation quickly.

"I read your brother's thesis his final year. He has a strong sense of justice, and I agree wholeheartedly with his philosophy on treatment of criminals. It's a strange theory but makes total sense."

"I never read it," Cleve said. The final thesis of each student was made available to anyone at the university library. Cleve had read Luke's thesis on "The Apprehension and Containment of the Lawless," and Angus's paper on "Ethical and Efficient Energy." But Cleve never thought to read his youngest brother's paper. He would have to request it by mail.

"Yep. He'll go places if we can find him," the DOJ attorney said. "Hey, how's your dad? I knew him. Great man. I used to be with the Marshal Service."

"Yeah, he is. He's doing good." Cleve was now distracted by his thoughts about Reid. "This is going to upset him though."

Batterton added, "Well, tell him we've decided to terminate Reid's assignment, so when we find him, we'll get him out and it will be over. If I get any more information, I'll contact you."

"Is he alive?" Cleve asked.

"I don't know." Batterton shook his head slightly. "I'll let you know if I hear anything else."

Batterton left, and Cleve sat stunned. This was a brother Cleve didn't know, and now Reid was missing. They didn't know where he was. The DOJ didn't know if he was alive or dead.

Cleve couldn't concentrate on the vote that afternoon. As he left the chamber, he couldn't even remember how he had voted. The only thing on his mind was the little brother that he didn't know.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two days later Cleve sat in his office in Harris with his father and his brother Luke. Cleve told them what Batterton had said about Reid and his assignment with the Justice Department. He told them of his brother's almost perfect score on his final exam. But he kept the incident in the classroom to himself. There was no reason to tell his father. No need to upset the old man further.

But his father knew what happened. Reid had told him. And Reid had told him why.

Travis tried to hide his emotions, but both of his sons knew how upsetting this was for their father. Reid was the last of his children, the child of his old age. Travis had been both mother and father to the boy. And they had always been close.

Travis sat in the room with his eyes wandering from one spot to the next. He wasn't looking at anything in particular but couldn't stop his brain's energy as it ran in every direction.

Then he focused, took a deep breath, and let it out noisily. Travis looked toward the door. "I've been thinking about going to visit Mary," the brother's father said.

Luke turned to his father. "You're too old for that, Dad. You can't head out to rescue your children the way you could years ago. Especially going to places you would have to go looking for Reid."

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,"<sup>1</sup> Travis said with assurance.

"Yes, you can," Cleve said. "You can do anything you want to do, but there's no need for you to go. I can go. There's a guy I went to law school with who practices in the Chicago area. I can make contact with him and work from there. I'll get Batterton to put me in touch with the DOJ up there. I'm sure they're the ones that discovered Reid missing. They've probably already contacted other law officers in that area to be on the lookout for him. Give me a day or two to get things straightened out here, and I can leave maybe Saturday."

"I'm going with you," Luke said. "Once you start asking questions, it will attract attention. You'll need somebody to back you up.

We're going to have to be careful though. We don't want to put Reid in any more danger."

Cleve stood up and moved in front of his father. "We'll do the best we can to find him."

Travis stood up to hug his eldest son. As Travis put his arms around Cleve, Luke noticed his father's hand. It was swollen again. It seemed to stay swollen all the time now. Luke knew that sometimes he wasn't able to use it at all. And his father's fingers were more twisted than Luke remembered. Luke didn't know how he was able to do anything with that hand.

Luke thought about his father's other injuries. Their father was able to use his right arm only because Thomas took care of their father's shoulder on a daily basis. Injuries he had suffered during the war had left the shoulder painful and stiff. Their father had lived with this pain for years, until Thomas found out about it and offered treatment.

No, his father didn't need to run off chasing after his children that were in trouble.

Luke remembered how bad the shoulder had gotten before the doctor moved to Harris. He prayed his father would never have to be without the treatment again.

It was upsetting to think that their little brother was in trouble. And it was also sad to remember how old their father was getting and to think about the things he could no longer do.

Luke would have to be careful not to make any more comments about his age or his ability to do things. Luke wanted to protect his father, and the last thing Luke wanted to do was to make his father feel useless. Luke knew his father was still capable of doing far more than most men his age. He had always been able to do more. But sometimes he tried to do too much and would suffer later.

Sometimes he would work too hard or too long in the fields with the children. Naomi told him that when this happened, their father might not get out of his rocking chair the next few days. And Luke knew too, that if he did something that made his shoulder hurt, his father's pain would be debilitating and he wouldn't be able to sleep for several nights.

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:13 (NKJV).

Luke loved his father. He wanted his father to be around for a long time, and he didn't want his father to suffer anymore. He'd had enough suffering in his life.

They had no idea how old the man was. Thomas had guessed Travis was probably in his seventies now. But even if he was eighty, he looked much older. Travis had spent years outdoors in the cold harsh weather of the Allegheny Mountains. Then he had come to Kansas, spending years plowing the fields in the hot sun. His face and hands showed the weathering.

Travis's words caused Luke's attention to turn back to what was happening in the room.

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"<sup>1</sup> Listen for God, and he will guide you. Follow God's leading and pray. We'll be praying for you here too."

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 30:21b.

## CHAPTER 16



**R**eid lay on the cold hard floor of the basement. He was finally able to move just a little. He had positioned himself awkwardly against the wall, leaning on a large wooden box. He could feel the dried blood from his head matted in his hair and on his neck and shoulder. The pain was enough to make him sick. He would vomit, have a few minutes of relief, then get sick again. But there was nothing in his stomach.

Only a small amount of light came through the window far above his head for a short period of time each day. He didn't know how long he had been here. Days, weeks, he had no idea.

He couldn't keep a thought in his head, couldn't focus his eyes, didn't know where he was.

Reid felt the evil and oppression around him. It pressed in on him, smothering him, but he saw nothing. He felt abandoned by everyone, including God. At no time in his life did he ever think he would feel this way.

Scripture came to Reid's heart, but he couldn't keep a thought in his head. It seemed he felt the scripture and understood it in his soul. "*Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.*"<sup>1</sup> Reid squeezed his eyes tight against the pain.

He struggled to think as questions came to his mind. Had God abandoned him? Was there really no one that cared for him? Would God truly end his distress?

---

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 142:4.

Another scripture came to his heart. He knew this scripture. He felt this scripture, but he couldn't think of the words.

*"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven."*<sup>1</sup>

Reid had a brief burst of strength, and he yelled, "Lord! Help me!"

Then he felt the Spirit again, and he questioned God more. The more he questioned God, the more he seemed to be able to focus.

"I need to be quiet? Sit still? Lord, are you going to guide me? Show me the way out?"

The Spirit spoke, and Reid heard the words and understood. *"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."*<sup>2</sup>

"I understand," Reid said out loud, trying to take a deep breath. Any strength he had just a few moments ago was now gone. In its place, he now felt weak, but peaceful.

"You want my worship? I do worship you, Lord. You are my God, my Savior. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forever. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised."<sup>3</sup>

The Spirit spoke again. *"I am he, I am he who sustains you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."*<sup>4</sup>

Reid relaxed against the box, resting his head, "Thank you, Lord." He could now feel the presence of the Spirit with him. Comforting him, easing his pain. He heard something far off in the distance. Was that angels singing?

Reid's heart felt joy, and the Spirit reassured him with, *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes."*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 107:28-30.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 95:6-7a.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 113:2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 46:4b.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 37:7.

Closing his eyes, he knew that help would come and all he had to do was wait.

\*\*\*\*\*

The morning sun was coming through the window above his head. Reid heard talking. Girls. They were coming toward him. He needed to hide, but as he tried to crawl from the box, he collapsed on the floor. He couldn't move. He was too weak. He felt like vomiting again.

As the girls rounded the pillar near him, one of them gave a short scream and threw her hands over her mouth. Both girls backed up a few steps, holding on to each other. Then they stilled to look at him.

One gave a hesitant, "Is that Red?"

Reid lifted his hand, reaching for them. And the older girl moved slowly toward him. She knelt beside him and touched his face gently. It was Red, all right. He had dried blood on his face and his clothing. He hadn't shaved in days. His breathing was shallow, but he managed to call her by name. "Barbara, help me."

"What do I do? I don't know what to do." Her voice was on the edge of panic.

"Help me get to that room." Reid pointed in the direction of the far wall. When he could focus his eyes, he had seen a door. At first wondering where it went, then he wanted to enter it. He somehow knew he would be safe there. "Please."

He didn't know how, but with the girl's help he was able to stand and move himself to the door. Inside, he collapsed onto the floor again. He asked them to take care of him, here in this hidden, unused storage room until he got better and was able to leave by himself.

So here in the dark, Reid lay alone day after day as he slowly healed. The girls brought him a blanket. Then they brought a bucket of water. The next day they brought him food. The Spirit stayed with Reid, comforting him as his body repaired itself.

He told himself that as soon as he was able to leave this room on his own, he would find safety, contact the Department of Justice, and end this assignment. He had gathered enough information. He knew who the boss was. He knew who had control over the organization. He wanted to return home to Chipeta and the baby.

When he could hold a thought, he prayed for Chipeta. Just like he had done every day since he left home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Saturday morning Luke and Cleve got on the train headed east. They had told Cleve's wife and children that Cleve had business with a colleague in Chicago and Luke was going along to keep him company.

They were also going to visit Mary. It wasn't a lie. They would see their sister, and Cleve would meet with his former classmate and the DOJ.

But they would also search for Reid. The only person who knew the whole truth was Travis. Travis remained behind watchful, knowing the danger his sons, and the entire family, were in.

The brothers' travels would take them first to Topeka, to talk with Department of Justice special counsel Barrett Batterton, then they would head for Chicago.

As their train left Topeka, the Spirit spoke to Luke. *"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*<sup>1</sup>

Luke responded softly, not wanting anyone else on the train to hear him. "Lord, I will fast and pray until we reach Chicago so that I can focus on you. Speak to me. Let me walk humbly among the people there so that the lies of the enemy will not overtake us. Help us to see ourselves as your servants. Chicago is a strange city to us, and we are fighting the evil that comes from your enemy, not from these people. Help us to blend with them but don't let us be like

<sup>1</sup> Micah 6:8.

them. Help us to value these people and serve you. Let your mercy flow through me as I discern what is good and what is evil. Blind the people's eyes to what we will do, close their ears to keep us safe, but let them respond to our requests. Lord, how do we find Reid?"

The Spirit responded, *"Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler."*<sup>1</sup>

"It's going to be a hard fight, isn't it, Lord?" Luke asked.

*"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 6:4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:13-15.

## CHAPTER 17



Travis had asked Thomas and Angus to pray with him. He wouldn't tell them why he wanted to pray, but his prayers caused them concern. Travis and Angus were now meeting at Thomas's clinic twice a day to petition God for his grace and mercy toward their brothers. Travis prayed fervently for his three sons that were no longer at home. And he also prayed for the protection of his entire family.

Thomas and Angus felt Travis's concern for his sons, and although they didn't know why Travis was so concerned, they prayed with him. As the days passed, they began to feel the urgency themselves. The Spirit was moving within them to continue to protect their brothers from evil.

Angus now prayed, "Father, we ask that you put a hedge of protection around our brothers. Hide them from the sight of their enemies, close their enemy's ears, blind their eyes. Let no gap appear in the hedge, let no weakness grow. The enemy will not gain access to them because you are their defense. You have told us that you are their protection and you will be glorified.

"Lord, you have said, 'And I myself will be a wall of fire around (them),' declares the Lord, 'and I will be (the) glory within.'<sup>1</sup>

"Even the enemy knows that you protect the righteous. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?' God, 'You have blessed the work of his hands.'<sup>2</sup>

"Lord, do we need to put 'the blood on (our) doorposts (that) will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying'?"<sup>1</sup> No, Lord. You have already put the blood of Jesus on the door to our hearts.

"We are protected. Your ministering angels care for us and surround us. 'The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear (the Lord) and (you) deliver them.'<sup>2</sup>

"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."<sup>3</sup>

"Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned."<sup>4</sup>

Angus looked up and spoke to his father. "Dad. I don't know what's going on, and I know you wouldn't tell me, so I'm not going to ask. But we need more prayers. I'm going to take Molly over to Jenny's this evening, and we're going to start praying there too."

"I'll bring Sarah and the boys. We'll join you," Thomas said. "And I'll ask Naomi to come too."

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid's dream was vivid.

*"Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.*

*"Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,' the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him."<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12:13a (NLT).

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 34:7.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 34:19.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 34:21–22.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 12:7–10.

<sup>1</sup> Zechariah 2:5.

<sup>2</sup> Job 1:10a.

Reid woke up suddenly. Had he seen a light? What hit him? He felt an urgency. He needed to get out of this place. He pulled himself up the wall and started inching his way to the door, dragging the blanket and holding the wall for support. He picked up the hat the girls had brought him and put it on his head.

It was easier to move than it had been just yesterday, like a weight had been lifted from him.

There was a little light coming into the room near the door. It wasn't totally dark. His eyes were blurry, but he knew where the door was. He'd seen it open and close when the girls came in and out. Reid clung to the wall as he moved forward until he found the door.

Reid passed through the door to the open basement, then the door to the street. Both were unlocked. He moved up a few steps and found an iron gate that was already open.

On the street, Reid looked around to get his bearings and started moving to his safe place, the tunnels. He moved past the Dirty Nickel, the market, the corner hotel, and the newsstand. Nobody was paying any attention to him. It seemed like they didn't see him.

It was late morning. The street was busy, but not as busy as it would be this afternoon or tonight. Reid stopped to look at his reflection in a window. One eye was partially closed, but the hat the girls had found for him covered his matted hair and shaded his eye. He looked bad but not bad enough to attract attention, if he could continue to stand up straight. He wadded the blanket up and put it under one arm.

Reid moved past the barbershop and the hardware store, two private clubs, and the boxing gym. Just another block and he could rest.

A Ford drove past, and the driver turned to look, throwing the brakes on quickly.

Reid saw them and turned his back, walking the other way, in the direction he had come. Then he turned right at the next corner, heading for an alternate entrance to the tunnels.

\*\*\*\*\*

Last time he had come through the tunnels, every time he came through the tunnels, he would unlock every door he found.

He prayed this door would be unlocked now. It was in a dead-end alley. If he got caught here, there would be no way out. But he didn't think he had the strength to go any further.

As he crossed the street he had just come down, he looked toward the empty warehouse where he had spent the last week, month, he didn't know. He fought to focus his eyes. There were men outside. Men he knew. If he had stayed, he would already be dead.

"Thank you, Lord," Reid said at a whisper. "You are my hiding place and my shield."<sup>1</sup>

Reid entered the alley and moved toward the door. It was locked. He turned around and leaned against the wall. "Help me, Lord. Show me where to go." He was already tired and needed to rest.

There was a door across the alley. The one that went into the back of the Wicked Lady. It was near the stairs that went to the apartments above the bar. If he could make it to the roof, he could rest there.

Reid moved slowly, carefully opening the door and moving up the stairs. Before he got to each landing, he would stop to listen. Then he would stay in the shadows. His vision was blurring more. He needed to get to the top. On the fourth floor, he couldn't go any further. He crawled into the dark cramped space under the stairs and passed out.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Hey, mister?" The boy shook Reid. "Mister? What's ya doin'?"

Reid opened his eyes abruptly and pushed himself away from the person shaking him.

"I ain't gonna hurt ya," a youthful voice said.

Reid's eyes were trying to focus on the shape in front of him. His vision was still blurry, and his mind fuzzy.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:114a (ESV).

“Did ya fall down them stairs? Look like ya got a knot on yor head.” The boy put his hand next to Reid’s ear, sending sharp stabs through Reid’s head. Reid closed his eyes tightly and pushed the boy’s hand away.

“Oh, I ain’t gonna hurt ya,” the boy said again. “Come on. Granny’ll fix ya up.”

The boy grabbed Reid at the elbow and started pulling on him. Reid couldn’t do anything but go with him. He didn’t have the strength to resist. The boy led Reid down the hallway and around a corner. He stopped at a door and opened it. Then he led Reid inside, leaving the door open.

“Granny, Granny, I found this guy on the stairs. He got hurt.”

An old, bent, white-haired lady entered the room, saying, “I done told ya to quit brin’ folks home with ya.” When she saw Reid, she started shaking her head. “No. No. Ya get out a ’ere. I know who ya is. I ain’t gonna get in trouble over ya.”

“Please. Please. Just let me rest.” Reid collapsed into a chair.

“Uh-uh. Not ’ere ya don’t. Go on, get! Boy, ya get ’im out a ’ere!” She grabbed the boy and shoved him toward Reid.

Reid saw he was getting no help from this woman. “Okay, I’m going.” But as Reid tried to stand up, he lost his balance and went down on the floor, his head whirling.

“I swear. Ya just keep causin’ me trouble.” She was looking at the boy. “Come on. ’Elp me get ’im up. We gonna take ’im up ta the roof.”

The woman and the boy pulled until Reid was able to get on his feet. Then they half dragged him up four flights of stairs until they reached the roof. Tar on the rooftop was warm and tacky. It made a sucking noise with each step. This roof looked like a place that was used often. There was wash hanging on a line nearby with a washtub underneath and a couple of chairs strewn near the edge. Bits of trash lay everywhere, some blown into a pile by the wind.

They got to the wall of another building that butted up against the roof, and Reid put his hands out to grab it. The woman let go, and Reid slid down the wall to sit on the tarred roof.

“Thank you,” he said, closing his eyes. This was where he had intended to come earlier.

“Ya better get yaself up an’ gone. Them’s bad men lookin’ far ya.” And she turned around to leave. “Boy! Ya get yaself aways from him. Ya stay aways.” And she left the way she came.

The boy kept looking at Reid. “I don’ like them men. Them’s mean.”

Reid didn’t move. Reid had put the blanket under his head and had laid down. He was watching the boy but didn’t have the strength to do anything else.

“I gonna brin’ ya some food later,” the boy said. And he turned around and walked off.

Reid closed his eyes and went to sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

“They’s comin’! They’s comin’! They’s comin’!”

Reid opened his eyes to see the blurry boy running toward him in the dark. The boy grabbed Reid’s arm and began to pull. Reid couldn’t get his fuzzy mind to operate correctly. It was nighttime and dark. That’s all Reid knew.

“I can’t,” Reid told the boy. “I can’t get up. Too tired.”

“Ya’s gots ta. I’s gots ta hide ya!” The boy stopped pulling and turned around to look at the roof. He ran to the wash hanging on the line and pulled two sheets until the clothes pens snapped off. The boy dragged the sheets flapping on the ground to Reid. Then he flung them over Reid and crawled under the end next to the injured man’s head.

“We’s gots ta be quiet,” he said in a not-so-hushed tone.

Reid heard the door to the stairs slam against the wall, then heavy steps moving in all directions. Reid could feel the oppression moving around him, and he tried to think of words to pray. His hazy mind just wasn’t working. He couldn’t form words. He couldn’t remember scripture. He didn’t know how to pray for protection.

The sheet was stripped off the two as they tried to hide in the open space of the roof. The boy jumped up and started to run, but

Reid saw someone catch him just a few steps away. Reid couldn't move. He just lay there watching as Mickey Sullivan's henchman reached down and grabbed him by the throat, pulling him to his feet.

They moved toward the stairs. The man that held the boy had one hand over the boy's mouth and the other wrapped around his waist. The boy was kicking and trying to scream. The sound was muffled but kept coming.

There was still a hand around Reid's throat. He faced the big man and was being pushed backward, barely able to touch his feet to the floor beneath him. He couldn't breathe. Just when he thought he would pass out, the guy holding him let go and threw him forward. He hit the brick wall with his back and head, coughing, trying to catch his breath. But being slammed against the wall knocked what little breath he had out of him, and he struggled to pull air into his lungs.

The big man grabbed Reid and put his hand around Reid's throat again, lifting him into the air and pushing him onto the stairs. About three quarters of the way down the first flight, the man threw Reid again. Reid tumbled down the few remaining stairs to the next landing and crumbled into the wall, again trying to get air. Over and over Reid was thrown down the stairs and again grabbed by the neck to continue the journey to the bottom.

Reid knew he would die. He had no strength to fight. No will to do anything. That was okay, he was ready.

Reid could hear the boy's muffled screams again and again, but Reid no longer felt anything. He saw nothing.

Then he heard Mickey Sullivan's voice. "You like these tunnels so much, I'm gonna bury you there. We'll even let this kid keep you company." Sullivan laughed.

Two men now had Reid by the arms as he was being hauled through the door to the tunnels. The men turned sideways to enter the narrow door with their captive. The boy was being held by Sullivan. The boy was still fighting, kicking and squirming. Reid couldn't let the boy suffer too.

Scripture came to Reid's heart, and he spoke out loud. "Then Samson prayed to the Lord, 'Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please,

God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge.'"<sup>1</sup>

Reid lifted his feet as the men held his arms, and he put both his feet against the boy and pushed. The sudden jolt made Sullivan lose his balance, and he stumbled backward, still holding the boy in front of him. Sullivan hit the ground hard with the weight of the boy on top. This second jolt caused him to lose his grip on the youth. The boy was faster than Sullivan. He jumped up and ran from the alley before Sullivan could get himself off the ground.

Sullivan pulled back and punched Reid in the stomach. Reid folded, but the big man grabbed him again and threw him down another flight of stairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Judges 16:28a.

## CHAPTER 18



**L**uke and Cleve had been in Chicago close to two weeks. Cleve had already sent five letters to his wife, the first five days they were in Chicago. It took a long time for the letters to arrive at home. Even though his wife had no reason to worry, he wanted her to know he was safe. But then he and Luke had moved to an area where they could find no paper and no place to mail a letter. There was no way to send more messages.

Luke had sent letters to their father also. He gave their location and told of leads they had followed that had only led to other locations and more leads. If something happened to them, he wanted his father to know what they were doing and where they had been. Now, because they could not find any paper, he had stopped sending letters too.

Red Crowder seemed to have been everywhere and was on the move constantly. Everyone knew him. But people were saying he had disappeared a few weeks ago. He just stopped coming to the places where he had always been.

The brothers walked the street once more, looking for information on Reid, hoping and praying that something would present itself that would lead to their brother.

Luke and Cleve had gone into every bar, brothel, and tavern they could find. They had entered boxing gyms and private clubs, even prostitution houses. Everyone knew Red Crowder, and everyone seemed to like him, except the people at the Pink Lady.

The girls at the Pink Lady wouldn't talk, and the men turned hostile quickly. The brothers had been attacked, and Luke had to

use his guns to stop the violence against them. Luke knew he had wounded the man that had ordered the attack on them. Someone had called him Sullivan.

Luke had also put three shots in the big guy. He had to do it to save Cleve, who was taking a beating. Then they had backed out the door, taking two young girls with them. They knew they didn't need to be seen here again. But they also knew this would be where they would find information on Red. Many of the girls had told them Red hung out here every night.

Close to midnight, they stood in the alley behind the Pink Lady. Occasionally, a girl would come out the rear door and they could catch her alone for a few minutes. Then they would ask about Red. So far, no one was able, or maybe willing, to tell them anything.

Cleve decided to look around the area once more, just to see if there was someone in an adjacent business that might know anything. Luke had warned him to be careful. Asking questions near the Pink Lady was dangerous. Luke wouldn't be there to help his brother.

Luke was sitting on the top of a trash can, talking to God. "Lord, 'for we are not unaware of (Satan's) schemes.'<sup>1</sup> There is darkness here. 'But (these) people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.'<sup>2</sup> But 'you are the light of the world.'<sup>3</sup> Shine your light. Reveal to us where to go, who to talk too, where to find Reid."

The door to the Pink Lady opened. A young lady stepped out, lighting a cigarette. She looked up with a start when she saw Luke and stood there, watching him.

"You're one of the guys looking for Red," she said apprehensively. It wasn't a question. She knew who he was. She had seen him shoot Sullivan.

"Uh-huh," Luke replied.

She looked around to see if anyone else was watching. Then she backed up and leaned against the door. Luke thought she was

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:11b.

<sup>2</sup> John 3:19b.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:14a.

blocking it, so she would know if anyone was trying to open it. He sat hopeful.

“Just listen,” she whispered, taking a puff on the cigarette. “Couple of weeks ago me and this other girl found Red in the basement of the Pickles and Feathers club, just south of here. He’d been beat up bad. We helped him into an empty storage room and took him food and water and a blanket.” She took another puff. “Like I said, he was beat up bad. We watched out for him for a few weeks. Then I guess maybe a week or two ago, we went back to take him more food and he was gone.”

“Can you remember exactly when you saw him last?” Luke asked.

She thought, took another puff, and shook her head. “Maybe Monday afternoon, a week ago, I think.”

“How bad was he hurt? Do you think somebody found him or could he have left on his own?”

“He was hurt bad, but he had been there a couple of weeks. So he could have walked out on his own, I guess. We’d taken him a blanket and found a hat and taken it to him. They were both gone. The only thing that was left was the bucket we’d been putting water in.”

Just then the door bumped her. Her eyes got wide, and she shook her head at Luke. Luke knew what was wrong. No one needed to see her talking to him. He quickly moved into the shadows, in the corner behind the door.

The woman turned to open the door and stepped out of the way, headed back into the building.

“What are you doing out here?” the angry male voice rumbled into the night.

“Just having a quiet smoke.” Then she threw the remainder of the cigarette onto the pavement.

Luke couldn’t see what was happening from his hiding spot behind the opened door. But he could imagine the man grabbing the woman by the arm and pulling her roughly back inside the building. Then the door slammed shut.

Luke stayed in the shadows, thinking. Monday afternoon, a week ago. That was just nine days. This was the most recent sighting

they had heard of. But Reid was hurt. Where would he have gone if he was hurt? To Mary. He would have tried to make it to Mary. But he had not gotten to her. Cleve had just talked to her two days ago.

“Lord, where is he?” Luke asked.

The Spirit spoke to Luke. *“I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.”*<sup>1</sup>

“Lord?” Luke said. “Her house? The girl inside?”

*“But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them.<sup>2</sup> But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.”*<sup>3</sup>

“I don’t understand, Lord. He was hidden on a roof? At the woman’s house, her apartment? Under flax?”

Luke’s mind was working to figure this out. *Flax? Flax? There were no fields here in the city. Why would there be flax on the roof?*

Luke looked up to see Cleve coming around the corner. Luke ran to him. “He was hidden on a roof. He was hurt.”

Cleve had no idea what his brother was talking about. “Slow down. What are you talking about? Start at the beginning.”

Luke stopped and took a deep breath. Then he told Cleve what the woman had said and what God had told him.

Luke ended with, “We’ve got to find a simple-minded boy. Where do we go to find a boy that has no sense?”

The brothers began walking the street again, saying nothing. Both thinking about Reid, wondering where he was and thinking of how to find him. But also knowing they needed to find him soon. Reid had been injured and needed help.

Cleve gave a short laugh. “We can always go ask the fortune-teller,” he said, pointing to the sign on the window in front of them.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 7:7b–9.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua 2:4a.

<sup>3</sup> Joshua 2:6.

Luke was in no mood for joking. “Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.”<sup>1</sup> Dad told us to listen for God. God’s going to show us where to find him. I haven’t got the energy to do anything else tonight. I’m spent. The Spirit said to look for him at dusk, when it’s getting dark. We won’t find him until tomorrow night. Let’s find a room.”

The brothers found a dirty hotel room and shut themselves in. Cleve searched the room for anything to write on but found nothing.

“We won’t find anything here to write a letter with,” Cleve said. “Jenny’s going to think I’ve forgotten about her. I haven’t sent her a letter in over a week.”

“Yeah. Dad’s going to be wondering too. But if we can find this boy tomorrow night, then maybe we can find Reid. Then we can just tell Dad we found him and we’re coming home.”

## CHAPTER 19



Travis’s sons had been gone long enough. He had not heard from them recently, and he needed information. Travis was a patient man; but in this situation, with his sons in danger, he was ill at ease. He didn’t like sitting around, not knowing what was going on. Travis had been praying, but he needed to do something more. This was the only thing he could think of to do, short of going to Chicago.

Travis stepped into Barrett Batterton’s office in Topeka.

“Travis, is that you, old man? I thought you would be dead by now,” Batterton joked.

“Not yet,” Travis replied somberly. He was grave and didn’t want any of Batterton’s teasing. “I need information.”

“What can I do for you?” The smile left Batterton’s face as he sat back in his chair. He had known Travis well, back in the day, and he knew when Travis was serious, there was no room for a playful attitude.

He also knew what Travis wanted. There had been reports out of Chicago of two men searching for the missing DOJ agent.

Travis would be swift and blunt with his question. Batterton knew this too. There would be no friendly, casual chitchat preparing for the conversation.

“I haven’t heard from my sons. Last message we got was that they were still in Chicago. Tell me what ya know,” Travis said.

Batterton took a deep breath and let it out noisily, then took another breath. “All I know is there are two men asking questions. It’s making the agents in Chicago nervous. They’re trying to watch

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 19:31.

these two, I assume these are your sons, but our agents can't seem to catch up with them.

"They hear a story of something that's happening, but before they get there, the two guys have moved on. Word is they keep going into one of the hospitals, but even when we wait for them at the hospital, we miss them.

"Got word there have been a few girls left there. They have tried to talk to these girls but have only been able to see one of them. She said the men took her out of a ratty bar on Ringland Street. Just walked out the door with her. No one tried to stop them. Odd."

Batterton waited for Travis to make a comment, but the former marshal just sat looking at him. So Batterton continued, "Then got another report that these two guys went into a brothel in the South Gleason area. Really rough neighborhood. They started working the room like they were looking for one girl in particular. Apparently, when they found who they were looking for, she had another gentleman with her. The big guy just walked over and whispered something in the man's ear.

"Our informant said the guy got a scared look on his face and got up and left. Not just moved to another girl. He left! Big guy didn't want the girl. He walked away, and the smaller one moved in. He bought her a few drinks, then got up and went upstairs with her.

"Big guy had him a girl by this time, and when the smaller guy went upstairs, the big guy followed and they went into the same room. Our guy never saw them come out. One of the girls went missing after that. Someone went to check on them because they had been in the room a long time. He found one of the girls asleep. They think that girl had been drugged. They woke her up, and she didn't know where any of the others had gone.

"Word is, the big cowboy wears two guns. Nobody says anything to him about it. Like they don't even see the guns. You just don't do that in Chicago. If you have a gun, it's under your jacket, hidden.

"He shot up one place. Bullets flying from both sides. Big guy hit only what he was aiming at, a high-level operator and his body-

guard. Other people all around but no one else was hurt. Can't figure out why with so many bullets in the air."

Travis said softly, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"<sup>1</sup>

Batterton looked confused. "What?"

"The whole family is praying. First Peter says, 'For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'<sup>2</sup> God is closin' the eyes a the wicked, allowin' my sons ta succeed. They're gonna find Reid."

When Travis's statement hit Batterton, he sat up straighter and looked annoyed. "You mean the whole family knows what's happening?"

"No, the others don't know. They just know Reid hasn't come home. An' he hasn't contacted his wife. They're simply prayin' far his protection an' his safe return. Soon. An' they don't know that Luke an' Cleve have gone after him, so it's a simple prayer for them too. That they will have safe travels, achieve what they went ta Chicago far, an' return safely."

Batterton looked uncertain. "You really think you can pray Reid to safety?"

"I know we can pray him ta safety. 'If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'"<sup>3</sup>

"You're kidding me," the DOJ counsel said, not believing anything Travis was now saying.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."<sup>4</sup> Unless God is finished usin' Reid in this life an' wants him home in heaven, Luke an' Cleve'll find him."

"So unless God wants Reid dead, he'll come home?" Batterton asked.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 91:1-2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 3:12.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 21:22.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John 5:14.

Travis nodded.

“That’s awful simple. And gives you a way out, doesn’t it? If God wants him alive, he’s alive. But if God wants him dead, he’s dead. It doesn’t matter what you pray.”

Travis quoted another scripture. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”<sup>1</sup>

“Then why do people suffer, if you can just pray and get what you want? All prayers aren’t answered with a yes,” Batterton said.

“God uses our circumstances to make us better people. He teaches us so we can serve him better the next time. He said, ‘I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on (God’s) name and (he) will answer them; (he) will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”<sup>2</sup>

Batterton said, “I’ll believe you prayed him home when Reid walks into the courtroom to testify against the crime boss.”

Travis stood up, preparing to leave. “If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:7–8.

<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 13:9b.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 91:9–12.

## CHAPTER 20



The four Indians stepped off the train. The people on the platform eyed them suspiciously. One of the younger men walked to the stationmaster and asked, “Where do I find the law in this town?”

“Straight down the street, on the left.” The stationmaster pointed in the direction of the sheriff’s office.

The Indian turned around and started walking. The others followed.

All they wanted was information. They were looking for the older man’s daughter. She lived in town.

Of course, the deputy knew exactly who they wanted, even called her by name. Yes, he knew Chipeta and was happy to point them toward the sheriff’s father’s home, telling the Indians that Chipeta’s husband, his brother, the sheriff, and their father were all out of town.

The four Indians found the small house pushed back into the trees. There they found Chipeta home alone.

Word spread through town quickly that Indians were in town looking for Reid’s wife. When Angus caught the gossip, he left the electrical power plant, which he managed, and went to find Thomas. Together they went to check on Chipeta.

Chipeta introduced Angus and Thomas as her husband’s brothers. She then introduced them to her father, Casicas, two of her brothers, and her brother’s son. Chipeta assured Angus and Thomas that everything was fine and that her family had simply come for a visit.

Angus and Thomas were friendly and visited a few minutes. They casually asked if the trip was good and if Chipeta's visitors needed anything while they were in town.

All the Ute spoke English well and were dressed more as white men. They did wear their hair like Indians and had beadwork on their jackets. A couple of them had deer-skin moccasin boots instead of the usual laced-up, button, or slip-on boots white men wore. Angus wouldn't have noticed this, but his father had made this type of boot for him and Reid when they were young.

Angus smiled as he thought about the boots his father had made. Angus had loved them and had worn them everywhere until some of the older boys at school had made fun of him. But they were the only shoes Angus had. It was the moccasin boots or go barefoot.

When Angus asked his father for a different type of boot, his father had quoted scripture: "*The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*"<sup>1</sup>

Then his father had taken him hunting. Telling him that he was going to give him the knowledge to understand why these boots were better than the ones bought in town.

Angus had killed his first buck, with his father's help, and he and his father had skinned the animal together. Then they hung the hide, and when it was ready, they dry scraped the hair from it. Together they had cut the hide into the right shape and size. Then Travis had helped Angus make a buckskin jacket. It had taken more than a year to complete the jacket. When it was finished, that jacket was the envy of all the boys at school.

Angus had been proud of that jacket. He had done it all himself. Now he laughed within himself. He had done some of it. Maybe.

His father would sit in his office at night, when he stayed with prisoners, and removed the parts Angus had messed up and sewed it back correctly. He would show Angus, again, how to do it properly. Then his father would take the jacket apart, again, and fix it.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 15:14

Thinking about it, Angus wondered if he had actually done any of it correctly. But the jacket had been beautiful when it was finished, and Angus had loved it too.

Angus now knew why those boots were better. His father had not had the money to purchase boots. But the boots he and Reid wore were cut and sewed together with love by his father. It had taken a lot of energy, time, and effort.

All the farm boys either got hand me down shoes, or some received new shoes, at the beginning of the school year. Most of the shoes were too big, giving their feet room to grow. But if they did outgrow their shoes, many would have to wait until the following autumn, after the harvest was in, to get new ones or until someone else outgrew their shoes.

Angus never really thought about it until now. His father had cared for him well. Angus always had something on his feet. Angus and Reid were never barefoot, unless they chose to be.

Angus's attention turned back to Chipeta's visitors just as Thomas was inviting the group to supper. The invitation was declined. Casicas told him it had been a long time since he had seen his daughter and they wanted to spend time with her alone. Angus and Thomas left to resume their daily activities.

Naomi wasn't comfortable with the men staying at her house, so she and Ruth moved in with Thomas and Sarah. She told Thomas this would also give Chipeta's family room and privacy.

Angus and Thomas would check on the Indians several times a day, watching from a distance. Everything seemed fine. There was no unusual activity.

Chipeta had taken her family to see the horses. Horses were important to the Ute. They were a symbol of status in the community. Her family here in Harris would be considered rich by the Ute's standards. Not because of their money or position or large homes but because of the number of fine horses they owned.

Thomas was on his way to the carriage house when he saw Chipeta's brothers looking at the horses. He stopped to talk, telling the brothers they were welcome to use any of the horses any time

they wanted. The Indians took advantage of the offer. Several people reported seeing them throughout the area.

Smoke would rise from the stovepipe at mealtime. Lights were seen in the house at night until the third evening. There was no smoke coming from the stovepipe, and there were no lights on at the house.

The next morning Angus went to his father's house to check on Chipeta. Everything was in order. Nothing seemed out of place or out of the ordinary, except the Indians were gone—and so was Chipeta.

## CHAPTER 21



**L**uke and Cleve walked the street toward the ratty corner hotel that many of the ladies of the night called home. They were looking for a boy. They didn't know what the boy's age was or what color hair he had. They had no idea what he looked like. All they knew was that he was simple-minded.

There weren't that many youths on this street, and the children that were there were dirty and brazen, uncared for by their parents.

A market stood across the street. Luke walked over to ask the proprietor if he knew of a boy in the area.

Luke picked up two sweet potatoes and dug in his pocket for some money.

"Hey, is there a boy around here, one we might be able to hire to do a simple delivery job? One that's honest but not too bright. One that won't ask questions?" Luke asked as he handed the money to the clerk.

"I wouldn't trust none of 'em. Everyone of 'em come through here an' just grab stuff as they pass through," the storekeeper said, annoyed.

Luke handed the man another bill. "For your troubles."

"Well, there is that kid that lives with the old woman. They live somewhere down that way." The man pointed across the street to the road that ran beside the hotel. "Friendly kid. Talks to anybody, but dumb. He hasn't got a lick a sense. I wouldn't hire him. Nothing would get done. But for what you want, he might work."

"Do you know the woman's name, or his?"

“Nah. I think I heard him call her Granny one time. She never calls him by name. She just calls him Boy.”

“Do you know where they live?”

The man shook his head.

“What does he look like? How old is he?” Luke asked.

“I don’t know.”

Luke could tell the man was getting frustrated with his questions, so Luke handed the man another bill.

“All I know is they walk that way when they leave here.” He indicated the direction with his hand again. “He’s maybe fourteen, could be a little older. Brown hair, when you can see it. He wears a black knit cap. I think the old lady must have made it. Kid’s always sticking something in the cap. Nails, leaves, broken stuff he finds lying around.

“Great, thanks.” Luke turned to leave.

When he got back to Cleve, he handed his brother one of the sweet potatoes. Luke wiped his potato off on his pants leg and took a bite. Cleve used his sleeve to wipe the dirt off his potato. Then he brushed the dirt off his sleeve and started eating too. Luke told Cleve about the boy.

The two walked in the direction the clerk had indicated. About two blocks down the street, there was a small grassy area and a few benches. Luke and Cleve sat down to watch the people.

An hour passed, and they had seen no one that matched the description of the boy. Shadows were long on the street, and it was getting dark. The tight buildings blocked all sunlight. Cleve looked up to see if there was any light left in the sky. On top of one of the buildings, eight stories up, he saw something move.

There was no wind on the street, but up high, above the structures, something was blowing in the breeze.

Cleve made the comment. “I wish some of that breeze would make it down here.”

“What breeze?” Luke asked.

Cleve pointed to the top of the building where sheets were blowing past the edge of the building. Then the wind would die

down, and the sheets couldn’t be seen anymore. A few moments later they would appear again.

Luke looked up to see what Cleve was pointing at. He kept his eyes on the movement far above them.

“That’s sheets,” Luke commented curiously and stood up, moving toward the building.

There was no one in the dank stairway as they climbed the eight flights to the roof. There, the brothers found linens hanging on the line. The sheets had been there a long time. Luke could see the wear from the sun and wind.

Looking around the rooftop, Cleve spotted more linens lying in a heap against a far wall and another one that had blown around a pipe sticking out of the roof.

Luke picked up the sheet against the wall. There were dried bloodstains on it.

“This is Reid’s blood,” Luke said softly.

“Oh, you don’t know that,” Cleve said, trying to reassure himself and his brother that Reid was okay.

“God told me he was on a roof hiding under flax. These are flax sheets. Look at them.” Luke shoved the sheet into Cleve’s chest. “It’s dusk. We need to get back to the street.”

The street had been busy when Luke and Cleve had gone into the apartment building, but now it was much more crowded. The brothers positioned themselves back on the bench in the small park and waited.

Just after the sky went dark, Cleve punched his fist gently into Luke’s thigh. Luke looked Cleve’s direction and Cleve pointed down the street.

There, among the mob of people, a lanky youth in a black knit cap moved toward them.

“Let me do this,” Cleve said. “I won’t be as intimidating as you are, big brother.” Cleve smiled at his younger brother.

Cleve walked across the street, pacing himself so that he would get to the door of the building at the same moment the boy did.

The eldest Britt brother put his hand out to open the door, and it reached the knob just as the boy's hand gripped it. The boy's hand was on top of Cleve's.

"Oh, hi there," Cleve said.

"Hi," the boy said as he pulled his hand away from the door.

"You got a minute to talk," Cleve asked.

The boy's face brightened. "Sure, I always got time to talk."

"You see that guy on the bench over there." Cleve pointed at Luke.

Luke waved.

The boy waved back.

Cleve said, "That's my brother. Have you got a brother?"

"Yeah. But 'e don't live 'ere. 'E lives over on Patterson."

"You see him very often," Cleve asked.

"Nah. Ain't seen 'im in close ta a year," the boy responded.

"Me and my brother over there have another brother. We haven't seen him in a long time either. We've been looking for him."

"Ya don't know where he is?" the boy asked.

"No. Somebody told us he got hurt and now we can't find him."

"That's too bad," the boy's face showed sorrow.

"We think he may have been up on your roof. Did you see anybody on your roof?" Cleve asked.

The boy's face now showed caution. He nodded.

"It's nothing to be worried about," Cleve explained. "We just want to find our brother so we can take him home. Can you tell us where he is?"

"I found 'im under the stairs. I think 'e fell down 'em. Granny wouldn't let me keep 'im in the rooms, so we took 'im up ta the roof. Me an' 'im hid there till the lady's man found us. They was real mean ta 'im. Kept pushin' 'im down the stairs. They was takin' us underground, but ya brother got me loose an' I ran 'way."

"Underground?" Cleve didn't understand.

"Yeah. Ta the tunnels," the boy said.

"Can you show me?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Travis returned from Topeka with the news of Luke and Cleve that Barrett Batterton had given him. But he wasn't sharing it with anyone. No one else in the family knew Reid was missing, and none of them knew Luke and Cleve had gone to look for him.

Travis stopped at the medical clinic on the way home. Thomas wasn't there, but Naomi was.

Naomi hugged her father, giving him a warm welcome home. Then she told him of Chipeta's visitors and that Chipeta had left with them.

Travis felt his family was falling apart. The Spirit spoke to Travis. "Satan has tried his best to separate all of you from me, like chaff from wheat. (Travis), I've prayed for you in particular that you not give in or give out. When you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and<sup>1</sup> strengthen your (family)."<sup>2</sup>

Yes, Satan had launched a major attack, and his family was in the crosshairs. Chipeta had been assaulted, and the baby had died. Three of his sons were away from home and in danger, one of them missing, maybe dead. And now Reid's wife had left him. This couldn't happen. He had to do something.

Travis told Naomi that he couldn't let Chipeta leave without knowing why. He told her he had to find her and bring her home and that the family needed to continue praying for their brothers and now for Chipeta too.

Without giving her time to tell anyone else, and without Naomi realizing her father would do something so suddenly, he took his few belongings and returned to the train that was still at the station.

Travis talked to the stationmaster and discovered the Indian's destination easily. When the train left the station, Travis was on it, continuing west toward Utah.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 22:31b-32a (MSG).

<sup>2</sup> Luke 22:32b.

## CHAPTER 22



**L**uke and Cleve moved through the tunnels slowly. Almost two weeks of searching, and this is where their effort had led—workmen's tunnels below the city of Chicago.

The lantern cast shadows in every corner and piles of debris lay everywhere. The two together, debris and shadows, caused everything to look like something it wasn't. Movement of rats caused an eerie atmosphere in the moist dark caverns.

Rats were everywhere. One ran across Cleve's foot, and he cringed. "Nasty critters," he exclaimed as he stepped backward and lowered the lantern to take a closer look at the floor.

Luke would have laughed, but there was nothing funny about being in this place. There was nothing funny about any of this—the dirty buildings; nasty, filthy, impatient people in this city. How could Reid have been involved with this? How had he been talked into this?

The Spirit spoke to Luke's heart. "*When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.*<sup>1</sup> *(I asked him,) 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And (he) said, 'Here am I. Send me!'*"<sup>2</sup>

Luke spoke softly to his Lord, "Was Reid fighting for you? Was he serving your justice?"

And the Spirit responded, "*The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 21:15 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6:8b.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 42:13 (ESV).

Luke smiled sadly. His brother was doing God's work.

The sheriff continued to speak softly. Cleve wasn't able to hear him. "Did he serve you well? Are you finished with him?"

*"(He offered his body) as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—This is (his) true and proper worship."*<sup>1</sup>

Luke stopped walking. He couldn't catch his breath. *A sacrifice?* "Have you taken my little brother home?" he asked out loud.

Cleve turned to look at him, confused. "What did you say?"

The Spirit responded, "*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*"<sup>2</sup>

"So it's not finished?" Luke spoke out loud again. "You're not through with him? You have more for him to do? He's alive?"

Cleve stood watching Luke in the shadows. He understood something was disturbing his brother but didn't know what it was. "What's wrong?"

But Luke didn't respond, he was still listening to the Spirit.

*"But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*<sup>3</sup>

Luke asked, "Did Reid stand firm? Have you saved him? Is he still alive? Lord, please, show me where to find him."

And there before Luke stood a large man dressed in linen with a belt of gold around his waist. *"His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude."*<sup>4</sup> Luke fell to his knees before the man.

Cleve couldn't see the man or hear the voice, but he was watching Luke closely. To Luke, the sound of the man's voice reverberated through the caverns.

*"Don't be frightened, (Luke), for your request has been heard in heaven and was answered the very first day you began to fast before the Lord and pray for understanding; that very day I was sent here to meet you. But for twenty-one days the mighty Evil Spirit who overrules the*

<sup>1</sup> Romans 12:1b.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 1:6.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 24:13.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel 10:6.

*kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the top officers of the heavenly army, came to help me, so that I was able to break through these spirit rulers of Persia.*<sup>1</sup> Your family's prayers have strengthened us, allowing us to now reach you."

The man raised his hand and gestured for Luke to follow. He turned and moved through Cleve. Luke stood shocked and stunned, then ran past Cleve, trying to catch up with the man. The man was moving quickly, too quickly for Luke to stay with him.

Cleve turned and ran after his brother, trying to keep up. But Cleve's legs weren't as long, and he wasn't as athletic as Luke. Cleve wasn't able to stay with Luke, and he fell behind.

They got to an intersection of tunnels, and Luke stopped suddenly, looking to each dark opening. It gave Cleve time to catch his brother. Luke had lost sight of the man. Which way did he go?

"Which way, Lord?" Luke asked.

Just then a noise came from the center tunnel. Cleve thought it was probably a rat, but Luke took it as a sign from God.

Luke started running again. He ran past a pile of bricks and kept going, then past a tunnel turning to the left. Another pile of bricks. No! Luke stopped, turned around, and went back, pushing Cleve out of the way without saying anything. The bricks were on top of a construction tarp, but the tarp was covering something.

Luke started to fling the bricks off. Cleve backed up and watched, staying out of the way. As Luke flung the bricks behind him, Cleve pushed them further out of the way, trying not to get hit by one himself. Luke pulled the tarp up to find more dark clay bars. But wait. There was something under the bricks. It was a body; there was a foot sticking out.

Luke kept working. Whoever this was, they were lying face down. His arms were curled awkwardly around his body, one was behind his back, the other around his head in an odd manner. One knee was up to his stomach, and he lay on top of it, the other leg outstretched. This man had been conscious when the bricks had been

<sup>1</sup> Daniel 10:12b-13 (TLB).

thrown on top of him. He had tried to protect himself from the bricks.

Luke checked to see if the man had a pulse. He couldn't find one. He continued to move bricks until the man was free, then Luke pulled him from the cramped niche in the wall and rolled him over. His hair was matted and stuck to his head. There was a couple of weeks growth of whiskers on his face. Luke gasp as he moved the lantern closer. This man looked like a younger version of their father. It was Reid!

"Oh, God!" Luke called to his Lord for help.

Luke put his face next to Reid's nose to feel for breath. God had told him Reid was alive, but he hadn't felt a pulse. Luke watched Reid's chest for movement. Nothing. Then a gasping breath drew in life-giving air, and Reid's chest rose sharply, then fell. This happened several times before his breathing steadied.

Luke picked up his little brother's upper body to hold him, and Reid groaned in pain. Luke stopped moving. The movement was hurting him. What kind of injuries did he have? It was too dark to see much. He had some small cuts and maybe some bruising, but nothing else was visible.

Luke looked up at his older brother. "How do we get him out of here?"

"We have to carry him," Cleve said.

But as Luke put his arms under Reid to pick him up, Reid cried out in pain. Luke tried taking a few steps, but each step caused Reid more pain.

"There's got to be a better way," Luke said.

Cleve reached for the tarp and cleared a larger area moving more bricks to the side. He spread the tarp on the ground. "The ground is smooth, put him over here. We'll drag him when we can. Carry him the rest of the way on the tarp."

\*\*\*\*\*

It took a couple of hours to drag Reid back to the tunnel entrance. Somewhere along the way Reid had passed out. The moans

and cries of pain had stopped. When they neared the steep stairs leading to the sidewalk, Cleve left his brothers and continued alone to get help.

Cleve found a telephone and called the hospital where Mary worked. No, she couldn't talk. The doctor was unavailable to come to the telephone. The hospital staff tried to brush off this call to one of their physicians. But Cleve was impatient on the phone, telling the operator that this was a family matter that demanded her immediate attention. He was persistent and finally got through to Mary.

She sent an ambulance to pick up Reid. A stretcher was taken into the tunnel, and it took both the ambulance driver and attendant, along with Reid's brothers, to get him up the steep narrow stairs and into the ambulance.

Mary was waiting for them at the entrance of the hospital when they arrived.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cleve and Luke waited in the hallway of the hospital. Every emotion ran through Luke's body—fear for Reid, anger at what had been done to him, sorrow for his injuries, disgust toward the people that had done this, grief for his brother's pain, pity, rage, shock, and sympathy. He couldn't sit still; he kept pacing the floor, looking toward the green painted doors that Mary had disappeared through with Reid.

Cleve said, "Luke, come on and sit down. You're not doing Reid or yourself any good walking the floor like that."

Luke sat down heavily beside his brother. "I can't pray. God showed me where Reid was, and now I can't even find words to tell him thank you."

Cleve said, "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."<sup>1</sup> Cleve added, "I can't pray either. I've been trying."

<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:26b–27.

Luke nodded, understanding that Cleve was just as upset as he was. But at this moment, Luke was also angry. He wanted to hit something. Instead, he put his head in his hands and started to cry.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mary came into the room to find Cleve asleep, with Luke staring mindlessly at the floor. Luke looked up to see Mary and back-handed Cleve across the chest as he stood up. Cleve woke up with a start.

"He's alive. I don't know how," Mary said, shaking her head. Then she motioned for Luke and Cleve to follow her. She led them down the hall and to a room where Reid lay asleep. A young woman sitting beside the bed got up and left when the doctor entered the room.

"He's been beaten bad," the doctor said. "Looks like it may have been as long as a week ago, maybe more. This isn't the first time. Some of the injuries have already started to heal. They look to be weeks old. Others have just started to heal. Almost every part of his body has been damaged in some way. There's severe bruising everywhere and small cuts.

"He's got blood in his kidneys. His eyes have that yellow color, so there must be some liver damage. He's coughing up blood. Wherever that's coming from has probably begun to heal, that's why there's not more than there is."

Luke sat down in the chair the young woman had just vacated looking at Reid.

The doctor continued, "We've got this new thing called X-radiation, X-ray. It lets us see what's going on inside the body. He's had several broken ribs. Some are almost healed. Some still have a way to go. He had a dislocated shoulder. We set it back in place. His pelvic bone has been cracked, but it should heal on its own with no problem. It's not like he's going to be doing a lot of moving around.

"His nose has been broken, and his jaw dislocated. He's had a head injury, more than once it looks like. Has an orbital fracture, but it doesn't look like there has been any permanent damage to the eye.

He had a skull fracture, but that's almost healed. Don't know what damage has been done to his brain. I'm sure he had a concussion when it happened. Has one now too. We're watching that closely.

"The most serious thing we need to deal with right now is his spine. Spinal cord looks to be intact, but some of the vertebra are broken and out of alignment."

"Wait." Luke looked up at his sister. He was overwhelmed by these injuries. He didn't understand a lot of what she was saying. "Explain this in words I understand."

"He could have brain damage, and his back is messed up bad," she replied.

## CHAPTER 23



Travis spent a week on the train to Utah. He got off and walked to the marshal's office several blocks away. He was carrying his canteen and saddlebags. That's all he had taken to Topeka and all he had with him when he had gotten back on the train in Harris.

He introduced himself to the marshal and gathered information about the reservations and the Indian groups he needed to visit. He and the marshal had lunch together. The marshal pointed Travis toward the general store where he could pick up supplies and the livery stable where he could get a horse.

Travis rode onto the reservation, looking for the Indian agent's office. When he found it, he asked for Chipeta. He didn't know the father's name. Naomi had not told him, and he had forgotten to ask. There had been too much on his mind when he had talked to his daughter.

Every time Travis's mind moved to his sons or to Chipeta, he would pray. Travis was determined not to worry. So he was praying constantly. Travis knew God was with him, and with his sons, and with Chipeta.

Travis clung to God and his promise of peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."<sup>1</sup>

No, he wasn't afraid. Not for himself or his sons or Chipeta. He was still giving his sons and Chipeta into God's care. And God reassured him because his sleep was still peaceful.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 14:27.

The Indian agent didn't know of any young woman that had just arrived. He didn't know of any men that had traveled recently.

Travis moved on to the next reservation. This time he went to the Indian village itself. No one knew of the young woman, so he moved to the next band of Indians.

Days passed as Travis traveled from one group to another.

Riding all day was harder than he remembered. He hadn't done anything like this in years. He reassured himself that he would get used to it again. All he had to do was keep moving.

Thomas wasn't caring for Travis's shoulder now. And it didn't take long for Travis to begin feeling the discomfort. But it wasn't bad. He could deal with it, as long as it didn't get worse.

But getting on and off the horse was becoming a problem. He couldn't use his left hand to grip the saddle, so he was using his right shoulder more. Travis knew he would have to be careful not to do anything that might aggravate the shoulder.

\*\*\*\*\*

Arriving at another band of Ute, Travis approached a man who was standing near a picket line of horses. Once again, Travis asked about Chipeta. Travis thought the man didn't understand. He looked at Travis but said nothing, then turned and walked away. Travis hoped that he left to find an interpreter. The man returned with a woman. It was Chipeta. When she saw him, she spun quickly to walk away.

"No, Chipeta. Stop. Please. Just let me talk ta ya," Travis called after her.

She stopped but didn't turn around.

"Please. I just want ta talk," he repeated.

She turned around slowly, able to change her outward expression but not her feelings. She had been gone from the reservation too long. She had adopted too many of the white man's disrespectful ways. She had not remembered to show respect for the elderly.

She tried again to change her manner. It would be a disgrace to her family if she were to disrespect this older man. And she realized

she didn't need to be ugly to Papa. He had never done anything but love her.

As she looked at him, she remembered the admiration she had always had for this man, and her countenance changed without effort. Even though she didn't want too, she needed to stay and talk with him.

Her feelings were so fluid. One moment she felt the love she had for Papa, and the next she didn't want to have anything to do with him.

She walked back to face him, saying nothing. But she had already made up her mind. Whatever he said, she wouldn't listen. She wouldn't believe him.

Travis gave her a brief hug, which she did not return.

"I'm so glad ya is safe," he said.

She still said nothing.

"Chipeta, why did ya leave? I know what happenen' ta ya was hard, but we love ya. Reid loves ya."

"No, he doesn't. He only married me because he wanted—" She stopped. She didn't want anyone to hear about the baby. She hadn't told anyone. "Wanted what I lost."

"No, that's not true," Travis said.

"Chipeta, why don't you invite your guest to sit at fire?" The English-speaking voice came from behind Chipeta.

It was her father. She knew without turning around.

"They don't know about the baby, and I don't want them too," she said softly. "They don't know about the attacks either." Then she spoke louder. "Would you like to join us at the fire?"

"Thank ya," Travis replied. He knew he had to accept any hospitality that was offered to him, or he might offend those asking.

As he approached the small fire, he thought of what Luke had said to him, "*You're too old for that, Dad. You can't head out to rescue your children the way you could years ago.*"

Now he understood what Luke was talking about. He might be able to get to the ground, but he would need help getting up. He was too old. And with the injury to his hand and shoulder, he couldn't do one simple thing, sit on the ground without a struggle.

The man pointed to a spot on the ground, and Travis attempted to sit gracefully but fell slightly and needed to catch himself. He put his right arm out, and when he hit the ground, it jammed his shoulder upward. He closed his eyes briefly against the pain and opened them to see Chipeta and her father looking at him.

Chipeta asked, "Are you okay?"

"Just old," he replied.

"I am Casicas. Who are you?" the man asked.

"I'm Travis. I'm Chipeta's husband's father.

"What do you want with my daughter?"

"She left without speakin' ta anyone in the family. I want ta know why she returne' ta her people an' left her husband?"

Casicas nodded. "That is a fair question. Chipeta, you need to answer him."

Chipeta stood defiant. "I didn't leave him. He left me. He went to do the job he was hired to do. I understand that. But he hasn't come back. He just left, and for five months I haven't heard from him. He doesn't care about me. He would have written me or sent a telegram or something."

"Yes," Travis said. "He should have. But he does care far ya. He ask me ta take care a ya while he was gone. I guess I failed ta do that. I kept information from ya. I did it ta keep ya from worry, but I see now it just made ya feel unloved." Travis looked into the fire. "The reason I went ta Topeka was ta search far Reid. He's missing. The people he works with can't find him. I'm afraid somethin' has happene' ta him."

She still stood defiant. "I don't believe you."

Travis looked at his son's wife. "Chipeta, ya know I wouldn' lie ta ya. An' ya know down deep in ya heart that Reid loves ya."

"No, I don't."

"We've lived with each other far close ta a year. Have ya learned nothin' from me. I believe the scripture, an' so does Reid. One a the great commandments from my Lord is 'Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.'<sup>1</sup> I'm sorry I didn' tell ya what happene', but I'm not lyin'

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 19:11b.

ta ya now. Reid is missin'." Tears came to Travis's eyes. He couldn't stop them as he watched the daughter he had learned to love stand before him, hard and uncaring.

He continued, "I know ya felt alone when he went ta Topeka, but ya knew he had a job ta do. I don' know what happene'. I'm sorry I didn' tell ya when I first found out. I didn' wanna worry ya. But I've been prayin' he will come back ta us safely. Please, I'm askin' ya ta come home an' wait far him there. If, after he returns, ya still wanna come back ta ya people, I'll make sure ya get here."

Chipeta watched her husband's father. She did love that old man. He now sat in what looked like a very uncomfortable position as his eyes glistened with moisture.

"I have to think about this," Chipeta said. She walked around the small structure Travis thought must be her father's home and disappeared.

Casicas spoke first. "My daughter has a mind of her own. She is rebellious and stiff-necked. It is hard to control her."

"She's a beautiful woman with a tender heart," Travis replied, still looking in the direction of Chipeta's departure.

"You have other children?" the Indian asked.

"Yes, I have six boys an' four girls," Travis replied, turning back to look at Casicus.

"I too have six sons," Casicas said. "But Chipeta is my only daughter. Do your children obey you, or are they like my daughter? Unwilling to listen."

"Mine obeyed when they was young." Travis laughed slightly. "Most a the time. They're all grown now. Reid's my youngest." Travis was thinking of Reid and the possibility of him being dead and thoughtlessly added, "Three are gone."

Chipeta's father nodded. "I too have lost children. They are buried where they were born. That is our custom. The Old Man who created the world made man out of the soil where my people once lived. This is why we do not travel far from our homeland. We remain where we were created. We bury our dead where they were born."

Travis smiled. "My sons are buried where they were born, on top a my mountain. My daughter is buried very close ta where she was born too. My people were also created from the dirt a the ground. 'Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.'<sup>1</sup> God brings us in a full circle, don' he? We come from dust, an' we are buried in dust."

"You worry about your son," Casicas said. He could see Travis's concern without having to ask.

"Yes, I know my son well. He wouldn' disappear like this if somethin' hadn' happen ta him."

The two men continued to talk until darkness fell. Chipeta did not return. Travis continued to sit on the ground. He had been there several hours, and he was stiff and sore from the long days of riding and from the position he had been sitting in.

Casicas stood up. "You may sleep outside my house." He raised his hand to indicate the porch.

"Thank ya," Travis said, but he didn't stand up.

Casicas offered him a hand. "You are like my father. He cannot get off the ground either."

Travis smiled, knowing this may not go well. He set his jaw and hardened himself, knowing the pain would come. Travis put his right hand out and grasped Casicas's arm, just above the wrist. Casicas grasped Travis arm in return and pulled.

## CHAPTER 24



**L**uke wanted to get Reid out of Chicago as soon as they could. If the people that had hurt Reid found his burial site disturbed, they would come after him. The first place anyone would look would be the hospitals. Cleve agreed. So Mary did everything she could to prepare Reid for travel and then prayed he would survive the trip.

Now Reid lay asleep on a mattress in the postal car of the train. Luke sat on the floor next to him, and Cleve sat nearby on a crate. Reid's dreams disturbed him. His brothers could tell by the noises he made and his periodic heavy breathing. Reid would breathe heavy and then hold his breath, then he would always wake up. He wasn't staying asleep very long at any one time. When he woke up, he would gasp for air, like he was suffocating, and then his breathing would slowly calm.

Mary had given Cleve medicine for Reid. It was supposed to ease the pain and help him sleep. He was sleeping some, but his brothers weren't sure it was easing any of the pain. The bumping and jolting of the train were a constant disturbance for him. He had been suffering the whole trip. Mary had told her brothers to give the medicine to Reid all the way home, even when they had a layover and stayed at a hotel.

They never made it to a hotel. When the train had stopped in St. Louis, they had a two-day layover. The only way to get Reid to a hotel was to carry him. Cleve had contacted a local doctor for assistance, and when the doctor saw Reid, he refused to take them to a hotel.

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:7.

The doctor had wanted to take Reid to the hospital, but Luke and Cleve had refused, telling the doctor that the people that had done this were still after him. There were too many people at a hospital that would see him. Someone might talk, and the people that had beaten Reid might find out where he was. There were also too many people at the hospital that could get hurt if they were found there.

Thankfully, the doctor was a courageous man and he had taken Reid home with him. For two nights they were the guests of this doctor and his wife. Then the doctor put them on the train headed west.

Mary had also said Reid needed to eat, but they hadn't been able to get much down him. Each time he woke up they tried, but he could only get one or two small bites down before he would start gagging or become nauseated. Mary had said he had been choked and had some injury to his throat. It was healing but apparently hadn't healed enough to swallow correctly yet.

Reid had lost weight. He had never had any fat on his body, but now he was sickly thin.

There was blood inside one eye. The white of the eye had been deep red at the hospital in Chicago but was now splotchy and more of a pink color. Mary had said his eyes responded when tested. They were healthy, but he didn't open them. Mary hadn't known why Reid wasn't opening his eyes. She said he should be able to see when he did decide to open them.

Even with his eyes closed, Reid recognized Luke's voice. That was a good sign. But he didn't seem to remember Cleve at all.

The injured man would talk to Luke, usually asking about Chipeta and the baby. It was the same conversation every time he woke up. Luke knew he didn't remember the previous conversations, so he was telling Reid whatever he needed to hear to comfort him.

Reid breathed heavy and held his breath. "Briim...m...mm." Then he jerked his head, gasp for air, and woke up again, still breathing hard.

"Luke?" Reid said with an urgency in his voice, then he took another deep breath.

"I'm here," Luke responded, touching Reid's arm.

"Are we goin' home?" Reid coughed gently.

"Uh-huh."

"Has Chipeta had the baby?" Reid gasped again and made noise with his throat.

"Yes," Luke replied.

"They're both okay?"

Luke gave a hesitant yes.

It wasn't a lie. The baby was okay, he was with Jesus.

"Do you think you can eat something?" Luke asked.

"I don't want anything," Reid responded, a nauseated look on his face.

"Here, try to drink some water."

Luke held Reid's head up as Cleve passed him a cup with a small amount of water in it.

Reid opened his dry lips slightly, but lost most of the little bit of water Luke poured in. The moisture ran down his face onto his neck. Luke used a damp cloth and wiped Reid's chin and neck. Then, as he was lying his brother's head down, he continued to wipe the sweat away.

Luke wondered if his brother had fever. It was hot in the car. All of them were sweating constantly. But Reid would also get chills occasionally, and they would have to put a blanket over him to get him warm.

"Luke?"

"Yeah?"

"Is Dad still praying?"

"I'm sure he is," Luke responded.

This was usually where the conversation stopped. But now, for the first time, it continued.

Reid added, "Would you read Scripture to me?"

"I don't have a Bible with me," Luke said. "I'm sorry."

"Can you get it? It's on the table by the door."

"Give me a minute." Luke looked to Cleve questioningly and shrugged his shoulders. He didn't know what else to do or say.

Cleve whispered, "Just a minute. I'll see if I can find one." He got up and left, headed toward the passenger car behind them.

"Luke?"

“Yes.”

“Who was that?” Reid cleared his throat.

“Our big brother, Cleve. Do you remember him?”

“Oh.” There was a pause, but no answer to Luke’s question. Then Reid called his brother again. “Luke?”

“Uh-huh?”

Reid coughed. “What did Chipeta name the baby?”

Oh no. How could he bluff his way through this one? He would try to distract Reid, change the subject.

“Here, Reid. Try to take some more water.” Luke lifted his brother’s head, but Reid didn’t open his mouth. “Reid, please try to take some water.”

Reid’s head rolled slightly. He was asleep again.

A short time later Cleve returned, followed by Brother Nick. “Look who I found coming back from a preacher’s meeting in Lawrence.”

Luke leaned forward and pushed up onto one knee, shaking the preacher’s hand, then sat back down beside Reid. Brother Nick looked down at Reid.

“Oh my, he doesn’t look good at all,” the pastor commented softly.

“I know,” Cleve said. “I’m glad we’re almost home.”

“What happened?” Brother Nick asked.

Cleve shook his head. He couldn’t explain it. The operation with the DOJ was ongoing, even if Reid wasn’t involved anymore. It was possible that Reid could still be in danger. Cleve couldn’t talk about it.

“He’s hurt bad. Mary said we may as well take him home. There was nothing she could do for him that Thomas couldn’t do at home. She said it would be better if he was with family,” Cleve answered.

“Who’s Mary?”

Luke responded, “Our sister. She’s a doctor.”

“Oh, right. I forget about her,” the preacher said.

Brother Nick had met all of Travis’s children, except Mary. He had read the story about Mary being taken by Indians when she was a young girl. Travis had gone after her. Travis had been a deputy federal

marshal at that time and had left his wife and four other children, including Luke and Cleve, to search for her. He had found her, rescued her, and returned home. But it had taken all winter.

Reid started mumbling. The three men turned to watch the injured man. His breathing was getting heavier.

“No. It’s mmmmeekaabbaa.” Reid held his breath, jerked his head, gasp for air, and woke up with a start. He took a few deep breaths, then called his brother again. “Luke?” Reid gasp for air again.

“I’m here.”

“Are we goin’ home?” Reid gave a soft cough.

“Yes,” Luke responded patiently for the thousandth time. “Can you open your eyes, and look at who’s here to visit you.”

They could see Reid’s face straining. He tried. Reid could squeeze his eyes tight, and he tried stretching his face to open his eyes. But he simply couldn’t figure out how to get them open.

“It’s okay. You don’t have to.” Luke took the damp cloth and wiped Reid’s eyes, then his forehead and neck, leaving the damp cloth resting across Reid’s throat. “It’s Brother Nick. Do you remember him?” Luke waited, but there was no response. “Do you still want me to read to you?”

Reid nodded and gave a weak, “Uh-huh.”

Brother Nick handed Luke his Bible and sat down on a crate beside Cleve.

Luke opened the Bible at random and started reading.

I said, “In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?”<sup>1</sup>

Luke’s face contorted, and he stopped reading. He looked to Cleve and put a hand over his eyes, upset by his little brother’s pain, his own inability to help Reid, and now the thought of his brother dying.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 38:10.

Reid knew exactly where this scripture came from: from the story of a Jewish king's illness.

"King Hezekiah. Keep reading," Reid said softly.

Luke handed the Bible back to the pastor and shook his head, mouthing the words, "I can't." He couldn't continue. He couldn't think of his brother dying.

Nick continued reading.

I said, "I will not again see the Lord himself in the land of the living; no longer will I look on my fellow man. Or be with those who now dwell in this world."<sup>1</sup>

The preacher had always been impressed with the knowledge of the Bible that Travis's children had. And Nick understood why they all knew the Bible so well. Travis was a righteous man of God. He had followed the Lord wholeheartedly, and Travis had taught his children well.

Nick had met Travis during the Civil War. Travis had offered Christian charity to many that had been injured in battle, including Nick. They had spent weeks together. Nick had been so moved by Travis's Christian witness that he had turned to the Lord himself and dedicated his life to the Lord's work.

Brother Nick turned his attention back to the men in the postal car. He looked at Reid, then at Luke. Luke had his head in his hands, looking at the floor.

"Please read," Reid asked again.

The scripture was upsetting Luke but seemed to be a comfort to Reid.

Like a shepherd's tent my house has been pulled down and taken from me. Like a weaver I have rolled up my life and he has cut me off from the loom; day and night you made an end to me.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 38:11.

I waited patiently till dawn, but like a lion he broke all my bones; day and night you made an end to me. I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am being threatened; Lord, come to my aid!<sup>1</sup>

Pastor Nicholas Gatte stopped again. He looked at Reid. Reid's eyes were open slightly. Cleve saw this too. He poked his foot out and kicked Luke gently. Luke looked up, and Cleve pointed to Reid. Luke smiled, but the tears were now flowing down his face.

Nick continued,

But what can I say? He has spoken to me and he himself has done this. I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. Lord, by such things people live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back. For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; parents tell their children about your faithfulness.<sup>2</sup>

Reid interrupted, "When the baby gets bigger, I'm going to tell him how God took care of me. Luke, what did you say Chipeta named the baby?"

Brother Nick looked at Cleve questioningly. Cleve put a finger to his lips, telling the pastor to keep quiet. Nick looked with sym-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 38:12–14.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 38:15–19.

pathy back to Reid. His eyes were closed, his breathing slow and regular. He was asleep.

Nick commented, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."<sup>1</sup>

Then the pastor knelt beside Reid and put a hand on his leg.

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."<sup>2</sup> Thank you, Lord, for the gift of life. Thank you for comforting us in our time of distress. Thank you for being our healer," Nick prayed. "God, you said, 'I will restore you to health and heal your wounds'<sup>3</sup> and like Jesus who suffered for us we accept what you give and we look forward to your glory." Looking to Reid he continued, "(Jesus) was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."<sup>4</sup> Now, Lord, heal our brother, Reid. Lessen his suffering, ease his pain. Bring him back to the fullness of health that you desire for him."

\*\*\*\*\*

When Mary decided Luke and Cleve could take Reid home, she had written a letter to Thomas and sent it by train, special delivery. It arrived in Harris just a few days before the brothers' return.

It gave a brief summary of Reid's injuries and explained that the complete medical records and X-rays would be coming with Cleve.

She couldn't call by phone. Long distance was only available east of Chicago.

Mary was not the only one who sent a special delivery letter to Thomas. Cleve sent one also. Thomas was following Cleve's instruc-

<sup>1</sup> John 11:12b.

<sup>2</sup> 3 John 1:2.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 30:17a.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 53:3-5.

tions now. Thomas had waited to leave the stables until he heard the train in the distance. The train was pulling into the station as Thomas arrived. The wagon was brought to a stop on the opposite side of the train, away from the station. The only thing on this side of the tracks was the cattle yard, and it was empty today. No one would see Reid being taken off.

Thomas entered the postal car and stopped to look at Reid from a distance. Reid looked to be in worse shape than Mary's letter had led him to imagine. The trip must have been hard on him. The doctor returned to the wagon for the stretcher. There was no other way to move him.

Thomas didn't acknowledge the other men but went straight to Reid. He checked his new patient out briefly, then turned to the others.

"Let's get him on the stretcher to move him," Thomas said, talking to Luke. The doctor turned to the other two men in the car. "Cleve, get the mattress into the wagon when we pick him up, then come back to help us. Pastor, help him please, then go hold the horses still. I don't want that wagon moving at all."

They rolled Reid onto the stretcher, and he woke suddenly with a cry of pain. They kept moving. This was the only way to get him home. He would be in pain until they got him into bed, then he would be able to rest. Thomas hoped some of the discomfort would go away when all the movement stopped.

Cleve drove the wagon as Thomas and Luke sat on either side of Reid. They tried to brace his body by folding the edges of the mattress up around him, trying to keep Reid as still as possible as the wagon bumped slowly along the short distance.

"We're going to my house," the doctor told Cleve. "We set up a bedroom downstairs for him."

Luke asked, "Where's Dad? And Chipeta?"

Thomas looked at Luke. It took a long moment for him to respond. "Chipeta's father came and took her back to Utah with him. Papa went after her."

## CHAPTER 25



Thomas got Reid into bed and took care of his needs. The doctor thought Reid seemed confused as he tried to make Reid comfortable. Reid was fighting everything Thomas tried to do. His patient also seemed nauseated. Luke worked to calm his little brother.

Luke had tried to get water down Reid on the train, but Reid had arrived in Harris severely dehydrated. The doctor moved quickly to provide hydration. It was hard to find Reid's veins. And it was hard to find his weak pulse. But when Thomas laid his hand on Reid's chest, his heartbeat was hard and fast.

When Reid finally settled down, Luke went to his office to let the deputy know he was back and to check on the town. This left the doctor and Sarah alone with Reid.

Reid stopped breathing for brief moments and then would gasp for air as he began breathing again. This happened again and again. The doctor was afraid his patient might stop breathing altogether. Reid continued to do this throughout the day. Thomas called Cleve and was told, yes, that had happened often on the train. Cleve told Thomas that Reid would always wake up when it happened. But the doctor didn't like this.

Thomas tried to examine Reid's throat; but every time the doctor would touch his throat, Reid would wake up, become agitated, and lash out at Thomas with his fist. Thomas would pull away, and Reid would calm. Eventually, Thomas theorized that Reid didn't have a clear airway. This had to be the result of his injuries. They would have to watch Reid constantly.

Thomas thought the violent outburst had to be a result of what Reid had experienced at the hand of his assailants. Reid must be trying to protect himself from further injury.

Thomas sat watching Reid, thinking about the first time the young man had walked into their home a little over seven years ago.

Reid never seemed shy, but he was more distant than the others Thomas and Sarah had accepted into their home. Thomas had to work to become friends with him. Even after Thomas thought he was making progress in their relationship, something would happen that would let Thomas know that he really knew nothing about Reid.

There would be an astonishing comment or an unexpected question. The most surprising question came when Reid asked his sister to sing at the chapel on campus with him.

It was about two months into the first semester. Reid had already chosen a song, and when he presented it to Sarah, he sang it to both her and Thomas. It was so beautiful that the others in the house came to listen.

When Reid finished singing, they discovered that Reid and his father had arranged and put Nehemiah 9:5b–6 to music. Reid didn't know how to read music, so it wasn't written down. But he remembered every word and every note.

Stand up and praise the Lord your God,  
who is from everlasting to everlasting.  
Blessed be your glorious name,  
and may it be exalted above all blessing and  
praise.

Stand up and praise the Lord your God,  
who is from everlasting to everlasting.

You alone are the Lord.  
You made the heavens,  
even the highest heavens,  
and all their starry host,  
the earth and all that is on it,  
the seas and all that is in them.

Stand up and praise the Lord your God,  
 who is from everlasting to everlasting.  
 Blessed be your glorious name,  
 and may it be exalted above all blessing and  
 praise.  
 Stand up and praise the Lord your God,  
 who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Reid told the Stewarts that he and his father had sung scripture together for years. Reid now wanted Sarah to take his father's part of this song.

Sarah had been speechless. Reid had honored her beyond anything she could have imagined. She was the only one of her brothers and sisters, that she knew of, who would perform in front of other people. And Reid was the only one she had ever heard sing. Now she had a kindred spirit in Reid.

They were introduced at the chapel service as Reid Britt, freshman prelaw student and his sister, Sarah Stewart, founding matron and vocal instructor of the Denver Academy of Sacred Music.

Those attending had sat in awed worship as the two sang. Such beauty. Such exquisite voices. Such praise to their Lord. They were immediately asked to become regular presenters at chapel. After a few more song presentations, Reid also began speaking.

One of his favorite passages, and the focus of several of his sermons, came from Amos.

There are those who hate the one who  
 upholds justice in court and detest the one who  
 tells the truth.<sup>1</sup>

There are those who oppress the innocent  
 and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice  
 in the courts. Therefore the prudent keep quiet  
 in such times, for the times are evil. Seek good,  
 not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God

<sup>1</sup> Amos 5:10.

Almighty will be with you, just as you say he  
 is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the  
 courts.<sup>1</sup>

Although Reid would preach and sing, he never cared about mingling with the other students. He was never available to talk with those that attended. He would disappear after chapel, rushing off to class or to the library for a study session with a classmate. Small talk was just not a part of Reid Britt.

Thomas felt like the proud papa each time he attended chapel to listen to Reid speak or sing. And he tried to attend every time Reid presented.

Now, sitting here watching Reid struggle to breathe, and knowing the pain he was in, Thomas felt like his own son had been injured and it pulled at his heart.

As the day progressed, Reid woke up several times. He always asked for Luke. Sometimes he seemed to understand who was with him and where he was; other times he didn't. Thomas sat with Reid all afternoon and into the evening.

Luke came by the house just after dark and found his little brother awake and upset. But when Luke spoke to Reid, he calmed. Luke decided to stay the night, hoping Reid would get accustomed to his surroundings by morning and not be upset when Luke left again.

After a hard first night home, Reid lay in bed the nights that followed talking to Thomas. He got his days and nights mixed up, and he couldn't sleep, he couldn't open his eyes, and he couldn't move. Reid always asked for Luke when he woke up but then would remember Thomas and calm down. He never spoke to Thomas of his physical pain, but he told the doctor what he had experienced the last few weeks.

He told Thomas about being beaten unconscious by a man three times his size, about the loneliness lying on the basement floor while injured and about feeling the evil and oppression around him.

<sup>1</sup> Amos 5:12b–15a.

Reid talked of the help he had received from the two girls and the young boy. About his throat being held so tight he couldn't breathe and about being thrown down the stairs over and over. He even talked about being buried beneath rocks and about the darkness and waiting for death to overtake him.

His story came in pieces. He wasn't able to talk for very long at any one time, and he always began by asking for Luke. But Reid would want to talk two, three, and sometimes four times every night. Thomas encouraged Reid to tell him what happened. It would help Reid heal.

But Reid was also thanking God that the Lord had seen him through these struggles and that Jesus had been there with him to comfort him. He told Thomas of lying in the storage room alone and of the comfort he received from listening to the angels sing. He talked about Jesus being buried with him in the tunnel and about Jesus staying with him as he traveled home. Thomas knew that the Lord had taken care of Reid. There was no way Reid could have lived through this without God's help.

Thomas couldn't share the story with anyone. It was too disturbing. He tried telling Luke but couldn't. All he was able to say was, "Reid told me how God took care of him. It was truly amazing."

\*\*\*\*\*

Sarah sat with Reid on the fifth day he was home. Someone was with him around the clock; he was never left alone. His pain had lessened without the movement on the train even though Thomas had decreased the medication. Now Reid wasn't being given any drugs. The doctor wanted to find out if the medicine was causing Reid's foggy thinking or if it was indeed damage to his brain. Reid seemed to be doing better without the medication.

Reid would stay asleep for longer periods of time and wasn't dreaming like he had been on the train. Most of his sleep was peaceful. He was sleeping better too, but not at night. The darkness brought thoughts of the tunnel, and he wanted distraction from his memories.

There was an empty glass bottle hanging upside down on the wall near the bed. Thomas used this to provide Reid with hydration. He would mix boiling water with salt, allow it to cool, and insert a needle into Reid's arm. One end of a rubber tube was attached to the needle and the other end to the bottle, allowing the salt water to gently flow until the bottle was empty. This happened throughout the day.

Reid didn't seem to be in as much pain as he had been that first day home. But his breathing was more labored. Thomas speculated that, without the medication, this was Reid's body's reaction to the pain that he did have.

"Luke?" Reid asked. He always asked for Luke when he woke up.

"Luke's not here," Sarah said, reaching out to touch her youngest brother. "It's Sarah."

"Where's Luke?" Reid asked in the soft hoarse voice that he now used every time he spoke.

Sarah answered, "He went into town."

"Are we home?" Reid asked.

"Yes, dear, you're home."

"Where's Chipeta?" Reid asked, then gently coughed.

"She's not here right now."

"Is she coming? I haven't seen her."

"I know. Do you want something to eat?" Sarah was trying to get Reid's thoughts off his wife.

"Luke went into town, didn't he?"

"Yes, he did." Sarah smiled sympathetically. She had just told him that.

"I haven't seen Dad." Reid coughed. "Where is he?"

It was getting harder to hide from Reid the fact that his wife and his father weren't there. Reid was becoming more alert, remembering more of the previous days. Maybe it was time to tell Reid the truth. Sarah would talk to Thomas about this later.

"Reid, honey, can you look at me?"

Reid turned his head slightly toward Sarah. Sarah wasn't sure if his eyes were open or not, but she spoke as if Reid had done what she asked.

"Reid, do you know who I am?"

“My sister.”

“Good. Now, where are you?”

“Your house.” Reid coughed again. Thomas thought that the coughing and the noise Reid made clearing his throat were the result of the damage done to it. Reid’s throat must be sore or bothered him in some way. The more Reid would talk, the more he would react this way. But he still wasn’t talking much.

“Good, that’s right. You remember. How do you feel? Are you in pain?”

“I don’t...I don’t think so. I’m just tired.”

“Good, that’s good.” She brushed her hand across his forehead and then kissed just below where her hand stopped. “Do you need anything?”

Reid shook his head slightly.

Sarah had her hand on Reid’s head, and she felt enough of the movement to know he had moved his head, but she couldn’t tell if he had said yes or no. “Reid, I need you to talk to me. I can’t see if you were nodding or shaking your head,” she said.

“Sorry,” he replied at a whisper. “No.”

“Okay. I’m going to get you something to eat. Lie still. I’ll be right back,” Sarah said.

“Sarah,” another voice came from the doorway.

“Oh, good morning, Brother Nick.”

“How’s our patient today?”

She smiled. “See for yourself. He’s awake.”

Brother Nick had been by every day and had sat with Reid and read scripture. So far, every time he came, Reid had been asleep.

“Good morning, Reid,” Nick said.

“Pastor, are you going to read to me again?” Reid coughed gently a few times.

Nick smiled. “Yes. Are you ready?”

Nick was happy Reid had realized he had been there. He was improving. Nick looked to Sarah, who was smiling too. Brother Nick patted her arm as he walked past. Nick was only there a few minutes each day, but he could tell that Reid was becoming aware of what was going on around him. He remembered more every day.

“You go ahead,” Sarah told Nick. “I’m going to get him some breakfast. Since you’re here I’ll take my time.”

Nick sat down beside Reid and opened his Bible.

Do you not know? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.<sup>1</sup>

“Pastor?” Reid said.

“Yes.”

Reid’s thoughts had been on Chipeta and the baby. He couldn’t remember seeing them. He knew that women often died in childbirth and that babies would die too. No one was talking about Chipeta or the baby. He began to think that’s what had happened. They were dead.

Reid cleared his throat. “You’ve come to see me before. But I haven’t seen Chipeta. Answer me honestly, please.” He coughed. “Did she go home to be with the Father?”

Nick knew that Reid would ask a question several times, getting things straight in his fuzzy mind. The pastor thought Reid must have been told about Chipeta. But with Reid’s harsh scratchy voice, the pastor had missed one small detail. Reid had said “*the* Father,” not “*her* father.”

“Yes, she did. I’m sorry, son.”

Reid was quiet. Then he asked. “Where’s my father?”

“He went after Chipeta.”

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 40:28–31.

Reid lay still. He hadn't opened his eyes this visit. Nick had been told that Reid was opening his eyes more often. But he still wasn't doing it very much. Nick wanted to see them open, but it didn't look like that would happen today.

Reid had gotten still. Nick thought he had fallen asleep. Brother Nick stood up to leave and got as far as the door when he heard Reid speak again. This time Reid's voice was softer than before.

"Did you bury my baby too?"

"Yes, I did."

Reid's voice continued to get softer as he spoke to no one. "My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, the grave is ready for me."<sup>1</sup>

Brother Nick saw Reid's mouth moving, but Reid wasn't talking loud enough to be heard from across the room.

"I'm sorry, Reid," Brother Nick said. He returned to sit beside Reid and put a hand on Reid's shoulder. The pastor sat waiting for Reid to talk again but nothing came. "I'll see you tomorrow." When Reid gave no response, Nick thought he had fallen asleep and got up to leave.

When Sarah returned with Reid's breakfast, Reid wouldn't talk to her. She tried spooning food to his mouth, but he wouldn't open his mouth. He refused to eat. She heard his soft breathing and thought he was asleep. She set the tray down on the table and returned to the chair and her sewing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas and Sarah talked that night. Yes, it was time to tell Reid everything. They made arrangements for Luke to be with them the next morning. The sheriff needed to be there to keep his little brother calm.

That night Reid didn't talk to Thomas. Thomas thought his patient had his days and nights straight again, and he didn't try to have a conversation with Reid. The doctor would let his patient sleep.

<sup>1</sup> Job 17:1 (NKJV).

Thomas was still with Reid when Luke arrived the next morning. Sarah greeted Luke at the door and walked with him to the bedroom. As Sarah and Luke stepped into the room, Luke could see that Reid's eyes were open. But they were staring at the ceiling blankly. Thomas got out of the chair and turned them around, going into the next room.

The doctor spoke quietly. "Reid's been awake a long time, but he's not talking. I don't think he's in pain. I've asked. He just shook his head at me, but he didn't say anything. He just stares at the ceiling. Every once in a while I'll see a tear slide down his face. I don't know what's going on."

Sarah added, "He hasn't tried to eat anything since day before yesterday."

Thomas looked at her, his brow furrowed. He wished he had known that yesterday. He needed to know if there was any change in Reid's behavior.

Thomas wouldn't say anything to his wife about this, at least not right now. She had taken on the continuous job of caring for Reid, and she was doing it well. He didn't want to discourage her. But he would remind her later that he needed to know about any changes in Reid's behavior.

They returned to Reid, and Luke sat down on the edge of the bed beside him. Reid's eyes were now closed, and they tightened when Luke sat down. Reid knew Luke was there; he had felt the bed move.

Sarah often sat on the bed, and sometimes Thomas would also. But Sarah didn't weigh much and didn't move the bed. Thomas sat carefully and didn't cause much movement either. But Luke was a different story. Luke was a large man. He caused the bed to shift, and Reid would always roll slightly toward Luke. When Luke sat on the edge of the bed, it always caused Reid a few seconds of discomfort.

"Reid? Are you okay?"

Reid nodded. His breathing was a little heavier now, after the movement of the bed.

"Are you sure? Look at me, Reid?"

Reid slowly rolled his head over to face Luke, but he barely opened his eyes. Reid was staring at him with no recognition on his face. Luke thought it looked more like Reid was looking through him, to some unknown person or thing at a far distance.

“Reid, we wanted to tell you why Chipeta and Dad haven’t been here,” Luke began.

Reid didn’t want to hear about this. He’d been thinking about their death since the previous morning. He didn’t think he could take any more. He had heard the preacher say that Chipeta had died; she had gone to be with God. His father had died at some point after she did. The baby was gone too. Chipeta must have died in childbirth. Could his father not take more death of his children? Had he grieved himself to death?

Reid’s mind was still fuzzy. He still had trouble understanding what people were telling him. But he understood this clearly. He didn’t want to hear the words *death*, *dying*, or *burial* again.

“I know. They’re gone.” Reid closed his eyes again, then coughed. “I just want to know how long it was after Chipeta was gone before Dad went too?” Another cough.

“Just a couple of days.”

A couple of days. Had Reid asked too much of his father, to care for Chipeta? He had now suffered the loss of two wives, three children, and two grandchildren along with most of his friends.

Reid knew that his father often took responsibility for things that were out of his control. Luke was always telling their father to let God handle a situation, telling him that God was in control and Dad needed to understand that. It wasn’t his father’s fault when circumstances caused something bad to happen. What had happened? Had his father felt responsible for Chipeta’s death?

*Death*, he had said the word to himself again. This was something Reid didn’t have to get straight in his mind. It was shoved in and stuck, nailed to his memory like Jesus’s hands had been nailed to the cross. His father, his wife, and their baby were dead.

“Reid?”

Reid opened his eyes again to look at Luke.

“Reid, the baby died.”

“I know. Brother Nick told me. I knew you were all hiding something from me.” Reid coughed. “I asked him to tell me the truth.” Silent tears began to run down Reid’s face again. “Can you leave me alone?”

Thomas and Sarah moved toward the door. Luke got up and started that way. He stopped, looking at Reid for a few moments, then went to the chair beside the bed.

“I’m going to sit right here, Reid. I’m going to stay with you,” Luke said. He would stay with his brother. Luke knew his brother didn’t need to be alone right now. Reid reached his hand toward Luke, and Luke accepted it. Reid squeezed his brother’s hand and closed his eyes as the tears continued to flow.

## CHAPTER 26



Travis sat on a piece of firewood turned on its end. He couldn't sleep. His shoulder hurt too much. He hadn't had this much pain in years and knew he had to get it under control.

Travis spoke to his Lord, "Lord, if ya will, stop my shoulder from hurtin'. Let me finish what I started. 'Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.'<sup>1</sup> But, Lord, if I have ta, I can take the pain in my body but not the pain in my soul. But ya, Father, will take care of that. Bring Chipeta home with me an', Father, take care a Reid. Bring him home. Don't let him find Chipeta gone."

And the Spirit spoke. *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."*<sup>2</sup>

"Is Chipeta scared? Is that why she came here? I know great harm has been done ta her by men who ain't ya chil'en. I know ya people didn' share ya love like they should have. I think they've had a change a heart if Chipeta would fargive 'em an' give 'em 'nother chance. Let her feel the love ya bring ta her. Let her feel the love I have far her. An' let her know that Reid loves her."

The Spirit brought scripture to Travis's heart: *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:49–50.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 4:18.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 4:8.

Travis replied, "Yes, I will continue ta love her."  
And the Spirit spoke, *"In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay."*<sup>1</sup>

Travis's countenance brightened. "Ya is bringin' Reid home soon? Thank ya, Father."

\*\*\*\*\*

Travis spent the next several days with Chipeta and Casicas. Chipeta had not made her decision, and Travis was trying to be patient. He didn't ask her to come home again. But Travis was impatient inside. God had told him Reid was coming home, and he wanted to be there to see his son.

"Chipeta?" Travis said. "Have ya ask God ta give ya direction. Have ya ask him what ta do?"

"No," she replied.

"Would ya do that? Can ya find some time ta go off by ya'self an' talk ta God?" Travis asked.

Chipeta replied, "I don't know how to pray."

"Ya've hear'd me pray, an' ya've hear'd Reid, an' Luke an' the others. I know ya hear'd the women pray too. All ya have ta do is talk ta God. Tell him how ya feel an' ask him what ta do. Would ya do that?"

She tried to brush off his request. "Maybe when I finish with my chores."

\*\*\*\*\*

That night Chipeta still had not prayed. Travis asked her again, telling her if she would honestly pray, he would go away and leave her alone. Then Travis returned to his upended piece of firewood on the front porch, and he prayed too. He prayed that Chipeta would talk to God and that she would hear his voice respond. He continued his prayers the way he had been praying, for Reid's safe return and for Luke and Cleve to be safe and have success. He prayed for the safety

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:37.

of his family in Harris. He prayed that the attacks from the enemy would stop and that his family would stand strong in their faith. Then he prayed for Chipeta again.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next day Chipeta again saw Papa sitting on the porch with his face in his hands.

She knew he needed to go home. She had seen his hand swollen again. He hadn't used that hand since he had shown up at their home, except to rub his shoulder. She had seen him pulling at his shoulder, backward and forward, watching him from a distance when he thought he was alone. She had gone to him and asked if she could help him. All he had said was, "No. Old injuries just hurt sometimes." But later that day, and into the next, she could still see that it bothered him.

She decided to do what he asked, then he would go home. She had no intention of returning to Kansas with him, but if praying was what she had to do to get him to leave, then praying is what she would do.

Just before dark she left the house and walked to the outcropping of rocks over the small hill.

She sat down and said, "Okay, God. Papa said I needed to talk to you and that you would talk back. So here I am. If you are God, you know what's going on so I don't need to tell you. Talk to me."

She sat defiant, expecting nothing to happen. But as she sat in the still quiet, she heard the soft wind blowing through the leaves of the trees and a bird singing nearby. She began to relax. The music of the bird's song softly faded away. The sound of a gentle wind through the trees lessened, but she could still see the leaves moving. It was peaceful on this hill, she had to admit that much.

Then her spirit heard a sound in the whispering wind. "*(I have searched (you), (says the) Lord (and I) know (you). (I) know when (you) sit and when (you) rise; (I) perceive (your) thoughts from afar. (I) discern*

*(your) going out and (your) lying down; (I) am familiar with all (your) ways.*"<sup>1</sup>

Chipeta's eyes grew wide. There was a voice in the wind. Her father had said there was, but she had never heard it. She continued to listen.

*"And (I know) even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."*<sup>2</sup>

Chipeta slid from the rock where she was sitting onto her knees. "Lord!" she cried.

*"(I) created mankind in (my) own image.<sup>3</sup> You are my child. Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart."<sup>4</sup>*

*"From one man (I) made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and (I) marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. (I) did this so that they would seek (me) and perhaps reach out for (me) and find (me), though (I am) not far from any one of (you)."<sup>5</sup>*

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on (you), that (you) should be called children of God!"<sup>6</sup>*

Chipeta started to cry. They were tears of joy. She was loved. She felt the love all around her.

*"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."<sup>7</sup>*

*"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 139:1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:30.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:27a.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 1:5a.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 17:26-27.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 3:1a.

<sup>7</sup> James 1:17.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:31-33.

Chipeta sat up with a start and stopped crying. Reid had told her this. He had told her that if they sought God above all else, that they would be happy, no matter what happened.

She continued to listen to the wind.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*<sup>1</sup>

*“For I know the plans I have for you’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’”*<sup>2</sup>

Chipeta began to cry again. “I’m sorry! I have made such a mess of things. I tried to be something I wasn’t. I tried to be white, but you made me Indian. You made all of us. We are all one people. It doesn’t matter what color we are! I loved you when things went my way, but when things got hard, I turn from you. Please, please, forgive me!” Chipeta put her head in her hands and continued to cry, this time because of her failures.

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”*<sup>3</sup>

*“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.”*<sup>4</sup>

*“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”*<sup>5</sup>

“Lord!” Chipeta cried. “You do want me to talk to you. You do want me to pray! Should I stay here or go back to my husband?”

*“Go, call your husband and (go) back.”*<sup>6</sup>

Chipeta fell prostrate on the ground before her Lord, acknowledging his sovereignty and power.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:34.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 29:11–13.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 31:3b.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 19:5a (ESV).

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 33:3.

<sup>6</sup> John 4:16b.

*“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*<sup>1</sup>

“My desire, Lord, my desire is for my husband!” Chipeta’s cry was almost a whisper.

Chipeta lifted her head and listened. The wind was blowing through the trees again. The bird’s song grew louder. The Spirit was gone. She couldn’t feel it anymore.

But she knew from things her husband had told her, the Spirit was always with her. Now she remembered the scripture he had read the last night before he left home. *“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and the God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”*<sup>2</sup>

God’s Spirit was always with her, always inside of her. That gave Chipeta a peaceful feeling, knowing that God was always there. She now stood in awe of his holiness.

The night was dark. There was no moon, but the stars were bright in the clear sky.

Chipeta walked back to her father’s house and stopped at a distance. She could see Papa on the porch, still sitting on the log, his head still in his hands. She smiled. She did love this man.

She started running to him and yelled, “Papa! Papa! God spoke to me!”

Travis looked up to see her coming to him, her arms out, reaching for him. Travis stood.

Casicas came onto the porch as his daughter ran into Travis’s arms.

“I’m going home with you,” she said and buried her head in his shoulder, crying.

Travis brushed her hair out of her face, and he could tell the tears were tears of joy.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 37:4.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 (ESV).

## CHAPTER 27



**B**rother Nick again came to deliver scripture to Reid. The last few times he had come, Reid had asked him to stay longer, reading more scripture each time. Reid was getting stronger, and he needed distraction from the thoughts rolling around in his head.

Brother Nick read.

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Reid thought. God was strengthening him. But why? Why was he allowed to suffer and live through what had happened to him while his wife, father and innocent baby had died?

God had sent him to do a job, and he had done it. But he realized it had not been finished. The evil men were still operating their business, still taking these children from their families and enslaving the girls.

And they were mostly children. Girls as young as thirteen, fourteen and fifteen, oh, even that twelve-year-old. They were being held for years, until they were of no use anymore. Then they were disposed of.

Reid decided he needed to finish what he had started. God was strengthening him for the battle. He was allowing Reid to rest for a season, then the battle would begin again.

Scripture came to Reid's thoughts: "*He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.*"<sup>1</sup>

Was that what happened? His enemy had gotten too strong, so God rescued him? Yes, that is what happened. He couldn't stand alone against the organization, so God had sent his brothers to help him. His brothers, righteous men of God.

"Brother Nick?" Reid interrupted. "Would you read Psalm 18?"

Nick turned back in his Bible, found the scripture, and began to read. Reid listened carefully for what he was looking for. There it was.

For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights. He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You make your saving help my shield, and your right hand sustains me; Your help has made me great.

You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way. I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle; you humbled my adversaries before me. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 18:17 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 18:31–40.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 35:3–6.

God had given him strength for this battle. He would finish. He would see that the men he fought against, the men that had caused his injuries and tried to kill him, the men that had taken him away from his wife and family, they would all be punished for their actions.

“Brother Nick, would you ask Cleve to come see me?”

“Of course, I will.” Nick stood up. “And I’ll see you again tomorrow, young man.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The pastor stopped by Cleve’s office to tell him that his brother wanted to see him. Brother Nick joyfully told Cleve of the progress Reid had made recently. He was remembering what happened in previous days. His speech was stronger and clear, and his eyes were open and focused. A great improvement from the first time the preacher had seen him on the train.

Cleve was happy to hear this. The last he had heard from Thomas or Luke was how upset Reid had been over Chipeta’s return to Utah and of the baby’s death. Cleve had gone to see Reid after this, but Reid had been asleep. Cleve had not gotten to talk with him.

Cleve immediately stopped what he was doing and headed to Sarah’s house. Reid had not said a word to Cleve since they found him. Even when Reid woke during the night while Cleve sat with him, Reid had only questioned where Luke and Sarah were. Then Reid had gotten upset, and Cleve could not console him.

Cleve remembered Reid calling for Luke.

“Luke?” Reid had called when he woke up.

“Luke’s not here. It’s Cleve,” he had replied.

“No. Where’s Luke?”

Cleve had told his little brother that Luke was in town.

“Sarah? Where’s Sarah?”

“She’s asleep. What do you need?”

Reid had not answered him but had begun the shallow labored breathing that he often did.

Thomas thought he might be having anxiety or that Reid might be scared when this happened. The doctor had told them that disori-

entation could cause both. If that is what was happening, then Reid would cling to whatever or whoever he remembered or understood.

Cleve had been concerned, not knowing what to do, and had woken Thomas from his sleep.

When Thomas came into the bedroom, Reid recognized his voice and had calmed down. Then Reid had asked the same questions he always asked: Are we home? Where’s Chipeta? Where’s Dad? What did Chipeta name the baby?

That was the night they decided Cleve didn’t need to sit with Reid. Reid didn’t remember Cleve. Being with Cleve caused fear within his little brother. This disturbed Cleve. Reid talked to Sarah’s sons Adam, Edison, and even thirteen-year-old Curt. He remembered them. But he wouldn’t talk to his brother Cleve.

Cleve was sixteen years older than Reid, and they had never lived under the same roof. Cleve was living with Sarah and going to school in Denver when Reid was born. Cleve knew most of Sarah’s children better than he knew Reid. He had spent seven years in Denver, then had gone to Ohio to attend law school.

Reid had been ten years old when Cleve returned. But Cleve was busy with his own small children. Cleve hadn’t had time for his timid little brother who would disappear when Cleve went to visit his father.

Cleve knew Luke had made a conscious effort to spend time with their youngest brother. But Cleve hadn’t. This was the consequence. When Reid’s mind had been disturbed, he had not known Cleve. Now, he was happy Reid had asked for him, and he hurried to reach his brother.

When Cleve arrived, he found Angus sitting on the far side of the room, away from Reid. Cleve had more of a connection with Angus than with Reid. They had lived together for four years before Cleve left for school. Cleve had cared for Angus the year Mary was taken by the Indians and their father was gone from home. Cleve had grown to love that little boy and had kept up with Angus as he grew, writing notes to him and occasionally sending him gifts. Angus had also spent many hours at Cleve’s house when Cleve had returned to Harris.

“Hey, little brother, I haven’t seen you around for a while,” Cleve greeted Angus.

“Yeah, I know. I’ve been busy. I came by to see how Reid was doing, but he’s asleep. I thought I’d wait for him to wake up, but it doesn’t look like he’s going to open his eyes any time soon,” Angus explained.

Cleve turned to look at Reid. “Yeah. He doesn’t open his eyes very much,” Cleve said quietly. “Have you talked to him since he’s been home?”

“No. I prayed for him when he was gone. I prayed hard. I didn’t want anything to happen to him. But I realized I don’t know him. I never have. I’m ashamed of the way I acted growing up. I want to ask his forgiveness, but it seems so unimportant now with him hurt like this and Chipeta gone,” Angus said. “I don’t want him to think that I’m more concerned about my guilty feelings than his injuries or what happened with Chipeta.”

“I know. I feel like I owe him something too. I don’t know how to make up for the past.” Cleve sighed. “Did you know he would sing at chapel on campus?”

Angus looked at Cleve questioningly and shook his head.

“Thomas said he sang two or three times a semester. He said he would go to listen and that his singing was amazing,” Cleve added. “He also had an almost perfect score on his final law exam. I checked on it. He missed points on the essay section because his law theory was different than what the instructor taught.”

Angus sat with his mouth open, speechless.

They continued to watch Reid sleep but remained silent for several moments. Then Cleve said, “He sent me a message through Brother Nick this morning. He wants to talk to me.”

Cleve moved to Reid’s bedside. Cleve had not seen Reid in several days, and then Reid had been asleep. He wasn’t sure how much pain Reid was in now or how coherent he would be. Brother Nick seemed to know more about Reid than he did. And Barrett Batterton seemed to know him even better. Cleve understood Angus’s feelings. He didn’t know Reid either.

As Cleve sat down in the chair beside the bed, he saw a single tear running down his brother’s temple. Cleve reached over and softly wiped it away. “Reid?”

“I’m awake,” Reid said weakly, but he didn’t open his eyes.

Cleve asked, “Are you okay?”

But Reid didn’t answer. Instead, he spoke his brother’s name.

“Cleve?” Reid said his name almost in a way that Cleve thought Reid was reminding himself of who he was talking to. Reid took a deep breath. “Cleve. I need you to do something for me.” His voice was getting stronger as he spoke, but it still sounded rough from the injury to his throat. Cleve wondered if it would ever sound better.

“Sure. What do you need?” Cleve said.

Reid opened his eyes slowly to look at his brother. “Contact Barrett Batterton and Don Prather at the Department of Justice. Have them come here together. I want to talk to them. I need you here with us when we talk.”

Cleve was surprised by the clarity and determination he now heard in his brother’s voice. His voice still sounded like he might be having some pain, but Cleve saw no sign of it on his face.

“Okay. Can you tell me what this is about?”

“I’m going to finish what I started. I want that gang in jail and off the streets,” Reid said.

“All right, I’ll get them here.”

“And, Cleve, I forgave you and Angus a long time ago. I didn’t hold it against either of you that you didn’t want me around. I know somebody was always having to do something for me. I was always in the way. I’m praying I’ll be able to take care of myself soon. I don’t want to be a burden on anyone. I never meant for this to happen.” Silent tears were again showing in Reid’s eyes. He started coughing and closed his eyes.

“You’ve never been a burden, Reid. We just sometimes get so wrapped up in our own lives that we don’t remember to reach out to those that are a little further out of our grasp. And you’re not a burden now.”

Cleve said the words Reid wanted to hear, but it wasn't a comfort. Reid knew it was a lie. He was a burden. He couldn't do anything for himself, and Sarah's family was taking care of him, not Cleve's.

Reid hesitated, knowing his next request would cause someone more work. He would again be a burden to his family. "Can you ask Sarah to come here? I'd like to try eating something." Reid cleared his throat again. "And call Thomas. Ask him to come see me, please."

He had to ask. If he was going to get stronger, he needed their help.

"Okay, I'll do that," Cleve said.

Cleve turned around and stopped to look at Angus. Angus had his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees. When he looked up, he had a sad expression. But as Cleve continued to watch, he saw his father's crooked smile appear on his brother's face.

Cleve smiled at this strange connection his two youngest brothers had. Angus looked like their mother but had their father's smile, and Reid looked like their father but had their mother's smile. Cleve now wondered if either of them realized this.

Angus looked at Cleve as he smiled. Reid had said he had forgiven Angus long ago. Angus was happy about this, but he also felt guilty. He had not been convicted of his wrong actions until recently, until he had earnestly prayed for his brother. Angus realized he had never prayed for Reid, until the last few months. He never gave a second thought to his brother. How merciful Reid was to him, holding no grudge and forgiving without being asked.

"Cleve," Reid spoke again. Then he stopped to cough softly. "Thank you for going to Chicago. Thank you for finding me."

Cleve turned back to the man in the bed. He reached down and rubbed Reid's arm. "You're welcome. I'll go find Sarah and get you something to eat." Cleve left the room.

Angus moved closer to the bed. He didn't know what to say to Reid, so Angus put his hand on Reid's arm and sat with him in silence. Reid didn't say anything. Angus didn't know if he was awake or if he had fallen asleep again.

Lying in the bed with nothing to do but think, Reid had trouble controlling his emotions and his thoughts. Hearing Angus's and

Cleve's conversation had brought back old feelings for Reid. These feelings were causing him to keep quiet around Angus, like he had done as a child. Reid was now uncomfortable with Angus. He lay in bed hoping that Sarah would come soon. He needed her to rescue him from these thoughts of his life growing up.

He had been hurt deeply as a child by the way Angus and Naomi had treated him. He had loved his brother and sister. They were four and five years older than him, but they had ignored him and treated him as if he was a burden to them. He had learned to stay away from both of them.

His wounded spirit had caused him to stay away from Cleve too. Angus and Cleve were close, and Cleve had never shown any interest in Reid. Reid had not wanted to feel the rejection that being with Cleve might bring, so he kept his distance. It wasn't hard to stay away from his oldest brother. Cleve seldom came to the house because he would visit with their father in town. But when their father retired, Cleve began coming to the farm to visit. When he did, Reid would disappear into his books, or the barn, or behind the house.

After Angus and Naomi left for school in Denver, Reid was left home alone with his loving father. The only siblings that remained in town were Luke and Cleve. His father and Luke, the one brother that cared for him, had helped mend the silent ache in Reid's soul. There had never been any rejection from either of them.

Reid had prayed and told God that he loved Angus and Naomi, but he didn't like the feelings he had when they were around. That's when Reid's view of them had changed and his spirit had calmed. It wasn't long after this that Reid began praying that they would one day reconcile.

Now the reconciliation was happening. But instead of pleasure, Reid felt the loneliness again, even with Angus in the room with him. And Reid's brother's touch was truly disturbing to him.

Reid thought of his father and the love that man had shown him. He had always been patient, and it never bothered his father when Reid would interrupt what his dad was doing. His father always had time for him. Tears came to Reid's eyes again. His father

wasn't here anymore. His wife and father were gone. They were the ones who would have cared for him unconditionally.

Reid loved Sarah and Thomas, but they had eight children. These children were now beginning to marry and have families of their own. Reid didn't want to be in the way. But Sarah's family was taking care of him now. Reid knew he was a burden on them.

Through the years, Sarah and Thomas had taken in Reid and his five older siblings while they each went to school in Denver. Reid knew the strain this had put on their already large family. But Reid also knew that Thomas and Sarah were happy to do it. Reid had been treated like one of their children, and he loved the relationship he had with both of them. But it was time to stop depending on others.

Reid was now determined to gain strength and recover quickly so that he would not be obligated to them any longer. He couldn't turn to Cleve or Angus. They both had their own families to care for, and Naomi was still distant toward him.

Reid knew Luke would gladly care for him, but Luke was sheriff. He had little free time and lived in two rooms in the back of the jail. Reid couldn't depend on him either.

Reid couldn't depend on anyone in his family. He felt the best thing he could do was to get healthy enough to leave. He could return to Topeka and his job. His obligation to the DOJ was all he had left, and he was now determined to make this his lifelong mission.

Cleve found Sarah and told her Reid was hungry. As Sarah prepared something for Reid, Cleve telephoned Thomas and told him Reid needed to see him. Then Cleve returned to his brother's bedside.

In the few minutes it had taken to find Sarah and make the phone call, Cleve had made a decision. He would be a part of Reid's life from now on. When Sarah brought the food, Cleve took it from her and set it on the table. He lifted Reid so Sarah could add a pillow behind his head and shoulders. Then Cleve helped Reid with his food.

It was difficult enough for Reid to swallow without having to do it lying down. With Angus and Cleve in the room it was even more difficult. But he managed to eat more than just two or three bites. And he was now able to swallow a few sips of milk. Sarah was excited

and explained to the others that this was a huge improvement. It was encouraging to everyone there, including Reid.

\*\*\*\*\*

Angus returned to the power plant confused about what to do, about how he should care for his brother. He sat down at his desk and closed his eyes. He prayed about their relationship. When he finished praying, he pulled his Bible from the drawer and found Colossians 1. He read the chapter, then went back to verses 21, 22, and the first part of verse 23 and read again.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

Yes, Angus thought, he had been alienated from both God and Reid. He had treated Reid like an enemy, but now they were reconciling. It took Reid's physical body coming close to death to bring them together. Angus knew that Reid's faith was so much stronger than his own. Angus prayed again, committing himself to care for his brother and to hold to the gospel. He prayed he could be a better servant of God.

When Cleve left the Stewart home, he told Reid he would be back soon. It had taken twenty-four years, but Cleve was now ready to get to know his baby brother. His brother—forgiving, patient, quiet, and humble. He wanted to know the man that could go through what Reid had been through and still have such a strong will. He wanted to know the person that Barrett Batterton had told him about.

## CHAPTER 28



Thomas arrived just as Cleve was leaving. This was the first time he had gotten a call asking him to come home to see about Reid. He thought Reid must be in pain or need something no one else could provide. But when Thomas entered the room, Reid had his eyes wide open and followed Thomas with his eyes from the door to the bedside.

Reid's words were strong. "Thomas, I need to get out of this bed. What is it going to take to do that?"

"Well." This was a surprise. Thomas had to think a minute. "First, we need to get you sitting up. I'll bring a wheeled chair home tonight."

"Why? Why a wheelchair? Why can't I sit in that chair?" Reid raised his hand slightly and indicated the chair Thomas was sitting in. "Why can't we start now? Why do I have to wait until tonight?" Reid's voice got rougher as he spoke.

Thomas could tell Reid was trying to hold back a cough.

Despite Reid's visible discomfort, Thomas's face brightened some. Reid's mind was working well right now. He was thinking, planning, using cognitive reasoning. This was good. But he also seemed agitated and impatient. This wasn't like Reid. He would have to pay careful attention to Reid's emotional state and not let him get too excited.

Patience. He would have patience with Reid and explain procedures carefully. He would make sure Reid understood what was happening. Thomas still wasn't sure there was no brain damage. Anger was a sign of damage to the brain, so were mood swings. Reid hadn't

had any nausea since his first day home, and he hadn't mentioned any headaches, which were also signs of damage to the brain.

Thomas explained, "Because the back on the wheeled chair is higher and can be slanted at various angles. It will support your head better until you learn to use your neck muscles again. And we can move the position of your legs on it. Your legs haven't moved in a while. We don't want to cause edema or any other problems by changing their position in relation to your heart too quickly. Reid, have you had any headaches?"

"Yeah."

Reid had never mentioned his head hurting before. But he was his father's son. Reid's father wouldn't tell anyone when he was in pain either.

"Okay. That may slow us down. You make sure you tell me if you get one. Things have to be handled differently if your head is hurting. I also need to know if the pain in your back changes. We have to make sure we're not doing something that is affecting your body negatively. You be patient and I'll come home early. We'll start this afternoon."

Looking into Reid's eyes, Thomas could see his brain working. Reid was thinking about what Thomas said.

"Okay. I'll wait," Reid finally said, and then he coughed softly several times.

The doctor got up to leave, then turned to add, "You get some rest. You're going to be surprised how fast you will get tired once we start."

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas brought the wheeled chair home. Over the next few days Reid sat in the chair just a few minutes several times a day. His neck and back were getting stronger, and he could sit longer each time he got out of bed. He hadn't developed any problems with his legs.

But his head still hurt. After sitting for just a short time, his head would begin to hurt worse. When he told Thomas his head was

hurting, Thomas would always make him lie down again. Now Reid began keeping the pain to himself. He wasn't telling Thomas. He would wait until the headache was so bad, he had to close his eyes. He always closed his eyes. It helped lessen the pain somehow. But once he closed them, he couldn't get his eyes open until the pain was almost gone.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas and Reid were sitting on the porch watching Adam work on the automobile. Without Travis at home, Bella had begun hanging out at the Stewart home where the three teenage boys would give her attention. She now lay near Adam, in the shade of the motorcar.

Adam was replacing a part in the engine and was doing well by himself. But occasionally, Adam would ask his father a question.

Thomas enjoyed working on the automobile and teaching his sons about the workings of the engine. As they sat on the porch, Thomas was explaining to Reid what Adam was doing. Reid wasn't talking, so Thomas was holding the whole conversation alone.

Adam called to his father from the yard, needing assistance. Thomas stepped off the porch to help, leaving Reid alone in the wheeled chair. He would be fine. Thomas was close and would be right back. But Thomas wasn't watching Reid at the moment.

Reid stood up slowly. He was determined to do this. Good. He was doing good. He was on his feet. He was standing sideways in front of the wheeled chair, holding to the arm of the chair. He tried to move his right leg. Yes, it was moving. He watched his foot slide across the floor. He was leaning heavily on the chair, but he was standing. He was moving on his own.

"Reid, stop!" Reid heard Thomas call to him from the short distance. Then there was a sharp ping in his head, and he jerked his head against the sudden pain. The abrupt movement caused his head to spin. He leaned more on the chair, and it rolled slightly. Reid went down sideways onto the floor. He tried to catch himself, twisting and

putting his arm out. But his shoulder and his head hit the wood floor with corresponding dull thumps.

Thomas got to him quickly, rolling him over, cradling his head. Reid's head hurt, and his eyes were now closed, his head spiraling.

"Aw, Reid, you have got to slow down," the doctor fussed at him gently. "You're trying to do things too fast. You're going to get hurt, and it's going to take longer to accomplish what you want. Are you okay?" The doctor waited for an answer, but it didn't come. "Adam, come help me. Let's get him back in bed."

\*\*\*\*\*

Bed. He was in bed again. His head hurt. His back hurt. His shoulder hurt. He couldn't get his eyes open again.

"Reid, are you in pain?" Thomas asked. "Remember what I told you. I need to know what's going on, so I'll know what to do for you."

"My head hurts," he responded softly.

"Where you bumped it or somewhere else."

"Where I bumped it. And the side, behind my ear. The side that always hurts." Reid coughed gently.

Thomas's face showed more concern. His head always hurt? The right side behind his ear? That's where his skull had been fractured. Reid had never voiced this pain as being constant before. Was it truly constant, or was this just the same location every time he got a headache? He'd question Reid about this later.

"Why can't I open my eyes when my head hurts?" Reid asked.

So that's why he wasn't opening his eyes. His head was hurting. Thomas was learning a lot today. Reid had never told him this either. If he had a headache when his eyes were closed, then his head had been hurting often.

Thomas spoke to Reid gently. "I don't know. Maybe it's your brains way of protecting itself from further assault. I really don't know. Let's just accept it. Don't fight it. Does anything else hurt?"

“My shoulder.” Reid hesitated and moved his mouth some, like he was trying not to say anything else, but he had to tell the doctor. He added, “And my back.”

“Okay. Just lie still.” Thomas grabbed a pillow and lifted Reid’s legs to put the pillow under his knees in an attempt to relax the muscles in Reid’s back. “Your body’s going to have to recover. It may take a day or so. Do you want something for the pain?”

“Uh-uh.” Reid shook his head slightly. “It doesn’t help. And it makes me see things that aren’t there.”

It doesn’t help? Reid had never wanted the medicine, but he had never told Thomas why. Now Thomas was concerned. He had thought Reid’s pain was low because he hadn’t wanted the medicine, but now the doctor wondered how much pain Reid had been in.

“We can try something else. Let me run to my office for a minute, and I’ll get something. It’s not going to be as strong, but it won’t make you hallucinate either. Let’s see if it helps.”

But as Thomas looked at Reid, the doctor didn’t want to leave his patient right now. Adam had been working on the Oldsmobile, the engine was in pieces. Thomas wouldn’t be able to use the automobile. He could walk to the clinic and back in less time than it would take to go to the stable and saddle a horse. The doctor felt he would be away from his patient too long. No, he’d call Naomi and have her bring the medicine to him.

Thomas said, “Try to go to sleep. Rest, that’s the best thing you can do for yourself right now.”

Reid nodded and cleared his throat gently.

The doctor’s fifteen-year-old son, Edison, had been standing in the doorway, watching. Thomas went to him and whispered to his son. “I wish I knew what was going on in his head.” Thomas turned around to look at Reid. “Why doesn’t he tell me everything? It’s like he’s scared to say he’s in pain. I need to figure out what else I can do to help him. There’s got to be something I’m missing. Stay with him for a few minutes, would you? I’ve got to walk away so I can think.” Thomas patted Ed on the arm as he walked out of the room. “Thanks. I’ll be on the porch.”

The doctor called Naomi, then went to the porch. Naomi arrived with the powdered medication and handed it to Thomas, then turned around and headed back to the clinic.

Naomi had brought this medicine the short distance from the clinic to the house. She hadn’t asked to come in and say hello to Reid. She also hadn’t asked why the medicine was being changed. She hadn’t said anything.

Thomas had been keeping Naomi up to date on Reid’s progress because he was her brother. Thomas thought she would be interested in the updates. But Naomi had never asked about Reid. She had never come to visit him either.

Now Thomas wondered why. Something was going on with Naomi. Thomas thought her behavior strange, but he was focused on Reid right now. He would find out what was wrong with Naomi. He would question her later. Right now, though, he had to take care of Reid.

The doctor got up and went to the kitchen. Thomas prepared the powder, mixing it with a small amount of buttermilk. The thick milk would be easier for Reid to swallow.

The doctor returned to his patient. Ed told him that Reid had not fallen asleep. He had been restless and looked to be uncomfortable. Thomas nodded and helped Reid with the cup.

Reid managed to drink the buttermilk slowly, sip by sip. Then Thomas helped him change positions, hoping Reid would be more comfortable and could rest.

When the doctor returned to the porch, Adam was gone. He had completed the repairs on the automobile and had taken it for a test drive. The tools still lay on the ground where he had been working. Bella came to Thomas, nudging him with her nose. Thomas scratched the dog’s ear, then put his elbows on his knees and leaned his head into his hands. Bella lay down at his feet.

Thomas was rubbing his own temples with his thumbs like he had a headache too. He had been sitting there for quite a while when Bella started barking and wagging her tail. The doctor looked up to see a man and woman coming toward the house. They were still a distance away. Bella jumped from the porch and ran toward them.

The man had a white beard. The woman dressed like an Indian. It was Papa and Chipeta!

Thomas stood up and watched them as they got closer, then he jumped from the porch and started trotting toward them. Travis had been stopped by Bella who was now on her hind legs. She stood face-to-face with Travis as he rubbed the jowls on each side of her face with both hands.

When Thomas reached them, he threw his arms around them both, pushing Bella out of the way, and hugging them tightly. "Thank God, your home." He backed up and immediately asked, "Did you talk to Luke or Cleve while you were in town?"

"Are they back?" Travis asked eagerly.

"Yes, and Reid's at the house."

Chipeta started for the Stewart home, but Thomas caught her by the arm. "No. I have to tell you what happened. He was hurt bad. You've got to know what's going on before you see him."

## CHAPTER 29



As they turned and started walking toward the house, Thomas told them of Reid's injuries. "He's been home almost three weeks. His back is messed up. His head is messed up. He's had broken bones, and his throat has been injured. He's just recently begun to eat. He has trouble swallowing. We can't leave him alone. He didn't recognize Cleve until just recently, but he's been clinging to Luke. He's remembering things but gets confused. Sometimes seems like he's lost and can't find his way back. I've started trying to get him out of bed some, but..."

They reached the porch.

"Sit down. I'll finish telling you in a few minutes." The doctor told them. "I want him to sleep before he sees you. He gets too agitated. I want him rested before he gets excited again. Let me go see if he's asleep. If he is, I'll let you peak in on him."

Thomas left the porch to check on Reid.

Chipeta remained standing, looking to the door that Thomas had just disappeared through. She was stunned. She wasn't sure she understood what Thomas had said. Reid had been hurt? It had never occurred to her that something could have happened to him to stop him from coming home. She had just thought he didn't want to be with her. Now she felt guilty for her selfish thoughts and her behavior. She couldn't think. What did Thomas say? Something about his head? But her thoughts were interrupted when Thomas returned.

"He's asleep. Come quietly."

Chipeta saw the wheeled chair as she walked into the house, and for the first time realized his injuries must have been serious.

In the parlor turned bedroom, Papa stopped suddenly just inside the door and put an arm around his daughter-in-law. Chipeta didn't know if it was to comfort her or to steady himself.

Reid lay in the bed. He looked so frail, so thin.

Thomas left the room to tell Sarah that her father was home with Chipeta.

Reid was on his left side, his face half buried in the pillow, his right knee resting on another pillow. She could see his nose. It looked twisted like it had a dip or a knot in it. There was a small scar on his lip and another one beside his eye. His eyes looked sunken, hollow. He was pale. He hadn't seen sunlight for a long time. He stirred slightly and moaned.

Chipeta started to cry and turned to Travis, burying her face in his shoulder, trying to remain quiet as her father-in-law wrapped his arms around her. Travis stood frozen, his eyes wide. He couldn't take his eyes off his son.

Thomas came near and pulled on Travis's elbow to get his attention, drawing him into the next room. Then the doctor had them follow him into the kitchen where Sarah greeted them.

Thomas called Luke on the telephone. He wanted Luke there when Reid woke up. If Reid had regressed any because of the fall, he might ask for his brother when he woke up, like he had done in the past. If the fall had caused any confusion, they would need Luke who could calm his little brother more rapidly.

Thomas continued to tell Chipeta and Papa about the injuries and about the fall that had happened that morning.

Papa held on to Chipeta, who sat next to him at the table. She was leaning on his shoulder, his arm wrapped tightly around her. Sarah now held her father. Her arms were around his neck from behind, her face turned so that her cheek rested on his head as he sat in the chair. He had his free arm wrapped around Sarah's arms, hugging them tightly. Sarah knew he needed comfort too.

They had all needed comfort when Reid first arrived home. His injuries were so serious, and he was ill from the dehydration. But when he had been awake and his head was clear, he had let the others know that he was happy to be home.

Thomas had come to bed late, uneasy about leaving Reid. Sarah was still awake when her husband came to bed. They had not talked. They had just held each other. Neither fell asleep until well into the night.

Cleve had clung to Jenny most of that night, unable to sleep himself. When the youngest child had awakened early in the morning, Cleve had gotten up to care for her. He had sat up holding his daughter in his lap until she awoke again after dawn. Then Cleve had returned to check on Reid.

Ed came into the kitchen. "Father, he's waking up."

They all moved to the bedroom. Travis and Chipeta stood just inside the door watching. Sarah sat on one side of the bed next to Reid; Thomas on the other.

"Luke?" Reid asked for his brother in his gravelly voice, his eyes still closed.

"He's not here right now. It's Sarah."

"Where's Luke?"

"He's on his way. He'll be here in a few minutes."

Reid opened his eyes slightly, then suddenly squeezed them shut, pulling air into his lungs noisily and burying his face in the pillow. Then he seemed to hold his breath, his face tight.

"What's wrong?" Thomas asked.

"Can't. Never. Don't." Reid couldn't get words out. His breathing became sharp and then irregular.

"Listen closely, Reid," Thomas said. "Calm down. I want you to concentrate on breathing. Think about breathing. Slow breaths, in and out. Come on. You can do it. Think about breathing."

Reid was trying. But the thought of what he had just seen stayed in his head, frightening him.

"Okay, you're doing good. Slow some more. Good. Okay, Reid, listen to me. Chipeta is home. She and Papa just got here a few minutes ago."

"No!" Reid yelled hoarsely and squeezed his eyes tighter. His breathing got faster. "No!" He jerked his head toward Sarah and rolled onto his back, taking a gasping breath. He had moved too fast,

causing his back to spasm. Now his body arched, and he moaned loudly. He held his breath, then gasp again and started coughing.

"Reid, honey, calm down. It's okay." Sarah touched his arm with one hand and his head gently with the other. She rubbed his forehead with her thumb in the calming motion that she had used to rub her baby's heads when they were upset.

Thomas reached down and straightened Reid's legs so his back wasn't twisted, placing the pillow under his knees.

"Reid, can you open your eyes," Sarah asked.

"No. Seeing..." He couldn't finish what he wanted to say, that he had seen his dead wife and father. His breathing continued to be heavy and fast.

Thomas put his hand out and motioned for Chipeta to come to him. "Reid, Chipeta is here. Turn your head and open your eyes."

"No! She's...she's...dead."

"No, she's not," Sarah said quickly. "Whatever gave you that idea?"

Reid's breathing was now labored and irregular. "You said she went...went to the Father. You said Dad went with her." Reid coughed and began to cry. His whole body was trembling.

Luke walked in the door and saw his father and Chipeta but didn't acknowledge them as he moved toward his little brother and Sarah. He knew Reid needed him right away.

"Sarah, scoot over," Luke said as he approached his sister. He brushed a hand across Sarah's shoulder as she let go of Reid's hand and moved away. Luke sat down in her place.

"Reid? What's wrong?" Luke asked, putting his hand on his brother's arm.

Reid raised his opposite hand and reached across his body for Luke, his hand flailing wildly as he reached for the brother that would protect him. Luke grabbed it, holding it tightly.

"Seeing...seeing...They're dead!" Luke looked up at Thomas, then to Chipeta and Travis, quickly understanding that Reid thought his wife and father were dead.

"No. No, they're not."

"Brother Nick said he buried them!" Reid cried.

"No, no. You're confused. Oh, Reid, no." Then the sheriff whispered to the others. "How long has this been going on?" Recognition suddenly showed in Luke's face as he realized what had happened. He spoke to Reid again, "Is that why you didn't want to talk about them the morning we tried to tell you? Oh, Reid. No. You're confused. They aren't dead. We buried the baby, not Chipeta or Dad."

Luke looked to Thomas. It had been almost two weeks since they had tried to talk to Reid about Chipeta. For two weeks now Reid had believed both Chipeta and his father had been dead. That's why he was acting so strange. The tears, not talking, not trying to eat, wanting to be alone. He'd been grieving.

Luke wanted to pick his little brother up and hold him, to comfort him, like he had done when Reid was a little boy. But he couldn't. He was afraid if he picked him up, he might hurt him.

Thomas spoke, trying to help Luke explain. "Reid, they're both here with us. They're both alive. They're fine."

Reid started to shake more. He still wasn't opening his eyes. Thomas reached to the foot of the bed and pulled a blanket over Reid.

"Sarah, get me another blanket. Quickly," he said.

"Reid, you need to calm down. Concentrate on your breathing. Slow it down."

Chipeta moved out of the way as Thomas reached to take the blanket from Sarah. Thomas spread this one over Reid also.

"That's good. Slow it down. Slow it down. Now just rest," Thomas told him.

Thomas laid a hand on Reid's chest, feeling his chest rise and fall until the trembling stopped and the breathing became a steady rhythm.

"I can't believe this happened," Thomas said softly. "We were so careful what we said."

Luke replied, "It's over now. Let's just concentrate on getting him through this. Chipeta, I'm glad you're home. You too, Dad."

They sat with Reid several more minutes. Then, when his breathing was calm again, Thomas spoke. "Chipeta, come here.

Here. Sit beside him. Put your hand on him. Talk to him.” Thomas stood up and let Chipeta take his place.

Luke moved Reid’s hand back across his body toward Chipeta, and she took it.

“Over here, Dad,” Luke said. “Come take my spot.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid didn’t remember much of the next few days. His head hurt, and his eyes stayed closed most of the time. He had to be told over and over that his father and his wife were home. He seemed to understand, and he wasn’t getting upset, but he couldn’t remember. After he was told, all he wanted was to be held by Chipeta until he fell asleep again.

Thomas would help Reid out of bed a few times a day, but he didn’t stay up long. When his head was hurting, Reid couldn’t concentrate. When his back hurt, he didn’t want to move. He had no energy. The fall had done more than set him back physically; it had calmed his enthusiasm for a rapid recovery.

Now, knowing that his wife and father were alive, he lost some of the zeal he had previously had to work toward recovery. He wasn’t thinking about finishing his mission with the Justice Department either. He just wanted to rest and be with his wife and father.

Reid’s recovery continued at a slower pace, one more agreeable to the doctor.

## CHAPTER 30



**D**on Prather and Barrett Batterton arrived in town and went to Cleve’s office, as they had been instructed to do in Cleve’s letter. Cleve didn’t know where to start.

“How much do you know about what happened to Reid?” Cleve asked.

Prather answered, “We got the report saying he was seriously injured and had been hospitalized in Chicago. DOJ there sent someone to talk with him but was told he couldn’t be disturbed. The agent was told there was brain damage and he didn’t remember anything that had happened. So he wrote it off as loss of memory. We didn’t pursue him as a credible witness because of that. All his work was useless.

“Someone else went back to talk to him maybe a week later, and he had been discharged from the hospital. No one knew where he went. But then we saw that a Red Crowder had been cremated. We figured that was the end of it.”

Cleve laughed.

The hospital had done well. Luke and Cleve had talked to almost everyone at the hospital, convincing all the doctors, nurses, orderlies, everyone, that Reid was in extreme danger and had to be protected. Then Mary had also changed the medical records to protect him. Red Crowder had died at the hospital and had been sent quickly to the morgue and then to the crematory.

The two men looked at Cleve strangely. Why was he laughing when his brother was dead?

“Well, Red Crowder may have died, but Reid Britt didn’t. He’s alive, and he remembers what happened.” Cleve laughed again, then quickly became serious. “He was hurt bad. He’s got a long way to go before he’s healthy, but he wants to talk to you. He’s had a pretty rough time of it. We’re not going to let him get excited or overdo it. But we’re going to let him start talking and see how it goes.”

Batterton punched Prather in the arm and gave a big smile. “Hard to kill, just like his father.”

Cleve continued, “There’s going to be a lot of people listening to his story besides you. I’ll be there, and our brother Luke will be there. We both have information for your case. The doctor will be there to take care of Reid. And Dad’s coming. He says he wants to know what his son has been through. I tried to talk him out of it, but I also understand his thoughts on it. And I think he has a right to hear. That brings a lot of us into this case, but Luke and I are already involved. The doctor needs to be there, for Reid’s sake and...well”—Cleve looked at Batterton—“you know my dad.”

“Okay. We can do this,” Batterton said.

“And then there’s Reid’s wife,” Cleve added. “We had to tell her what was going on. She says she’s not going to let him out of her sight again. She doesn’t have to be there when he talks to you, but she wants to attend the trial. She’s a lawyer. And she suffered while he was gone. We think you should grant her request too.”

“Now wait a minute,” Don Prather said. “You’re not going to start demanding things be done against policy. Barrett, stop this.”

Barrett Batterton sat in the chair with his arms across his chest and his left thumb pressing on his lips. “Reid didn’t tell her what he was doing, did he?”

Cleve shook his head. “No, she was in the dark the whole time.”

“She was the victim of an assault while Reid was away, wasn’t she?”

Cleve nodded.

“And they lost a child too, didn’t they? She has suffered for this operation. I keep up with people. I wasn’t happy when I found out Reid had married, but after it was done, there was nothing I could

do about it.” Batterton sat thinking, then said, “Reid kept his end of the bargain. There’s no reason she can’t observe.”

Prather gave a loud huff but was quieted by the look Batterton gave him.

Cleve smiled. “Okay then. Let me get everybody together, and we’ll go out there to talk to Reid.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid sat in the wheeled chair in Sarah’s parlor. Thomas sat on one side of him, and Luke sat on the other. When Reid started talking, he didn’t want to stop, not even when Thomas told him too.

Reid named names, gave dates, connected towns, and exposed businesses. Both Batterton and Prather thought the way his mind was working was amazing. He was remembering details, and he recalled conversations.

“January 20, we were in Broken Toe, Nebraska, we stopped at the Rusty Coal and made a delivery to a man named James Sutton. But he wasn’t the boss there. The boss was Wade Leggett. I played cards with him, and he kept an eye on everything that was going on in the place. Kept giving the girls these looks that pushed them in the direction he wanted them to go. I wouldn’t have thought much about it, I mean, that goes on everywhere. But then Sutton handed him a small box. The box was set on the table between us, and he opened it a couple of times. He dumped some powder from the box into a drink and sent the drink to a rancher with one of the girls. Rancher was out cold in a short time. Two other guys dragged him upstairs with one of the girls. Later the girl brought Leggett a wad of cash she had taken off the guy, and Leggett ordered the guy dumped outside town. Heard later he was found dead.

“Left for Hicks Bow on the twenty-second with two other guys, Stan Joyner and Ethan Hay. Out in the middle of nowhere, we met up with a wagon full of girls and was told to take them to a mining camp just outside of Prairie Grain. Got there on the twenty-fifth. Never saw a man there. Woman was running the place. Her name was Shannon Casey.”

Cleve had tried to keep up and record it all, but had trouble. Reid wasn't slowing down when he gave a series of towns and businesses or when he gave several names all at once. Cleve had to keep up the best he could as Reid kept telling them where he had been; who he had been with; of transactions involving illegal goods and large amounts of money; and of abducted girls, assassinations, and brutal killings.

Reid stared out the window most of the time as he spoke. Other times he would look around the room, but he never looked at his audience. He wouldn't stop when one of them would ask a question. After three or four unanswered questions, they quit asking.

Thomas was watching Reid's eyes move as he spoke. The way Reid was moving his line of sight from the window, to the floor, to the door, and around the room, Thomas thought Reid could have been watching the events happen right in front of him.

For almost two hours Reid told of his trips back and forth across the Midwest until he got to Minneapolis. Here, Reid's voice got low and hoarse. They were having trouble understanding him, and he had begun coughing. His breathing was heavy. Thomas demanded a break.

This was taking much longer than Thomas had anticipated. The doctor had wanted to stop earlier, but Reid had refused. When they did take a break, Thomas moved Reid to the bed and told him to sleep. Reid's speech was close to unintelligible. Thomas wasn't going to let the others into the room until Reid slept.

Cleve found Chipeta, and a few hours later, when they started again, she helped Cleve record what Reid was saying.

Over a hundred names were on the list of known gang members in thirty-seven towns and cities across the Midwest. Other towns and names were given in directions to the east and west of the area Reid had been in. This gave the DOJ in those districts somewhere specific to start their investigations. There would be a concentrated effort to clean those areas out.

Most surprising to all of them was the name of an establishment just outside of Harris, in the direction of the mining camp. It was a small, extremely nice hotel. It was used by many businessmen who

came to town. The mining company had a contract with the hotel to provide meals and lodging for their corporate visitors.

The Morehouse Hotel had opened the year after Travis had retired from the federal marshal's job.

The place was owned and operated by a middle-aged couple that moved to the area after the couple bought the land, sight unseen. The hotel was built in grand manor and was a showplace in the area.

Hank and Betsy Sonders and their four daughters had initially owned the place. They were well-known for their outstanding food and hospitality.

Luke thought about it. The oldest daughter had run off with a cowboy just about the same time that Betsy died. Hank had reported his daughter had gotten married in Kansas City.

Betsy's sister, Rose, had arrived shortly after that with her own daughter. About three months later Rose married Hank. Then the second daughter had been sent back east to school. The niece was only fourteen when she arrived and wasn't attending school. The other girls had never attended school either. Why had he never thought this strange?

As they continued to talk Luke realized there had been more strange happenings at the hotel. While the place had a good reputation for friendliness, the family never came to the town's social gatherings, not even the daughters.

Wait! The body that had been found at the Odom farm last year, could that be one of these girls?

The marshal was known to go out there several times a week for a late supper. Luke had gone with him once or twice, and the family had been especially pleasant with the marshal and to Luke.

Did the marshal know about this place? Was he turning a blind eye to what was going on out there? The marshal was a great guy and effective in his job. But if he knew about this place and was providing protection for them, then he had connections to organized crime too. If this was true, then there were probably other criminal operatives within the Justice Department. This would be dangerous for Reid.

Luke hadn't stopped Reid's declaration to share what he thought was going on with the marshal. But now Luke was concerned.

Thomas had demanded Reid talk less and rest more. It took the better part of two days for Reid to finish. On the morning of the third day, Reid connected all the dots, telling of each operations connection to the boss in Chicago. His comments were precise and direct. Then he answered questions, clarifying information for Batterton and Prather. He spoke of payoffs to Chicago's police and of other towns where sheriffs and marshals had also received payoffs. After Reid retired to his room, Luke and Cleve gave their statements. Then Luke offered his concerns about the current marshal in Harris.

Don Prather and Barrett Batterton left Harris excited, but a little overwhelmed, about the information they had been given. They assured Luke and Cleve that further investigations, and rapid arrests would begin soon.

## CHAPTER 31



**L**uke walked into the mercantile, and Cecil Montgomery immediately spotted him and left the customers he was helping.

“Luke, there were some guys just in here. They were asking about Reid. I’ve never seen them before.”

Brother Nick and the adults in the family knew Reid was home, but they were all keeping it to themselves. They weren’t telling other people.

None of the family had been told of Reid’s job with the DOJ. They were simply told Reid had been beaten because of something that had happened with his job and the men that had caused the injuries were still out there. They were also told that Reid didn’t need visitors from outside the family because of his injuries. The family accepted this and held their tongues.

There had only been a few people at the train station when they had taken Reid off the train. None were paying attention to what was happening on the back side of the postal car, away from the station, when Thomas and the others had transferred Reid to the wagon. The workers on the train knew he was there, but they didn’t know his name and had paid little attention to him.

Cleve had explained to Brother Nick, also, that Reid was still in danger from the men who had beaten him. Without giving many details, Cleve had convinced the pastor to keep Reid’s injuries and presence a secret.

Luke was listening closely to the merchant. “Two guys, suits, looked like they were from the city. I told them I knew him, but he had been gone for months. Where is he anyway?”

“Thanks, Cecil,” Luke said. And without answering Montgomery’s question, Luke turned around and walked out the door without getting what he had come for.

Luke went to his office and called his brothers, letting them know that someone was looking for Reid and warning them to be careful.

Then Luke went to the train station and interrogated the stationmaster and the warehouse foreman in depth. Both had been questioned by the same men.

The men had come in on the west-bound train with one small bag each. They had not given their names but told the stationmaster they had worked with Reid several months back.

Both the stationmaster and the warehouse foreman had pointed the men toward the family’s land and the family’s homes. The stationmaster had told the men where Cleve’s law office was, that Luke was the sheriff, and Thomas was the town’s doctor. He told them that Angus was in charge of the power plant and the telephone exchange. Luke thought the stationmaster seemed to take pride in knowing this and in passing the information along to others. When the men left, the stationmaster had seen them walking down Main Street going east.

East on Main Street, that would take them in the direction of the marshal’s office. Luke headed that direction to see if he could spot them. But as hard as Luke looked, he found no one unusual in town. No one else reported seeing these men, including the marshal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Agents from the Department of Justice filtered into town slowly. A few stayed at the Morehouse Hotel, others stayed at the hotel in Harris, and a few found rooms at boarding houses. They watched, and they waited.

But they didn’t have to wait long. Monday evening, just before dark, Luke spotted the marshal headed from town going east at a casual pace. This was a regular activity on Monday nights. The mar-

shal was headed to the Morehouse. Luke positioned himself on the bench in front of the sheriff’s office. Now Luke waited.

When the marshal left, DOJ agents quietly took over his office, holding the deputy for questioning, and searched every inch of the building. Then they casually moved to the boarding house where the marshal lived and searched his room there. Few people in town noticed this endeavor.

Almost three hours later, the activity started. Federal marshals had been brought in from other districts. They weren’t known by the marshal in Harris. The DOJ agents and these marshals began returning with prisoners and wounded.

Luke called Thomas and told him to get to his office. The raid at the Morehouse was over, and there were those that needed help.

\*\*\*\*\*

The raid had taken exactly twenty minutes, start to finish. The DOJ agents and the marshals had swiftly moved into the hotel and cleared every room. Other agents had searched the outbuildings.

The person that had put up the biggest fight had been the handyman, Louis Tanner. Tanner had barricaded himself in his room in the back of the carriage house. He was firing his rifle at anyone he saw. One of the marshals had returned fire and shot him quickly.

Luke received the first man that was brought in to be jailed, the marshal. Others followed. There was Rose Sonders, two high-level mining executives, a squirrely nervous man by the name of Gallo, and a big man named Hogan.

Thomas took care of the two wounded marshals. Both had minor injuries. He let one of them leave that night, keeping the other until the next morning.

The doctor sent for Naomi, and together they cared for the two girls that everyone thought was the Sonders’ daughters. They weren’t.

The oldest one thought she might be twenty-four years old now. She had been twelve when she was snatched from the street on the way home from school in Hamilton, Iowa. The other girl

said she was twenty-two and had lived with her aunt and uncle in Broadmoor, Ohio.

Both confirmed that there had been two other girls with them when they came to Harris. The girls that everyone in town thought were their sisters. These girls, along with the woman that was thought to be their mother, had been killed. Both girls had known about the murders and now told their stories. One of the stories had involved the marshal.

The youngest girl and Hank Sonders had disappeared during the raid.

## CHAPTER 32



Luke had spent the last few days observing and helping the marshals that had come to town to assist in the raid on the Morehouse Hotel. Now they had taken over his office along with the marshal's office at the other end of town. If he couldn't get his work done, he thought he would just go fishing with his father.

Early in the morning Luke rode to the family's stable and saddled his father's horse, then took it to his father's house. He found Naomi preparing breakfast and his father sitting on the back porch with Bella.

"Dad, I've got nothing to do today." Luke sat down beside his father. "Marshals have run me out of my office. Let's go fishing for a little while."

Travis hesitated, shaking his head slightly. "I don't know. I need ta go ta Sarah's. I need ta be with Reid."

"Reid's doing better. He's got Chipeta with him. You can take a break and spend some time with your other children." Luke smiled playfully.

"I'm sorry. I just can't get past Reid thinkin' that we was dead on top a his injuries. That must a been torture far the boy." Travis looked at his son apologetically.

Luke got up and squatted in front of his father. "Dad, I'm joking. I go by there almost every day myself. But you're going to have to quit thinking of Reid as a boy. He's a man now. He has a wife, and he's done a man's job—and done it well."

"I don't feel like it's over. Somethin's wrong. I can't put my finger on it. Can't seem ta get a clear look at it. I've felt it since the first

evenin' I got back with Chipeta. Then last night I read, 'Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.'<sup>1</sup> My mind just stayed there an' wouldn't let me move on. Somethin's gonna happen an' we need ta be ready for it. I feel in the pit a my stomach. Somethin' else is comin'."

"Well, let's go fishing, and we can talk about what to do," Luke said.

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke and his father rode to the river and started fishing in their usual spot, but there were no bites. The pair left their horses tied where they began and started moving along the bank. Luke had gotten himself a reel and was casting into the river and pulling the line in. Travis would plop his cork into the water a few feet from the bank and let it sit a while, then move it over a few feet.

The conversation, when there was some, was casual. Nothing specific. Luke would say a few words about something that happened in town, and after a long silence, Travis would make a comment about one of his grandchildren or something he had seen in Utah. They hadn't gotten around to talking of the danger that Travis was certain still existed.

The sand along the bank on the other side of the river was clean and white, the water low. Rocks along the far edge were exposed and being gently kicked over by the moving water, a white foam mist appearing. The river was quiet.

On their side of the river the growth was thick and the landscape muddy where the water came over the bank and spilled into bogs that could capture a man's boot and pull it from his foot. Travis and his son were stepping carefully.

They had moved about fifty yards away from the horses and were nearing an outcropping of thick trees at a sharp bend in the

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 6:10-11.

river. Travis grabbed Luke's arm and pulled him to the ground as he ducked low behind some brush and river weeds.

Luke peered over the grass. There against the backdrop of the darkened shadows, a man and a young girl sat at a campsite. The man was moving around. The girl sat perfectly still.

Luke whispered, "Can you see who that is?"

Travis replied softly, "Looks like Hank Sonders ta me."

"You sure?"

"No, but I'd be willin' to bet on it, if I was a bettin' man," Travis said.

"Keep an eye on them. I'm going back to the horses," Luke said.

Travis nodded.

Luke returned with a spyglass and both of their rifles. He passed his father's rifle to him. Then put the spyglass to his own eye.

"Yep. That's him. Looks like he's got the girl tied to something." And he passed the spyglass to his father.

Travis looked and passed the spyglass back.

"I'm going to work my way over there and see if I can pull the girl out quietly. If I can, then we can try to get Hank."

Travis nodded again. He raised his rifle and braced his arm and the gun against a small low-hanging tree limb, zeroing in on Hank and moving the barrel of the gun as the man moved. Travis adjusted the sight for distance.

Luke moved away from the river and around a muddied area full of frogs and mosquitoes.

Travis kept watch. He thought back to another time that he had watched a campsite from across water. He had found a man injured on the plains in Nebraska. He had removed a bullet and cared for the man, then had accompanied him to his home in Kansas. The man had become his close friend, Marshal Mark Forrester.

Mark had slipped away while Travis dozed one night and had gone after an escaped prisoner alone. Travis had awakened and spotted him from the distance. The criminal had drawn on the marshal, and to protect the marshal, Travis had made a clean shot across the water. They had captured a second man, and the three had continued to Harris together.

That was the beginning of the best friendship Travis had ever experienced. They had been together through Travis's marriage and the death of both of their spouses. Both had children leave home, and Mark had celebrated with Travis following the birth of his four youngest children. When Travis's youngest daughter had died in his arms, Mark had been there to take the child from him and support him.

After Mark deputized Travis, they had fought outlaws together, searched for missing people together, and protected the town. They had both been seriously injured in shootings, and the other had been there to care for and support the wounded. Travis had been with Mark when he died. They had both learned a lot from the other and had grown to love each other as brothers.

Travis still missed his friend even though he had been dead more than twenty years. Travis had not felt comfortable when he had gotten the promotion to federal marshal after Mark's death. It just didn't feel right doing his friend's job. But Mark had wanted Travis to take the position. He had told him so.

Mark had sent a recommendation for Travis's promotion to the District Marshal's Office. Travis didn't know that until Mark was gone. But Mark knew Travis was the right man to take his place.

Travis had done well in his position as marshal. He had shown both honesty and integrity. And Travis had nerves of steel. He wasn't intimidated by others, and he didn't shudder at the thought of a fight. Travis was an outstanding tracker and an accurate shot.

Travis could hold his tongue, saying very little or nothing, until it was necessary to talk. And the man was patient. Everyone had marveled at his ability to calmly wait out a situation. He had played an integral part in clearing his district of the violent outlaws and criminal activity that had plagued the state. And he had assisted in other districts. He had been admired by the other marshals he had worked with.

Travis now saw movement near the camp. Luke was on the ground, crawling up behind the girl, pistol in one hand, knife in the other. Travis prayed the girl would remain quiet and not give Luke away. Luke had her attention now. He was telling her to be quiet.

The ropes that held her were being cut. She rolled over onto her hands and knees and began crawling past Luke, then stood up and ran through the trees. Luke watched Sonders, as did Travis.

Luke had turned around and was working his way back to the trees, following the same path the girl had taken. Someone must have made a sound because Sonders turned suddenly, drew his pistol, and began running toward the location where the girl had been tied. The girl was out of sight in the brush and shadows. Luke must have seen Hank coming because he began running, low to the ground. Sonders fired, and Travis saw his son go down. The girl screamed. Travis fired, and Sonders spun around and hit the ground.

Travis picked up the spyglass to look for Luke. He didn't see movement anywhere. Travis started making his way around the bog to where he had last seen his son.

Travis prayed for Luke. This couldn't happen now. Now that Reid was home and safe. "Lord, let him be okay. Please. Take care of him. Let him be okay." Travis moved as quickly as he could through the thick undergrowth at the edge of the river. The camp was in sight now, and Travis could see Sonders rolling from his back to his knees in an attempt to get up. The pistol was still in his hand.

Travis moved to the man on the ground and stepped on his gun hand. He reached down and grabbed the gun from Sonders, saying, "Get up slowly."

Travis was old, and Sonders might have tried to knock the old man off his feet, but there was a tone in the former marshal's voice that caused Sonders to still. He knew the old man's reputation, and he wasn't going to challenge Travis. The bullet had hit Sonders in the shoulder. It wasn't a serious injury if he received medical attention. Travis looked around quickly. They moved toward the bog to search for Luke.

Luke's father called him, but there was no answer. The girl cried out, and Travis turned in the direction of her sound.

If he hadn't moved, Travis wouldn't have seen Luke. Covered in mud and slime, Luke was picking himself up from the swamp. There wasn't an inch of skin, hair, or fabric without the dark-brown gunk covering it. Luke was spitting and gagging.

“Watch your step right there,” a muffled voice came from Luke as he pointed to a spot near him. Then he spit. “The ground just drops off. I imagine that’s three or four feet deep.”

“Thank ya, Father,” Travis said, releasing a deep breath to relax.

Travis and the others waited while Luke dipped himself, clothes and all, into the river to wash the slimy mud off. By the time they made it back to town, Luke was almost dry.

In town, the sheriff turned Hank Sonders over to the marshals. There had been several marshals out looking for Sonders since the raid on the hotel when Sonders and the girl had come up missing.

One of the marshals asked Luke, “How’d you find them?”

Luke replied, “Dad knew where to look.” Then he winked at his father.

Travis shook his head and gave a crooked smile as he turned to walk off.

## CHAPTER 33



Luke rode home with his father and then went to the Stewart home to check in with Reid.

Reid was seated in a cushioned chair in the sitting room when Luke arrived. The sheriff commented on Reid’s progress and sat down to visit a while, telling him about the DOJ raid on the hotel two nights earlier.

“How many were taken into custody?” Reid asked.

“Not many. The Sonders woman; two mining guys; the marshal; a little guy named Gallo, a real nervous type; and a big guy by the name of Russ Hogan. They rescued two of the girls, but Hank and the youngest girl were missing,” Luke told Reid.

“Dad and I went fishing this morning and found Hank and the other girl near the river. We got Hank at the jail now. The girl is with Naomi and Thomas.”

“Hogan. Black hair, big mustache, favors one leg?” Reid questioned Luke.

“Yeah, that sounds like him. You know him?”

Reid’s face changed expression as he started chewing on the inside of his bottom lip. Luke could tell his mind was working on something.

“I need to go see him,” Reid said softly.

“Thomas is not going to let you do that,” Luke replied.

Reid raised his voice. “I didn’t ask if Thomas would let me go. I said, I need to go see him! *Make it happen!*” Reid started coughing.

“Okay. Don’t get upset. Let me see what I can do.” Luke was concerned about Reid now. Reid never raised his voice, and the yelling had made him cough. He was still coughing.

Everyone in the house came running into the room when they heard Reid yell.

Chipeta was the first to speak. “Reid, what’s wrong?” she asked as she put a hand around his head and pulled it slightly toward her.

Reid was clearing his throat, his already hoarse voice now low and gravelly. “Nothing. I just asked Luke to do something for me. He doesn’t want too. Either he does it or I’ll find another way,” Reid said with no emotion in his voice this time. He coughed a few more times.

Sarah’s thirteen-year-old son, Curt, asked, “What do you want him to do?”

“I want to visit one of the prisoners at the jail,” Reid said. His eyes were now closed, and he looked exhausted. He didn’t have the strength he had just a few minutes ago. Any anger Reid had in his voice earlier was now completely gone.

Sarah had been around Reid more than anyone and seemed to understand more of what was happening with him and what he needed. Although her blindness wouldn’t let her see that his eyes were closed, she heard his breathing becoming heavier. She asked, “Do you have a headache right now?”

“Yeah,” Reid responded softly. His breathing was still heavy, and he would occasionally hold his breath, his forehead furrowing as he squeezed his eyes tighter.

“Do you want to go back to bed?”

“Uh-uh,” Reid replied, shaking his head.

“Okay. We’ll leave you alone. Luke, why don’t you come to the kitchen with me, and I’ll get you both a cup of coffee,” she said.

Luke followed his sister to the kitchen, and Sarah’s sons went back to what they were doing. Chipeta was left alone with Reid.

Sarah prepared the coffee. She told Luke when Reid had a headache he got disturbed more easily and was more difficult to deal with. Coffee seemed to help somehow. She asked Luke to take the coffee back to Reid and talk with him more. She told him to give the coffee

time to work and use the conversation to get him in a better mood. Then Luke was to ask if Reid was ready to go back to bed.

Sarah said, “He’ll probably be ready. He doesn’t take long after his head starts hurting before he needs to lie down. If you help him back to his room, hold him good. When he has a headache, he’s not steady at all.”

Luke returned to the parlor with two coffee cups and found Reid in Chipeta’s arms. Chipeta was sitting on the arm of the chair. Reid had his head against her and his eyes closed. Luke thought he might be asleep.

“Reid, I brought some coffee,” Luke said softly.

“I don’t want any,” Reid replied.

Chipeta reached out for the cup and took it. She took a sip. “Wow. That’s a good pot. Here, Reid, try this.” She put the cup to his mouth. He took a sip. She kept coaxing it down him until she had given him the entire cup. Luke and Chipeta talked a few minutes, then Chipeta asked, “Reid, are you ready to lie down?”

“Uh-huh,” he replied weakly.

Luke helped Reid out of the chair, and Reid staggered back to his room with his eyes closed, leaning heavily on Luke.

Reid lay down and said, “Luke, I’m sorry I yelled. I don’t know why I do that. I get worked up inside real fast, and it comes out before I can stop it.”

“That’s okay. It’ll get better as you heal,” Reid’s brother offered reassurance.

“I hope so.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke left and went straight to the medical clinic asking Thomas what he thought about Reid’s request. Thomas wasn’t for this at all.

The doctor was busy packing equipment and supplies. He was headed to the mining camp. He wasn’t looking at Luke as they talked.

“Reid’s just beginning to move around on his own, but he has to have help to do it. Doing something like that is really going to take energy he doesn’t have to spare. He hasn’t gotten disturbed in almost

a week. He doesn't need to leave the house. He doesn't need to go to that jail and get upset."

"Thomas, he may get upset if he doesn't get to go. I think we need to find a way for him to do what he thinks he needs to do," Luke said.

"No. He doesn't need to do it. No!" the doctor repeated.

Luke added, "He was pretty demanding when he told me 'Make it happen.'"

Thomas turned around to look at Luke. "That doesn't sound like Reid."

"I know. Reid's there in front of you, and then something like this happens, and you wonder if he's the same person. You know, he's never told me he had a headache, even when I ask him. But he tells Sarah. She acted like it was nothing to ask him, and he apparently tells her all the time. She gave him some coffee and said it helped. How does coffee help?"

Thomas's eyes went wide, and his face showed amazement. "It stimulates the brain. And it would give him more energy. I haven't thought of that. It makes the brain work faster. He'd be more alert. I've been trying to get him to rest, to stay calm. Maybe we need to do just the opposite and let his brain work more. I wonder what other types of stimulation would do to him?"

Thomas was thinking, Luke could see it in his face.

"Okay, let's take him to the jail. Let's let his brain work instead of rest. Let's see what it does to him. We can take him in the morning."

## CHAPTER 34



The federal marshals weren't happy when the sheriff came by early the next morning to say there would be an interview with the prisoner named Hogan in a couple of hours. The marshals would need to bring him out of his cell, into the outer office, and leave him in the custody of the sheriff. He told them he was just giving them a heads-up as to what would be happening later in the day. Then he turned around and walked out of his own office, leaving them all in astonishment. The local sheriff had just told them what to do. None of them liked it.

Luke wondered what his father would have done if he had been one of those marshals and a local sheriff had just told him what he was going to do? Luke almost laughed as he walked out the door. He thought his father wouldn't have cared. He would have probably said, "Just let me know when." But Luke also knew his father wouldn't have left the prisoner with the sheriff. He would have hung around watching.

Later that morning, Thomas and Luke helped Reid into Thomas's Oldsmobile Touring Runabout. Until now they had tried to keep Reid out of sight. No one outside of the family and Brother Nick knew Reid was in town. Luke and Cleve had tried to hide him from everyone, fearing that Reid may still be in danger. Now he would be in the middle of town, and everyone would see him.

Thomas drove to the back of the jail and stopped the automobile. Luke helped Reid from the seat and walked with him around the side of the building and onto the boardwalk in front of the jail. They entered the outer office. Luke looked at the marshal sitting at

the desk and gave the marshal a thumbs-up, flicking his wrist, gesturing for the marshal to get out of the sheriff's chair. The marshal complied, and Reid took the seat.

Now Reid sat waiting for the marshals to bring Hogan out. Luke had asked for the prisoner, but the marshals had decided there would be no interview. They didn't like the sheriff overstepping their boundaries. Then, when young Reid had walked in, assisted by the doctor and the sheriff, they were even less inclined to let the questioning take place. But Reid would have none of their defiance.

From his seat behind the sheriff's desk, Reid sat controlled and spoke forcefully. He got everyone's attention with his now rough, rasping voice. "I'm DOJ attorney Reid Britt. You can let me talk to the prisoner called Hogan here now. Or you can send a telegram to the Department of Justice special counsel Barrett Batterton in Topeka while I wait right here. Then I will talk to Hogan. Either way, I'm going to talk to him. I suggest you let me do it now. This is my case. My witness. My jurisdiction. Now, either you do your job or move aside and let the sheriff do it."

Thomas and Luke looked at each other. Luke smiled slightly. They hadn't seen this side of Reid very often. Luke wondered how often Reid used this tone with people. It reminded Luke of the tone his father would use when he was marshal, when cowboys or outlaws were disregarding his orders.

The sheriff had only heard Reid use this tone once, maybe, when Reid had demanded two miners watching their house from the trees show themselves. That was just over five years ago, the afternoon before their house had been burned. Then Luke realized it was the same tone he had used when Reid had told him, "Make it happen."

Luke was still smiling. Reid was so much like their father, both in the way he looked and in his mannerisms. Neither talked much, but when they did, you had better listen. They were saying something you needed to hear. When Reid spoke, his voice had sounded like their father too, before these injuries. The smile left Luke's face. Reid had had a beautiful singing voice and had sung often while working at the farm. Luke loved listening to him as much as he loved his father's singing. Luke had never known that his brother sang in

front of other people until Cleve had mentioned it on the train to Chicago. Reid would probably never be able to sing again.

Luke noticed Reid's expression. He was giving the three marshals in the room the coldest stare imaginable. His deep-gray eyes didn't move. Their father used to look at people that way too.

Finally, one of the marshals said, "Okay, I'll go get him," like it was a common request to see this happen and they had not previously refused.

Hogan was brought into the office. He stopped suddenly when he saw Reid. The marshal with him gave him a shove to push him further into the room. Reid told the marshals to find a chair for the prisoner and then to leave. Hogan hadn't taken his eyes off Reid.

Luke shooed the marshals out the door and returned to stand by Reid. Reid had watched the marshals until they were gone. Now he was looking at Hogan. Their eyes weren't moving from the other's gaze.

"Thomas, leave," Reid said, his voice still hoarse but more pleasant than when he had spoken to the marshals. He was still watching Hogan, not looking at Thomas.

"I think I need to be here," the doctor replied, concerned that Reid may have a problem during the interview that needed to be addressed. He also wanted to observe how this stimulation would affect his patient.

Reid raised his voice, "Thomas, I said leave." Reid coughed gently several times.

"I'll be just outside the door," Thomas said in submission.

"Luke, you go too," Reid added with a quiet tone.

"Are you sure?" Luke was just as concerned about leaving Reid alone with this prisoner as Thomas was, only for a different reason. Reid wouldn't be able to defend himself against this guy if he needed to.

Reid knew the sheriff's concern. "Yeah. He's okay. I'll be fine."

When the two men were alone Reid told Hogan to sit. Hogan complied. The two kept their eyes on each other but said nothing. Reid was a patient man, and Hogan had been a friend. He knew Hogan had questions, and Reid waited until Hogan finally spoke.

“Red? I heard you were dead.”

“Almost,” Reid replied in his now characteristic gravelly voice.

“I also heard you were a Fed.”

“Yep, I am.”

“Red’s not your name, is it? What’s your real name?”

“Doesn’t matter. What matters is, I can help you.” Reid coughed.

“But I want to know something first. How did you get into this business?”

They sat looking at each other for several minutes. Neither said anything. Reid was patient. He would wait until Hogan was ready to talk.

Hogan eventually said, “I had two kids. A boy and a baby girl. The boy got sick, and I didn’t have the money for a doctor. I was working at a factory making machine parts. I asked for extra hours, maybe work two shifts a couple of times a week. They put me on as night watchman.

“I’d work the manufacturing angle during the day, then went straight to watchman in the evening. One night I was told to watch the office entrance. Nobody in, nobody out after hours. What they didn’t tell me was that the big boss would sometimes come in during the night and he had his own security. I’d never met the guy. I didn’t even know his name. So, when they came in during the middle of the night, I tried to stop them.

“Security guy grabbed a piece of rebar off the ground and smacked me in the hip with it. Broke the bone and they left me there lying on the sidewalk. Some of the other workers found me the next morning and took me home. Then I couldn’t even work my regular job.

“One of the guys suggested I borrow money from a businessman down the street. Said he had a soft heart for sick kids and helped people in the neighborhood. I couldn’t even walk, and I still needed money for the boy. I hadn’t seen a doctor myself, and we needed money to live on too. I sent my friend to get this guy. And this really nice-looking man, real polite, came to our apartment. We talked, and he loaned me money to pay the doctor for my son and me and

kept loaning us money until I was better. Then he said it was time to pay up.

“I’d lost my job at the plant because I couldn’t work with a broken hip. So, when he said pay up, I didn’t have the money. He said I could work for him to pay my debt. So I started working for him, and he wanted me to do more and more stuff, stuff I wasn’t comfortable doing. My boy was still sick, and we still needed money to pay the doctor, so I did it. Then I did something that caused an accident, and it killed somebody.

“He kept giving us money, and a couple of months later my boy died. Then he wanted me to kill somebody else, and when I said I wouldn’t do it, he threatened to hurt my wife and baby and turn me in to the police for killing the first guy. So to protect my family, I killed somebody else. But I was seen that time, and then I needed to hide. He sent me to Detroit, and I kept working for his organization. He kept supporting my wife and daughter.”

Reid nodded throughout the story and kept nodding when Hogan was through.

Reid asked, “So why did you take care of me like you did?”

Hogan explained. “When I saw you, you reminded me of a guy I met back in Chicago when I was a kid. I’ll never forget him. He was looking for a job and came to the warehouse where I worked. They hired day labor, and he was there every morning just like the rest of us. But they refused to hire him.

“He had a daughter, and he told me she was about my age. Like I said, I was just a kid. Anyway, she had been injured during the war. He was trying to get her into see a doctor. But he didn’t have any money.

“They wouldn’t hire him, but they kept on asking him questions, like they were going to. Then they would make fun of the way he talked or the way he looked. They’d always find something to ridicule him for.

“Everybody knew he couldn’t read, but they kept asking him to. Half the people there couldn’t read. We needed more workers. We were always shorthanded. I don’t know why they wouldn’t hire him.

“He looked like he came straight out of the mountains except his pants were Union army. He was probably a hard worker. There was no sense in what they did. It was just mean. Like I said, you reminded me of him. And I started thinking about how similar our stories were.

“Both of us had kids that needed a doctor and neither of us had the money. When I saw you, I started wondering what happened to him. And my son would be just about your age now, if he had lived.”

Reid sat unmoving with no change of expression on his face, just like he had been doing since he sat down at the sheriff’s desk.

Reid finally said, “Did you enjoy the killing?”

“I got used to it, but how can you enjoy it? I use to throw up just like you did, in the beginning,” Hogan said.

Reid spoke. “Well, like I said, I can help you. You turn state’s evidence, and I’ll work on your deal.”

Hogan got a troubled look on his face. “They’ll kill me. And they’re going to find you. You know that, don’t you?”

“No, they won’t ’cause we’re taking them all down. There won’t be anyone left. If you give us the right information, I might be able to keep you out of jail.”

Hogan shook his head and repeated. “They’ll kill me.”

“The way things stand right now, does it really matter?” Reid asked coldly.

“No, I don’t guess it does.” Hogan now looked defeated. “I was hoping one day I would be able to find my daughter and get to know her again, but it doesn’t look like that will ever happen.”

“You help us, you testify, and I’ll see what I can do to help you find your daughter.” Reid waited a moment and cleared his throat. “You going to help us?”

“Sure, why not? I got nothing left to lose.”

Reid called Thomas as loud as he could. After one try, when Thomas didn’t answer, he asked Hogan to call him. Thomas came into the room, and Luke followed.

Reid’s voice was low. “Thomas, would you go get Dad and Sarah and bring them here?”

“Why?” the doctor asked.

“I want Hogan to meet them.”

“No!” Thomas said quickly. “I’m not bringing my wife here to meet this, this killer.”

Reid was calm. He patiently asked, “Please, Thomas. Just for a minute? Please?”

Thomas backed out the door, saying, “I’ll see what she says.”

Reid nodded and offered a whispered, “Thank you.”

Luke backed into the corner and stood quietly. If Reid didn’t see him, maybe he could stay.

When Reid thought they were alone again, he asked Hogan if he believed in Jesus and had he asked forgiveness for the things he had done.

“Yes. I believe in Jesus, and I ask for forgiveness every day of my life.”

“You won’t receive the forgiveness you’re looking for and the peace you want unless you turn from your sin,” Reid said. “Asking for forgiveness and then killing someone else doesn’t work. The Lord said, ‘Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds.’<sup>1</sup>

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.”<sup>2</sup> “Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice.”<sup>3</sup>

Hogan asked, “How do I do that?”

“God can’t look at the wickedness in your life. He’s too holy. You have to get rid of the intentional sin. ‘Come now, let us settle the matter, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’”<sup>4</sup>

Hogan looked down at the desk. “I guess I don’t really believe he’ll forgive me. I think my sins are too great.”

“In him we have redemption through (Jesus) blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup> God

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 25:5a (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3:19a.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 1:16–17a.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 1:7.

says once he forgives, ‘Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.’<sup>1</sup> All you have to do is turn from your sin and pray. Do you want to?’

Hogan nodded. “Yeah, I’d like to have peace. I’d like to live the rest of my life in a calm, quiet place without these demons in my head.”

“Can you pray for forgiveness yourself, or would you like for me to pray with you?” Reid asked.

Hogan looked despondent, then he looked to Reid with anticipation. “Can you help me?”

Reid coughed a few times and cleared his throat. Then he said, “Repeat after me and believe in your heart: God in heaven, I come to you in the name of Jesus. I’m a sinner, and I’m sorry for the sins in my life. I ask for your forgiveness. I believe your son Jesus gave his blood on the cross and died for my sins. I now want to turn away from my sin and come to you. You said if we confess to you and believe in our hearts that you raised Jesus from the dead, we will be saved. I confess Jesus as my Lord and savior. I believe with all my heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. I accept Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior and Lord. Amen.”

Hogan repeated the prayer that Reid prayed word for word. When Hogan looked up, he was smiling. They talked a few minutes about following Jesus. Then Reid heard the motorcar returning.

Thomas walked in the door with Travis and Sarah. The doctor closed the door and put his arm around his wife, determined to protect her from this evil man.

Travis walked to Reid and asked, “What do ya need, son?”

“Dad, I want you to meet Hogan. Hogan, this is my dad, retired federal marshal Travis Britt. And this is my sister Sarah.”

Travis reached his hand out to shake Hogan’s. Hogan extended both of his, which were chained together. Travis took Hogan’s right hand and said, “Good mornin’.”

Hogan didn’t respond. He just watched Travis with his eyes wide.

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:17b.

Reid was still watching Hogan. He spoke almost at a whisper. “Dad, which side did you serve in during the war?”

“The Union,” Travis replied.

“And where were you the second summer after the war?” Reid coughed gently.

Travis looked at his son, knowing his son knew where he was. But he answered saying, “Chicago.”

“And why were you in Chicago?”

Travis reached his hand toward Sarah and took hers, pulling her to him. “I took Sarah there ta see a doctor.”

“Why did she need to see a doctor?”

Travis responded, “Sarah was blinded durin’ the war. We was lookin’ far help.”

Reid asked his father one last question. “And why didn’t you stay in Chicago?”

“Cause I couldn’ find a job.”

“Thank you, Dad, Sarah. That’s all I needed. Thomas, you can take them home.” Reid coughed a few times, his breathing a little heavier.

Thomas reached for Sarah and pulled her to the door. Travis slowly followed, still watching Reid and Hogan. None of them understood why they had been asked to come. None of them were questioning Reid.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes,” Thomas said.

Then they left.

Hogan sat staring at Reid. “You’re his son?”

“Yes. And he rose above his circumstances. You can too. From this point on, it’s not where you’ve been or what you have done, but what you do with the rest of your life.” Reid sounded like he was choking, but he kept talking. “I can help you look for your daughter. She can learn what kind of man you have be...come.” Reid coughed a few times and shook his head. That was all he was able to say. His voice was gone.

Luke heard the strain in Reid’s voice and stepped beside his brother.

“Are you ready for me to take him back to his cell,” Luke asked.

Reid nodded and tried to say something, but the only thing that came out was another cough. He picked up a pencil lying on the desk and turned a piece of paper over to write on the back. "Find him a cell to himself."

When Luke came back, Reid had his head in his hands, his elbows propped on the desk.

Reid looked up at his big brother. Luke was barely able to understand Reid when he said, "Any coffee?"

Luke shook the coffee pot on the pot belly stove to see if there was any left from that morning. There was just a little. When Luke poured it into a cup, it was thick and black.

"This doesn't look any good. I'll make a fresh pot," Luke said.

"No," Reid said, barely making a sound and shaking his head. He put his hand out for the cup, wiggling his fingers, asking Luke to give it to him. Luke put the cup in Reid's hand. Reid made a face as he drank it. It was thick and scalded from sitting on the stove all morning. But he drank it anyway. Then Reid leaned in toward the desk again.

Before the doctor got back, Reid was feeling better but he was tired. He wanted to go home and rest.

## CHAPTER 35



**T**he marshals took their prisoners and left town a few days later. Life in Harris returned to the late summer's lazy pace. Thomas continued to work with Reid, and Reid got stronger. He was now walking on his own, albeit slowly. It seemed the more Reid did, the less his head would hurt.

Thomas decided to experiment with Reid. He continued to give him the milder medication on a regular basis and started giving him coffee like it was medicine too, a little at a time throughout the day. Both seemed to help. Reid wasn't getting many headaches during the day anymore.

But a night without coffee, when he was used to it during the day, caused him to wake up with a headache. So before Chipeta helped him out of bed each morning, he would have his first few swallows.

Reid's throat continued to heal also. He was swallowing better, and he wasn't coughing anymore or clearing his throat. But his voice remained rough and harsh. He could only reach a certain volume before it would leave entirely. Both Reid and the family were getting used to this.

People had seen Reid in town when he had gone to talk to Hogan at the sheriff's office. Now people knew he was home and were asking about him, so he quit trying to hide.

Reid and Chipeta talked about their future together, but Reid knew they also had to deal with their past. He asked Chipeta's forgiveness for not telling her about his job. They asked God to help them forgive the men that had attacked her and caused the baby's death.

Reid silently prayed for the men that had attacked his wife—both times. He prayed they would seek forgiveness and turn from their evil ways. Reid held no animosity toward the men that had beaten him, but he prayed for their repentance. And he prayed that Chipeta would forgive those in Harris that had ostracized her when she had first arrived in town over a year ago.

Together they decided to just start over. They would build a new life together. They would try to forget as much of the painful past as they could. The couple would help each other focus on the present as they looked forward to the future and a family.

On a Sunday morning in early October, they climbed into the Runabout with Thomas and Sarah and they went to church. They knew they would get plenty of looks from the people in town. They had both changed.

Reid didn't look like the boy he had been a year and a half ago when he returned home from school. He was now a man. He had experienced things that no one in this church could have imagined, and he had survived. The innocent expression on his youthful face was gone. It was replaced with a knowing look that told people he had seen the worst of humanity. But there was also a quiet air of serenity. He was at peace with what he had done and what he had experienced.

His face had two small scars, and his nose and eye socket were slightly deformed. It caused many people to take a second look. But the changes in his face were so slight they had to look closely to distinguish what was different.

He walked slowly, seldom taking more than just a few steps without holding on to something or someone. He was making progress in his recovery, but right now he was still unsteady. Reid carried a cane, on top, the silver head of a wolf. Reid told Chipeta that Hogan's cane was a reminder to him that even in the worst of times there was always a friend.

The people in town and at church still didn't know about Reid's injuries. He had been taken care of quietly by his family.

Chipeta wore her traditional Indian dress. God had spoken to her. She was now confident of who she was: God's child and an

Indian. She didn't need the friendship of the ladies at church, and she wasn't looking for it. She had the love of her extended family to help her through anything. She was poised to care for her husband and to remain faithful to God. That was all she wanted.

The four arrived at church, and Thomas helped everyone out of the automobile. No one in the church yard was paying attention. But by the time Reid and Chipeta got to the steps of the church, everyone was watching. They had not been seen at church in more than nine months, and Chipeta wasn't dressed like the other women anymore.

Reid stopped at the bottom of the steps, and Thomas stepped beside him, allowing Reid to take his arm. Others watched as Reid slowly made his way up the steps, supported by his wife and the doctor. At the top of the steps, Thomas turned around and returned to the bottom, putting a hand out to his wife who again joined him. The four went into the church and sat down together. Travis came into the building soon after and sat beside his youngest son. Other family members arrived and sat near them.

As the congregation continued to arrive, the people filled the church. Many eyed the large family with interest. The separate families seldom sat together, but today they sat surrounding the young couple.

Some of the church members had never realized how large this family was. They now took up nearly a quarter of the church building. The sheriff stood against the wall as he always did. But he had moved from his usual spot to stand near his family.

Brother Nick had not expected to see Reid and Chipeta in church this Sunday. When he entered at the beginning of the service, he was surprised to see them. He smiled as he looked their way, happy they had both decided to come. He still visited Reid often and had grown to love both Reid and his wife.

As was his custom, he asked the congregation to stand for the reading of the scripture.

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I

pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.<sup>1</sup>

Chipeta sat a little taller through the sermon. She and her husband had both experienced insults, hardships, and persecution. They were both given a thorn in their flesh. Her husband was injured and would probably struggle for a long time, maybe the rest of his life.

And there were those that didn’t like her just because she was an Indian. When God had spoken to her, she had understood that she was nothing without God.

Chipeta knew now that everything they had been through was to show God’s power and glory. She couldn’t have come back to Harris, to her husband, or to this church, if it weren’t for the power of God’s love. She was too weak within herself.

Chipeta knew that while she was weak, her husband was strong. God had made him that way. But he was also humble and relied on God for everything. He submitted to God’s will in his life. Reid’s faith was strong, and he was sure of God’s love. He sought God’s forgiveness, but he also fought for truth and justice, recognizing Jesus as truth and God as the ultimate judge.

*“For (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising (Christ Jesus) from the dead.”<sup>2</sup>*

Reid had never felt sorry for himself because of his injuries and had remained the same gentle, steadfast man that she had married. He was quick to forgive, difficult to offend, and he was patient. He was content to wait on God’s timing. Reid often quoted Psalm 27:14,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7b–10.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:31.

*“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!”*

At the end of the service, Brother Nick asked everyone to go to another person in the room, someone they needed to ask forgiveness of or who they needed to show love to, someone not in their own family. They were to give that person a hug or a handshake. And if they needed to ask forgiveness, they should do so.

In front of everybody, Brother Nick walked straight to Reid. Travis stood up and stepped aside. Nick reached out and shook Reid’s hand, then sat down beside him, and said, “I’m the one who confused you. I’m the one who told you your wife and father were dead. I didn’t mean for you to think that. I was the one confused that day. Would you please forgive me?”

Reid looked at his pastor. The man he had grown to depend on and to love. His expression didn’t change as he thought briefly about what had happened.

Then Reid nodded and smiled. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’<sup>1</sup> We were both confused that day. Of course, I forgive you.”

Reid and Nick hugged each other, and Nick moved to the rear door of the sanctuary to greet his flock as they left the building.

The room was still and quiet. People were considering what the pastor had just asked them to do and what they had just seen. No one understood what had happened between the pastor and Reid Britt, but it sounded serious. And Reid had forgiven.

Slowly people started moving toward one another, talking quietly. Handshakes and hugs were beginning to be exchanged when a young woman came to Chipeta and extended her hand with a smile. Chipeta stood and accepted the woman’s hand. Then another came and gave Chipeta a hug. Chipeta accepted that hug too.

Reid continued to sit as members of his extended family moved away, but women of the church continued to come to Chipeta. Men were shaking Reid’s hand as they walked past, then they shook Travis’s hand as they moved toward the exit.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 23:34a.

Travis stood behind Reid and Chipeta until the last hand was shaken and the last hug given. Then he said, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”<sup>1</sup>

Reid replied, “Amen.”

Reid stood up and stepped out into the aisle, waiting for Chipeta, who joined him and extended her arm. Reid took it, and they began moving to the door.

Brother Nick was still talking with the people who were exiting the church. Naomi stood near the door. She stepped toward them when Reid and Chipeta neared.

Reid stopped, looking at his sister, the sister that had cooked his meals and washed his clothes and sewed patches on his pants. The sister that had taken care of him, even when she didn’t want to. Naomi reached out to hug her brother.

“I’m sorry, Reid.” She let go of him, looking at both Reid and Chipeta. “When you showed up that day with a wife and moved back in, all I could think of was the additional work it would bring for me. I never dealt with the feelings I had as a child taking care of you.

“Dad and I talked when I came home, and I apologized to him for the way I acted toward him, but you weren’t here. I didn’t talk to him about the way I treated you.

“But then when Chipeta came home with you, I got jealous again. You had a wife, and my husband was dead.” Naomi shook her head, not wanting to finish her thoughts, so she moved on.

“Then you left, and the baby died. Then Chipeta left. Luke and Cleve brought you home, and you were in such bad shape, and you really needed somebody to take care of you then. And Chipeta wasn’t here. Sarah and Thomas took you in, and they wanted to take care of you. They wanted to!

“I felt guilty for everything I had done and for my selfish feelings. I knew I was wrong, but I didn’t know how to fix things between us, so I just avoided you.

“Now I have. I’ve dealt with my feelings. Thomas helped me understand why I felt the way I did. I know it wasn’t your fault

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 133:1.

Mama died, and it wasn’t your fault Mary left. It wasn’t your fault you were the youngest and needed someone to take care of you. I had memories of Mama’s love, and I was jealous of the girls at school who still had mothers that loved them. I took out my anger on you. I’m so sorry. I know you can’t even remember her.”

Naomi turned to Chipeta. “I’m sorry. You had nothing to do with my selfish feelings. I never asked God to help me get rid of them. I’ve done that now. I’ve asked and God has forgiven me for the jealousy and anger I had. I’ve given my feelings over to him. He took them away. Can you both forgive me too?”

Reid took his sister into his arms. “Oh, my sister, how I have longed for this day. Don’t you think I knew what was going on? I figured it out a long time ago, and I forgave you then. I prayed that you would forgive yourself and return to us, both in body and in spirit.”

Reid continued to hold her. When they released each other, Chipeta reached out and hugged her sister too.

They turned and walked to the door, visiting with Brother Nick. Naomi left to join her father and Ruth who were waiting at the wagon.

Brother Nick followed Reid and Chipeta to the steps that led from the church and helped Reid to the bottom. Reid was concentrating on walking and not falling down the steps. He didn’t see two of his old classmates standing near the last tread.

When he got to level ground, Reid looked up to see McDaniel Piper and Amelia Matthews waiting for him.

“Reid, I haven’t seen you since you left for Denver right after we finished school. What in the world happened to you, man?” McDaniel said.

Brother Nick patted Reid on the shoulder and left chuckling. “You’re on your own.”

Reid smiled and watched as his pastor moved on to talk with someone else. Reid had learned Nick’s subtle sense of humor and enjoyed being around the man.

Reid turned back to McDaniel.

“Hey, Mac,” Reid said. “Morning, Amelia.”

“Hi, Reid.” Amelia replied, eyeing the Indian woman oddly.

Reid started moving toward the automobile, but Mac wasn't ready to end the conversation. Reid had not even answered his question. He followed Reid a few steps and asked again. "What happened to you?"

Reid stopped. "I fell down some stairs."

"Man, that must have hurt. So introduce us." Mac indicated Chipeta by waving a finger back and forth between Chipeta and himself.

"Mac, Amelia, my wife, Chipeta."

Amelia said good morning to Chipeta, and Mac commented, "Beautiful lady," as he tipped his hat.

Then Mac started his rambling and told Reid and Chipeta that he and Amelia had gotten married soon after Reid left for Denver and had moved to Lawrence to work at his grandfather's shop. They had recently returned and were building a home on Amelia's father's ranchland. He asked where Reid and his wife were living.

"We're with Thomas and Sarah." And then Reid realized they probably didn't know the Stewarts by their first names. The couple hadn't been back in town long. "Dr. Stewart and his family. His wife is my sister."

"Huh, didn't know that," Piper continued saying. "You'll have to come see the place we're building. It'll give you some ideas for your own place."

"I'm afraid you will have to come to us for a visit. I'm not moving around very well," Reid commented.

Mac stopped talking to eye Reid curiously. "It really bummed you up, huh?" Then he continued telling Reid about the construction of their new home.

And he told of his grandfather's death. The family had sold the business shortly afterward because Mac had not wanted to continue doing this work. None of the other family members wanted the business either. Mac and his wife had returned to Harris just before their third child was born to take a position at the Matthews's ranch.

Mac was a talker. He always had been. As they continued to talk, a small child ran to the couple and Mac reached down and picked him up.

"This is Matt," Mac said.

An older woman walked up holding a toddler by the hand and carrying a baby. She handed the tiny baby to Amelia. Amelia immediately began telling Chipeta about their child, pulling the blanket away from the child's face so Chipeta could see the baby.

Reid felt his chest tighten. He knew the presence of this child was affecting Chipeta too. She was tensing and holding tightly to his arm with her free hand.

Chipeta said, "He's beautiful."

Reid could hear her voice breaking.

"Yes, he is beautiful. Children are a blessing from God. Mac, it was good to see you. Amelia, we'll see you again." Reid smiled at his friends and began to move away. But instead of continuing to the automobile, he began pulling Chipeta in the direction of the graveyard.

Neither of them had been to their baby's grave. Reid thought it was time to go.

## CHAPTER 36



The DOJ was making arrests throughout the Midwest. Businesses were closing, and towns were in shock of what was going on behind their beautiful city streets. Some of the criminals heard the raids were coming and had escaped capture. Marshals were searching all the known hangouts on a regular basis and were watchful for the wanted men in their districts.

Court hearings were on the federal district court dockets; and Reid was receiving information regularly, keeping up to date on the arrests, trials, and convictions.

Hogan had given important information to the DOJ that expanded their hunt for the organization's leaders into other areas. Arrests in these areas were alarmingly swift and effective in shutting down the trafficking operation.

Hogan was given a new identity and light sentence in a minimum-security jail.

Reid had sent letters to the DOJ in Chicago and throughout Illinois searching for Hogan's daughter. She had been found in a small town in southern Michigan with a husband and Hogan's two grandchildren. His wife had remarried but was now a widow. She was living nearby. They had corresponded and were looking forward to Hogan's release and their reunion.

\*\*\*\*\*

*"Now then, get your weapons. Get your bow and arrows. Go out to the open country.<sup>1</sup> And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand."<sup>2</sup>*

Reid woke up suddenly. "Lord, was that you?"

"What? What's wrong?" Chipeta woke up to Reid's words.

"Get everybody up." Reid said with urgency in his voice. "Tell them to get out. Head for Dad's. Tell Thomas to call Luke. Get out. Now!"

"Why? What's happening?"

"Just go. Tell Adam to bring me a gun."

Reid was giving a lot of instructions. Chipeta didn't know what was going on, but she was now scared. She picked up her robe and started upstairs.

Thomas came to Reid. "What's going on?"

"Thomas, call Luke. There's men on the way. Get everybody out of the house. Their coming from the north, from the ranches. Take everyone to Dad's."

"Reid, did you have a dream. Lie down. It was just a dream."

"No! God warned me. Get everybody out! Call Luke! Now!" Reid raised his voice, demanding obedience.

Just then Adam came in the door wearing a gun belt and pistol, a rifle in his hand. Ed and Curt followed him. Adam handed Reid the rifle along with a box of shells.

Thomas stood watching Adam in amazement. What was he doing? Thomas knew his son owned a pistol, but he hadn't known about the gun belt. That was Adam's hunting rifle that he had just handed Reid. Reid didn't need a gun right now.

"Adam, get everybody to Grandpa's house. Hurry."

"I'm staying with you," Adam said. Then he turned to Ed. "Ed, you take care of Mother."

Reid trusted Adam. They had talked. Adam was more interested in law and justice than he was medicine, but he hadn't told his

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 27:3a (NIRV).

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 9:2a.

father yet. Reid also knew that his own father had taught Adam to shoot, so Reid knew that Adam was proficient with the weapon.

Adam had asked Reid all kinds of questions about the DOJ and Reid's work. He had told Reid he had read everything he could find about the organization Reid was fighting. Adam had also read the reports sent to Reid. He had spent a lot of time in Cleve's office reading the crime journals too.

Adam knew the organization wouldn't give up easily. Adam had agreed with Reid when they had talked: someone within the organization would come after Reid at some point; there would be a fight. Reid and Adam both knew this.

Thomas stood in shock at what Adam was doing.

Ed had gotten his mother and was on his way to his grandfather's house with his younger brother, Curt.

"Thomas, call Luke. Now!" Reid again demanded.

Thomas was still watching Adam with his mouth open. He wanted to tell Adam to put the gun away, but now Adam was helping Reid get his boots on.

Thomas turned around and left the room, not knowing why he was calling Luke at this time of the night.

Chipeta came back into the room. She reached down to help her husband stand. Reid picked up the rifle and his cane, then reached for Chipeta. They started moving out the door slowly, Adam behind him.

When they got to the steps of the porch, Chipeta and Adam helped him to the ground. They started moving toward the stable.

"Go, Chipeta. Get to Dad's," Reid said.

She moved in front of him, shaking her head. "No, I'm not leaving you."

Reid handed the rifle to Adam and put his hands on her cheeks, looking into her eyes. "I need to protect you. I need to concentrate on what I'm doing. I need to be able to move without worrying about where you are. I need to know that you are safe. Please. Go to Dad's." Reid leaned forward and let his forehead rest on hers a moment. Then he took her in his arms and gave her a passionate kiss, hugging her tightly. "I love you," he whispered. "Now go."

She backed away, turned, and started running.

Adam and Reid made their way past the stable. Adam stayed beside Reid as they moved slowly through the field. Reid knew they wouldn't be able to defend themselves in the open, but that's where God had told him to go. He was listening, and he was obeying. He would follow God.

It was a clear night, and the moon was full. They would be able to see a great distance across the open land. The two moved toward the garden. Reid knew he wouldn't be able to run if he needed to. He got to the edge of the sown dirt and began to let himself down to his knees. But he couldn't do it. He grabbed for Adam but still fell forward. Adam caught Reid, easing his fall, but Reid hit the ground awkwardly. He lay there a moment. Then he rolled over and struggled to position himself with his gun arm free, facing north, so he could see the attackers coming.

Reid heard steps behind him and rolled over, his gun moving with his line of sight. It was his father.

"Dad? What are you doing?" he whispered.

Travis replied, "God told me, '(Your) children are far from safety.'<sup>1</sup> 'Who will rise up for (them) against the wicked? Who will take a stand for (them) against evildoers?'<sup>2</sup> 'Listen to what the Lord says: Get up! Defend yourself before the mountains.'<sup>3</sup> So I got up an' was comin' ta ya. On my way, I ran into the others. Ed told me where ya was."

"God told me to stay in the open, they would be coming from the north. Six of them," Reid replied, turning back to look across the field. "We should be able to see them easily in this moonlight."

Luke arrived with his deputy, Cleve and Angus. The seven men lay on the ground waiting and talking quietly.

Travis wasn't listening to the conversation. He was praying scripture, reassuring his heart that God was in control and the Lord would take care of his family. "'Deliver (us) from (our) enemies, my

<sup>1</sup> Job 5:4a (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 94:16.

<sup>3</sup> Micah 6:1a (NET).

God. Protect (us) from those who attack (us).<sup>1</sup> Protect us, Lord. ‘We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed.’<sup>2</sup>

Then Travis began singing softly.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge.<sup>3</sup>

The others had quieted and were listening to the song.

My Savior, you save me from violence. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.<sup>4</sup>

Travis stopped singing to listen. God was speaking to him again.

*“As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike (them down.)”<sup>5</sup>*

“I see them,” Angus said.

Travis replied quickly, “Wait. God’s gonna do somethin’. Wait far God.”

The deputy looked at his boss. “What’d he say? What’s he talking about?”

“Shhh,” several of the men said.

No one moved. They watched six shadowy figures move slowly toward the Stewart home. There was the low rumbling of thunder moving across the distant sky. The tops of trees around Travis’s

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 59:1 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:8–9.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 22:2–3a (NKJV).

<sup>4</sup> 2 Samuel 22:3b–4 (NKJV).

<sup>5</sup> 2 Samuel 5:24.

home began to blow, moving in a rhythm that sounded like an army marching.

Travis whispered, “God’s movin’.”

Then light suddenly brightened the sky with a boom. The men on the ground could see the figures standing abruptly freeze, stiffen, and fall in an instant. The men lying with Reid felt a jolt of excitement move from the ground to their bodies.

“Move!” Travis yelled.

Luke grabbed his father from behind and yanked him to his feet as they ran to the men that were now lying on the ground in front of them.

Quickly grabbing the guns and tossing them to the side, Reid’s band of protectors pulled the men to their feet. Pushing them together, Luke and the deputy took control of their captives. Adam gathered the men’s weapons.

God had won this battle for Travis and his sons without a fight. God’s supernatural power had taken the assailants down with a bolt of lightning.

Reid was still lying on the ground, watching the shadows move. God had protected him again. Reid rolled to his back and relaxed, closing his eyes. “I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me. He shall send from heaven and save me.<sup>1</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be above all the earth.<sup>2</sup> I will praise you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to you among the nations. For your mercy reaches unto the heavens, And your truth unto the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let your glory be above all the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

Reid opened his eyes to see his father, Cleve, and Angus looking down at him.

“Come on, little brother,” Cleve said, smiling, and put a hand out.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 57:2–3a (NKJV).

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 57:5 (NKJV).

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 57:9–11 (NKJV).

Angus extended another hand. They helped Reid up, and the three brothers and their father began making their way to their father's home.

"Tell Thomas to come to the jail. Some of these guys have burns that need to be taken care of," Luke yelled at them from a distance. He and the deputy were headed to the jail with their prisoners, with Adam following.

Cleve gave a wave over his head, acknowledging that he heard and would tell Thomas.

As they approached the house, the others started coming to meet them.

Curt was the first to reach them. "What happened? What was that noise?" he asked.

Angus replied, almost laughing, "It was *awesome!* God took them down with his mighty finger."

Reid took Chipeta in his arms as Cleve and Angus both talked, telling what happened and what they had seen.

The noise woke Ruth. There were so many people at her house. She didn't see her mother. She came sleepy-eyed to her aunt Chipeta, asking to be picked up. Chipeta let go of Reid and leaned down to put an arm around the child, taking her to her mother.

Reid sat down on the edge of the porch beside his father.

"God has done a mighty work today," Reid said.

"Yes, he has. 'For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And his mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.'"<sup>1</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid sat alone at the table in his room reading over the pages that Barrett Batterton had sent for him to review in preparation for the upcoming trial. The window was open letting in the cool late autumn breeze.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:49-50 (NKJV).

"Mac, why don't you just come inside?" Reid said without looking up.

"Hey, man!"

Reid raised his head to look at Mac Piper who was leaning over, looking through the window.

"Man, I thought you would jump. I've been standing there watching you for a while," Mac said.

Reid smiled at his friend. "Yeah, I saw you. I kept waiting for you to say something. Come on around." And Reid indicated the direction of the outside door and the entry hallway that led to his room.

When Mac entered, he flopped onto a chair at the table and picked up a paper, eyeing it with suspicion.

"This is some deep stuff. What are you into?" Mac commented as Reid reached over and took the page from him, placing it back where it belonged. Then he set a book on top to keep the pages in place.

"It's my job. I'm a lawyer. Remember?"

"Yeah, I knew that's what you wanted to do. So you finished school, and you're doing it, huh?" Mac looked at Reid, a little awed by his accomplishment, then said, "Wow. Congrats."

"Thanks."

Mac continued, "Listen. I wanted to come by and tell you I didn't know about what happened to your wife and baby. Amelia's mother told us when we got home from church that day. I'm sorry. Like I said, I didn't know. I could tell something was up by the look on your wife's face when the children came to us."

"It's okay. Like you said, you didn't know," Reid responded. "Cherish your children, they're a blessing."

Mac nodded and changed the subject. "So are you working here with your brother?"

"No, I work out of Topeka."

Reid liked Mac. They had been friends most of their lives. But Mac was a talker. That's probably why they had gotten along so well. Mac had talked, and Reid had listened. Right now, the attorney had

work he needed to do and wanted Mac to leave. But Mac looked like he intended to stay a while.

“What happened out here a few nights ago? There’s a couple of new marshals in town, and somebody said the guys at the jail were after you,” Mac Piper asked as he thumbed through the edge of another stack of papers.

Reid let out a long noisy breath. “Oooh. Yeah, I guess I was their intended target.”

Mac didn’t react. He seemed to ignore the answer, but Reid knew he had heard. Mac was constantly doing something, moving, fidgeting, seldom paying attention to the person he was actually talking to. He gave his attention to everything except what he should be focused on. But he always knew what was going on around him and seldom missed a word said.

Reid really didn’t want to talk about this with Mac. Mac would repeat the story, and it would probably grow each time his friend told it.

“Rumor is they were struck by lightning.” Mac laughed. “Lucky for you, huh? So why were they after you?”

“They probably wanted to stop my testimony at a trial coming up soon,” Reid replied.

“Boy, they must have done something bad. But why are you testifying? Did you see what they did?”

“Mac, it’s a little complicated. I’m not supposed to talk about it before the trial. I’ll explain it to you after the trial is over. I’ll be free to talk about it then,” Reid said.

Mac looked up at Reid. “If you’re a witness, why are you studying all this?” Mac indicated the papers on the table by making a circular motion with his finger.

“Because I’m also one of the prosecuting attorneys.”

“*One* of the attorneys? How many are there? Just who do you work for?”

Reid hesitated, looking at the table. It was no longer a secret who he worked for, but he liked people not knowing he was DOJ. *Oh well*, he thought. *It won’t be long before everyone knows anyway.*

Reid looked up to face his friend again. “I work for the Department of Justice.”

Mac sat unmoving for a long moment, then said, “You didn’t fall down any stairs, did you?”

Reid cocked his head slightly and smiled a guilty smile. “Yeah, I fell down some stairs.” Reid hesitated, then corrected his story, “Well, it was more like I was pushed down some stairs.”

“Oh, man!” Mac put his hands on top of his head and interlocked his fingers. He stared at Reid.

They continued to talk. Mac asked more questions that Reid refused to answer, and Mac eventually said they could save the questions and Reid could answer them later. When Piper finally left, Reid took some papers to the bed and lay down to read.

## CHAPTER 37



Cleve sat in the courtroom waiting for the others to arrive. This trial had been moved to Kansas City to accommodate one of the witnesses. An odd request on behalf of the prosecution, which was the Department of Justice. The federal court had allowed the move, despite the security issues in moving the defendants.

That witness had been Reid. He was doing much better, but Thomas was concerned a long train ride might be damaging to his back or give him headaches, which would cause his thinking to become foggy. Thomas had refused to give Reid permission to go to Chicago. One day on the train, broken up into two days for travel, with rest between trains—that's all Thomas was allowing.

Reid had laughed at the doctor, telling him he didn't need his permission to do anything.

Luke and Cleve had intervened. Then Cleve had used the connections he had through the state congressional office and requested the federal court system change the trial's venue. It had been granted.

Now the courtroom was full, except for two chairs on either side of Cleve. It was a closed courtroom, only the necessary parties and approved reporters were allowed in.

The rear doors opened, and noise in the back of the room stopped as the reporters turned to watch an Indian woman enter with an old man. Cleve turned around to see why the talking had stopped, and he saw his father and Chipeta coming toward him. Moving slowly behind them, Luke walked beside Reid.

Chipeta was wearing her colorful Indian clothing, complete with beaded necklaces, a shawl with fringe as long as her dress,

leather moccasins, and beaded hair adornment. She had embraced her people and was no longer wearing the clothes she said she had worn, "pretending to be a white woman."

As Reid neared the seats on the front row, he stopped. He looked at the three defense lawyers sitting at the table. He knew two of these guys. The younger man was one of the two that had attacked Chipeta in Denver.

Chipeta had finally told Reid about that night. It had been dark, and she had not seen her attackers clearly. He had never told her about the incident in the classroom the day she had remained at the Stewart's home. She didn't know this was one of her attackers, and he wasn't going to tell her.

"Reid, our seats are over here," Luke said, thinking his brother had not seen the empty chairs.

"I know," he replied. But he didn't look toward the seats or move.

"Can you make it?"

"Yeah." But Reid still didn't move.

Luke waited.

Reid kept looking at the defense lawyers.

The younger man turned to talk with one of the other lawyers, then noticed Reid standing in the aisle and looked up to see who the man standing there was. A strange look came to the man's face. The young lawyer said something to the older man sitting next to him. That man turned to look at Reid also. It was the instructor at the university that took such great amusement in asking Reid the difficult questions. The same one that was on the disciplinary board that had wanted Reid expelled from law school.

This instructor had never realized that he was one of the people that had pushed Reid to become a better lawyer. His hard questioning in the classroom had encouraged Reid to study more, to make sure he knew any answer to any question that might be asked.

Reid had followed 2 Timothy 2:15 in everything he did: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Reid tried to present himself to God, and to everyone else, as

a worker not ashamed, who handled truth correctly. That's one of the reasons he had done so well in his studies.

Reid and the two lawyers were still looking at each other, that cold, hard stare in Reid's eyes, when the bailiff called for everyone to rise. Reid stayed where he was, then moved to his seat and sat when instructed.

Luke leaned over and whispered, "You know those guys?"

"Uh-huh."

"Doesn't look like a good relationship," Luke added.

"Uh-uh. It's not."

\*\*\*\*\*

After the preliminaries were disposed of, the prosecution called its first witness, Reid Britt, alias Red Crowder.

Reid was simply asked to tell what he knew about the fourteen defendants that sat in chains against the wall.

Reid was on the stand the rest of the day. Prosecution was allowed to take a few breaks for Reid to move around and to rest. The defense had objected to the prosecution's requests for a recess each time, but the judge was accommodating.

Reid was on the stand again the next day. He had finished his testimony and was taking his seat when prosecution called their second witness.

Everyone turned to the door in the back of the courtroom to see who would enter. In walked Mary. She smiled at her family as she walked to the witness chair, putting a hand on Reid's shoulder as she passed.

She was sworn in and was asked the question, "What is your profession?"

"I'm a medical doctor," she responded.

"Where do you practice?"

"Chicago."

"And what is your relationship to the first witness?"

"He's my brother."

"Would you tell us what part you played in these men's arrest?"

Mary began talking. She wasn't speaking softly. Her words were loud and clear.

"My brother Reid came to me and asked if I would help him. He was going to bring girls to the hospital. He asked if I could check the girls out and make sure they were okay. Then he wanted me to get them all home as fast as I could. It only took one for me to know that I would help.

"When I talked to the first girl, I found out she had been kidnapped and was held against her will. I could tell she had been beaten, several times, and was being forced to be with men. There was physical evidence of both. I brought her medical records with me."

The prosecution handed the judge a few papers.

"She was only sixteen. I helped seventeen young ladies over the next couple of months. Girls that Reid brought to the hospital. Then my brother Luke showed up one day. He had another one. He and my brother Cleve brought in six in the next two weeks."

Mary was on the stand for the remainder of the day. She sat strong and resilient during the cross-examination. She provided documentation for all twenty-three girls, including names and hometowns.

Depositions from twenty of the girls were offered to the court. The statements included the location where they were held, locations and dates they were abducted, and the location and dates they were removed by one of the Britt brothers. Information on what they had seen and experienced were included. This connected eighteen of them to Reid's testimony. Six would be mentioned during Luke's and Cleve's time on the witness stand. Most of the girls had a direct connection to one of the defendants. The others were connected through one or more of the subordinates of the accused.

When Mary's testimony was complete, the judge called for a recess until the next morning. Mary stood watching as the accused were escorted from the room. Then she turned to look at her family.

She had not seen her father in eighteen years. She had been watching him from the witness stand. He was such an old man now, but he still looked strong. She knew the woman sitting next to him had to be Reid's wife, an Indian.

Mary remembered how upset she had been when she had received the letter telling her that her youngest brother had married an Indian. She felt she would never be able to forgive him. She had stayed mad at him until the day he walked into the hospital with the first girl.

That day she realized that it didn't matter what race a person was, or where they lived, or their culture. There were evil men in all races, in all nationalities, and in all walks of life.

But there were also good men. Men like her father and her brothers. Men that stood and fought for justice and truth. Men that would put their lives in danger to help someone in need.

Scriptures long forgotten had returned to her mind as she was helping that first girl. *"Encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone."*<sup>1</sup>

Mary had also remembered a verse from Exodus. *"Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession."*<sup>2</sup> She knew she still wanted justice for her own abduction, but she no longer wanted these men to die. That is how she had felt, before she had forgiven them. Now, she was willing to forget the revenge she had wanted in the past and she just sought God's peace.

Mary knew that God set the standard for right and wrong and that God administered discipline and punishment. He brought justice to those who had been unjustly treated.

But Mary also knew God forgave when there was true repentance. God was also *"a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."*<sup>3</sup>

Mary had a hard time reconciling these two characteristics of God, justice and forgiveness. But she had finally come to terms with the relationship.

The girls she was helping had been kidnapped, and there were others still in the hands of their kidnappers. They were being sold

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:14b.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 21:16.

<sup>3</sup> Nehemiah 9:17b.

over and over and over again. It had to stop. She would help these girls get the justice they sought. And she would help them understand forgiveness.

As she helped each girl, she told them that these men would receive the punishment they deserved and the girls would receive justice. If not by man, then by God. And if they received it from God, it would be much more severe. She had even quoted scripture to them: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>1</sup>

These scriptures stayed on her mind as she worked to help the girls that were brought in. The girls needed kindness and understanding, and they needed justice.

The girls needed to forgive the men also, so that they could live according to the scripture: *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."*<sup>2</sup>

She told them the only way to live that scripture was to forgive, that without forgiveness they would still have bitterness and anger, they would still rage at the memories of those that hurt them. They would still desire harm come to those they considered their enemies. She told them that forgiveness didn't mean these men would not face the consequences of their actions. She explained to them that she knew what she was talking about, she had been kidnapped too.

Memories of her own captivity by the Indians had returned. Mary, and another captive girl, had tried to escape. The Indians had beaten the other girl and left her, abandoned, as they took Mary and moved on. Mary's father had been trailing the Indians and had found the girl and cared for her until she died from her injuries.

Mary had blamed herself for the beating. She was the one who had come up with the plan to escape. She had talked the other girl into joining her. They had both been caught, but the other girl was the only one that was punished.

Mary was older now, and able to separate her feelings from the experience. She knew the truth about what had happened, that none of it had been her fault. And she recognized the lies her feelings were

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:31.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:31.

telling her. The truth was, she had done nothing to cause her kidnapping and she had not caused her friend's death. She tried to explain to the girls that their feelings would sometimes lie to them. She encouraged them to seek the truth, and sometimes that involved listening to other people. Sometimes it didn't. But the girls were to discern for themselves what was truth and what was a lie. That's where they needed to know Jesus. He was truth itself.

She had also told the girls to find people that would help them through the hard transition back to a normal life. She had had her father, Sarah, Thomas, and Dr. Jessie Cooper.

Dr. Cooper, Mary had gone to work for him less than a year after she had returned home. She was scared of every shadow and didn't talk to anyone, except her father. Dr. Cooper had been a sour and short-tempered man, but he had been nice to her. He was going blind when she went to work for him, and she became his eyes. He had been good for her, helping her heal and trust again. And he had helped introduce her to medicine.

The night Mary went home after helping the first girl, she cried. She asked God to forgive her for the hatred she had held all those years. And she told God that she would help any girl that was brought to her.

But now, she stood in the courtroom with her family and worked to protect those that couldn't protect themselves. The last step to her own healing was to help others get justice for these girls that had been in the same position she had been in. Now she felt more freedom than she had ever felt.

Looking at her sister-in-law across the room, she knew that she needed to ask her forgiveness too. She walked toward her family.

Reid still sat in his chair. Mary was amazed that he was walking, that he looked as healthy as he did. She could not have imagined he would have made such a good recovery after seeing him in the hospital just a few short months ago.

Mary hugged Luke, who was standing in the aisle, then she hugged Reid, telling him how happy she was that he had recovered so well. Her father stood up watching her, anticipating her coming to him. She looked at him smiling, hugged Cleve briefly, then moved to

her father. She put her arms around his middle and held on to him for a long time. She spoke softly into his good ear, telling him how much she loved him.

Yes, she remembered he had noise in one ear, the result of an explosion during the war. He couldn't hear soft voices with that ear, the noise was too great. She was probably the only one that knew that. He smiled as she spoke, and his eyes moistened. She knew he loved her, and she loved that man dearly.

Then Mary let go of her father and turned to Chipeta. "Chipeta, I am so sorry for everything that has happened to you and Reid. I really don't know how to begin or what to say. I just want you to know I love your husband and when I get to know you, I'm sure I will love you too. Can we be friends?"

Chipeta nodded, smiling, and Mary reached out to hug her new sister.

It had been another long day. Everyone was tired. It would be another long day tomorrow.

## CHAPTER 38



The family had eaten supper in Reid's hotel room. Now Reid lay in bed, watching his brothers and sister and listening to the conversation. Chipeta sat beside him, leaning back on the headboard, holding his hand.

Someone had found a rocking chair and brought it into the room. Travis sat beside Reid's bed, rocking. Mary laughed at him inwardly. He still had the excess energy he had always had that caused him to be doing something constantly, even if it was just the rocking.

Travis, Reid, and Chipeta watched the other three at the table. These three laughed and told stories, remembering their childhood.

They talked of their mother and of the few memories they had of their first father. They talked of doing farmwork and of the joy they had when their mother remarried. They talked of the memories they had of their father before he had become their father. Then they started telling stories.

Somewhere during the storytelling, Cleve said, "Do you remember the day Luke brought that turkey home from Mr. Smith's. Mary tried to pick it up like it was a chicken. She was hugging it so tight until that bird decided he wanted down. He got his wings loose, and they started flapping." Cleve stood up from his chair and tucked his hands into his armpits and started flapping. Then he looked at Mary. "You screamed and dropped it, and that thing turned around and lowered that wing and started for you." Cleve mimicked what the bird did. "You started screaming and running for the house but couldn't get the gate open." Cleve was laughing hard at his memory.

The others were laughing at him.

"So you climbed the fence but fell over the top. Got your foot stuck in the wire on top and fell face down, hanging from the fence by your foot." Cleve turned to look at his father, who sat quietly smiling. "Dad came running from the barn to rescue you, and you wouldn't hold still for him to get your foot loose." Cleve laughed. "That was the funniest sight! Both of you lying on the ground after you fell and that turkey still going at you through the fence."

There was more laughter and conversation about the turkey, about hunting trips, and camping under the stars.

Mary started another story. "Do you all remember that cat Mom had? The one that would get up under the bed all the time. You remember that? One night it tore a hole in the mattress and crawled inside and went to sleep. Dad came home late and crawled in bed. That thing latched onto his leg." Mary started laughing so hard she couldn't continue.

Cleve continued the story laughing too. "The noise Dad made woke everybody up. Mom lit the lamps, and they stripped the bed of its covers looking for what got him. Leg was all scratched up, blood all over his leg." Now Cleve was laughing so hard he couldn't continue.

Luke picked up the story here. "We all just stood there watching that lump move around inside the mattress. We didn't know what it was. All of us scared to go after it. Then Dad just pounced on it from the top." Luke raised his arms and made a downward motion like he was pouncing onto the table. No one could finish the story. They were all laughing too hard.

Chipeta asked, "Papa, what happened? Did you get it out of the mattress?"

"Yeah," Travis said calmly. "Lost a shirt, a sheet, an' half the skin on my arm, but I got it out a there. Chucked it out the door. I don't think it come back ta the house far more 'an a week. Their mom spent most a the next day repairin' the mattress."

There was more laughter and stories.

Then Mary turned to Reid. "Do you remember when you were about five..." She stopped and smiled.

Reid was asleep, his head lying on Chipeta's lap.

Luke quietly spoke. “Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.”<sup>1</sup> Come on, let’s get out of their way and let him sleep. Party moves to our room.” Luke slapped Cleve quietly on the shoulder.

The three got up to leave.

Travis turned around and softly touched Reid’s head. He stood up, kissed Chipeta on the cheek, and said, “Good night, sweet girl. I’ll see ya in the mornin’.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The group spent six more days in the courtroom. Luke and Cleve both testified to their involvement and what they knew of the defendants and the organization.

Reid was listed as one of the prosecuting attorneys, even though he was also the primary witness. The day after his testimony ended, Reid moved from the gallery to sit with the prosecution lawyers. Batterton had wanted him present at all times so he could spot the lies being offered from the defense. He did his job well and had found many lies. They were all refuted.

The last three days in the courtroom were shorter. Reid’s chair at the defense table was more comfortable than the hard straight-backed chairs his family sat it. But the constant sitting was hard on him. The second day after his testimony, the prosecution had asked the judge to quit early so that Reid could rest. Recess had been granted early that day, and the following days the judge had repeated this action without a request. A hard-nosed judge sat on the bench, but he had been sympathetic toward Reid’s injuries.

The trial was over. All fourteen men had been found guilty and would be off the streets for good. More trials were ongoing in the districts where other crimes had been committed. These trials only needed Reid’s deposition. He wouldn’t have to attend. Cleve and Chipeta were sending these out as quickly as the requests came in.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 116:7.

Special Counsel Barrett Batterton turned around from his seat at the prosecution table and, using his index finger, motioned for someone behind the Britt’s to join him.

Don Prather walked up beside Reid and put a hand on his shoulder to get his attention. The two shook hands, and Prather said, “Do you remember that day in the dean’s office at Denver U? Watch this.” Prather smiled a mischievous smile.

Prather moved to stand in front of the defense lawyers. He stood quietly until Reid’s former instructor and the young lawyer that had been in Reid’s class looked up at him. Then Prather asked loudly, “Did it bite you?”

Reid chuckled and gave Prather a knowing smile, rolled his eyes, and shook his head.

No one else understood the joke.

Batterton then spoke to Travis. “I have to admit, you succeeded. If your prayers are what accomplished this, then I’m going to have to consider learning how to pray.”

Travis replied, “We all need ta pray. There’s still more evil goin’ on that needs ta stop. God said, ‘If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.’<sup>1</sup> ‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’”<sup>2</sup>

Batterton looked at Travis oddly. “So you’re saying there’s something out there, like a ghost, that’s causing all this?”

Luke had heard the conversation and jumped in. “Not exactly a ghost, but similar. If we could ‘clear the air’ so to speak, it would sure get rid of a lot of the intentional wrong doing in this land. ‘For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:14.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ<sup>1</sup> There are other things going on in this world than what we see.”

“Reid,” Batterton called, “you tell me how this all happened. How did you get away?”

Reid smiled. “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.”<sup>2</sup>

Barrett Batterton’s forehead furrowed as he eyed Reid questioningly. “So where do I learn about these things?” Batterton asked.

Cleve was also listening to the conversation. He reached into a satchel on the floor and pulled out a Bible, handing it to Batterton. “Wait a minute,” Cleve added. Then turning toward the back of the room, Cleve spoke loudly, “Daniel, come here, please.” They waited as a man moved toward them and stopped behind Travis.

“Barrett Batterton, DOJ, meet Daniel Elshout, my chief of staff here in Topeka. Daniel, Batterton here would like to know more about fighting in the spiritual world,” Cleve said.

Elshout grinned at Cleve and made a face. “I’m your only staff.”

Then his facial expression changed, and Elshout looked at Batterton. “You have come to the right person, my good man. I learned from the best.” Elshout put a hand out and patted Travis’s shoulder.

The two men continued to talk as the Britt’s moved toward the exit.

As they neared the door, Elshout yelled to Reid, “Hey, Reid. I’ll be out next week to talk to you.”

Barrett Batterton took the opportunity to have Reid’s attention also. “Hey, Reid. See me after Christmas. We’ll get you set up.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:3–5.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 40:1–3.

Elshout said, “I’m going to write a book on Reid’s exploits undercover.”

Not to be outdone, Barrett replied, “I’m putting him on as special counsel for the DOJ.”

Reid smiled at the two men and waved. As he walked out the door, he softly said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”<sup>1</sup> Lord, give me strength to continue this fight.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7–8.

## CHAPTER 39



Reid sat in the rocking chair on the porch of the hotel. The man at the restaurant told him that he would bring his meal when it was ready. Reid wasn't hungry, but he would try to eat at some point before he went to bed.

It had been a long two weeks. The trial had been a hard win, but he and his associates had succeeded in prosecuting three federal marshals on extortion and racketeering charges. Reid hoped this was the last trial associated with the undercover operation he had been involved with three years earlier. He had been occupied with case after case over the last two and a half years, beginning with his testimony against the organization's leadership.

The Department of Justice had succeeded in clearing the state of the human trafficking of young girls, of many prostitution houses, and of many dishonest lawmen throughout the Midwest. But each time, as the prosecution was preparing for a case, they would discover a connection to another city or state official or another marshal or sheriff of another town with a brothel or club trying to stay open on their own without the support of organized crime. Reid anticipated these being the last men he would prosecute in connection with this operation. There were no indications of more.

Now, as Reid relaxed, his thoughts turned toward home. He would see his family soon. Scripture came to his mind: *"My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest."*<sup>1</sup> Yes, his home was peaceful and quiet and safe. His family was happy.

Reid's wife had a peaceful spirit and had now fully embraced her Indian heritage. Their son, Esa, had just turned two.

Reid spoke a prayer out loud. "Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, Sovereign Lord, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever."<sup>1</sup>

He could get some rest tonight without having to think of an appearance tomorrow in the courtroom. In the morning, he could stay in bed as long as he wanted. When he got up, he wouldn't have to put on that constricting suit. Then he could take his time before catching the train headed home in the afternoon. He would be home the following day. Home with his wife, Chipeta, and their son, Esa.

There was a knock on the door. "It's open," Reid yelled as loud as he was able into the room without looking. This would be supper arriving.

"Mr. Britt? I have a message for you."

Reid turned to see a young man standing in the open doorway. It wasn't the man from the restaurant.

"Bring it here, please," Reid said as he dug in his pocket for some change. He began to hand the coin to the messenger, but the messenger shook his head.

"No, sir. I work for Mr. Batterton. There's no need."

Reid took the message and put the coin back in his pocket. The messenger didn't move. He was obviously waiting for an answer. Unfolding the paper, Reid read,

*Good job with the trial! Come see me before  
you leave town. How about tomorrow 9:00 a.m.?*

Reid sighed and nodded toward the messenger. "Tell him I'll be there." So much for staying in bed late and taking his time. But he would not put on that uncomfortable suit.

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 32:18.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel 7:29.

Barrett Batterton stood up to welcome Reid into his office. "There's the man we owe our gratitude to!" He waited till Reid dropped his satchel and then sat down himself. Then Batterton reached his hand out. Reid swapped hands with his cane and took Batterton's hand, shaking it in greeting.

"Reid, this is Homer Warsh out of the D. C. office. Warsh here has a proposition for you."

Reid turned awkwardly, stretching his hand toward the man in the chair next to him.

"Mr. Warsh." Reid nodded.

"Mr. Britt. It's nice to finally meet you. We've been watching your performance at the trials. There's been interest since your testimony before the initial lock up of the organization's top leaders. Such detail. Your prosecution presentations have been outstanding too and the execution brilliant. You did a wonderful job. It's not often we let a lawyer so inexperienced take command of an operation like this. But you have certainly proved yourself."

"Thank you, sir," Reid replied.

"We've also evaluated your ideas on judicial reform." Warsh smiled. "Yes, we reviewed your university and law school papers. Your ideas have merit. They're being looked at further. We've been talking about reform within the judicial system for quite some time. Changes are coming. They may be implemented slowly but they will happen."

"What we would like from you is a fresh eye. We'd like you to observe some of the judges and courtrooms and give us your input. We'll tell you what we are looking for, and you just tell us how these judge's line up with our framework. We're not going to tell you what concerns us about those that you'll observe. We're hoping that you'll see what we see, or maybe see something we don't see."

"I'm to evaluate the judges?" Reid asked. "The person or the execution of their duties?"

"Both."

"Am I to do this openly or covertly?"

"Any way you think you can get the best reading on the individual judge," Walsh said. "We're giving you free rein to do this however

you want to. And take all the time you need. We want it done right. You will be free from any commitment to upcoming trials. You concentrate on this."

The two talked for several hours. When they were finished, Reid placed the stack of papers he was given in his satchel to review at home. He slowly stood, pulling a pocket watch from his jacket pocket.

"Do you have time for lunch?" Batterton asked.

Reid shook his head. "I'll pick something up to take with me."

"Oren!" Batterton said loudly.

The young man that had delivered the message the night before moved from a side room to stand in the doorway.

"Oren, call the café next to the train station and order Mr. Britt something to go. Get him enough for today and tomorrow morning. And a couple of drinks. Charge it to me. Then run down and find a cab. Hold it for Mr. Britt." Then turning back to Reid, Batterton said, "Reid, I'll walk you down."

Barrett Batterton reached over and took the satchel from Reid and started moving toward the door. Reid followed. Reid was happy to let him carry the bag. It didn't weight much, but it still threw his balance off and slowed his movement.

As they walked, Batterton stopped several times to talk with Reid quietly. He advised Reid, giving him information on some of the courts he would be observing and on a few of the judges. Batterton gave him what seemed would be general knowledge on how some of the judges handled their courtrooms. Reid knew this information would be helpful in planning his visits. Batterton had always been helpful.

Reid wouldn't be able to slip into a courtroom late or unnoticed. His slow and sometimes awkward movement and his inability to stand for long periods of time always attracted attention. Thomas had worked with Reid, building his strength while doing rehabilitation, and helped restore Reid's ability to walk. The information he had just been given would allow him to be less conspicuous in the courtrooms he visited.

As they moved through the revolving door of the federal office building, Batterton said, "You shall not show partiality in judgment, you shall hear the small and the great alike."<sup>1</sup> Batterton smiled at Reid.

"You're learning, aren't you?" Reid commented.

"I still have a lot to learn," Reid's supervisor replied.

They found Oren on the street, waiting with a cab. Reid climbed into the automobile and sat down. Batterton set Reid's satchel on the floor near Reid's feet.

"I'll be waiting for your reports." Batterton shut the door.

---

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 1:17a.

## CHAPTER 40



The phone rang, and Chipeta answered. Then looking through the doorway to the room in the back of the house, she said, "Reid, it's Luke."

Reid was sitting at a large table reading and making notes. This is where he did most of his research and study.

The room had little furnishings. There was a large table, which his father had built, and a red cushioned leather high-back swivel chair. Reid had looked long and hard before he found this chair in a Sears and Roebuck catalog. This was a chair he could sit comfortably in for long periods of time.

Books and periodicals were scattered in stacks around the walls and crates of other material were mixed in. Several times Chipeta had offered to put things in order, but Reid had told her not to touch it. He knew where everything was, and he didn't want to have to go looking for something when he needed it.

Occasionally, he would venture to his brother Cleve's law office in Harris for the use of some of his books. Reid seldom stayed in town to do his research. The young lawyer would ask to borrow the books from his oldest brother and take them home. He would, however, read the latest journals while at the law office.

Chipeta waited as Reid made his way to the phone that hung on the wall in the middle of the hallway. She handed him the receiver.

"Afternoon, Luke," Reid said and then he went silent listening to his brother.

Chipeta watched her husband. His expression became solemn. As he hung up the phone, he turned to face his wife. "Can you call

Sarah or Jenny, Molly, somebody. Get them to watch Esa. There's been some trouble out at Amelia's father's place. We need to go out there and help."

"What happened?"

"Amelia's father was killed. And Amelia's been shot."

Chipeta gasped at Reid's words, throwing her hands to her mouth.

"Gather what you need and make the call. I'll get Esa and get the motorcar running," Reid said as he walked off.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid and Chipeta arrived at the Matthews's ranch to see Luke and the undertaker unloading supplies from the back of a wagon. Thomas's Oldsmobile was already parked in front of the large ranch house. Chipeta and Reid climbed out of their Ford Model T and moved toward Luke, who turned and began moving their way.

"Reid, Mac is in the barn," Luke called.

"What happened?" Reid asked.

"Apparently, Mr. Matthews was selling some horses to a couple of guys, and the deal went bad. Don't know what happened exactly. One of the hands said the two guys started heading for their horses when Matthews yelled something at one of them. Something like he wouldn't sell him any horses if his life depended on it. The younger guy yelled back, 'Well, it does,' and he went for his gun.

"Matthews had his gun on and pulled it to defend himself, and he was faster than the other guy. The guy fired at Matthews just as Matthews's bullet hit him. The force of the impact turned him around and his bullet went toward the house and caught Amelia. She was on the porch with two of the kids. The hand thought Matthews must have seen her get hit. He started shooting again and yelling. Emptied his gun. Ranch hand doesn't think he hit anybody that time, but the other guy turned around and shot Matthews. There's several bullet holes in the wall over there." Luke pointed toward the corner of the house. "Mac came out and saw Matthews on the ground and ran to

him. The buyers were riding off. He didn't see Amelia until one of the hands yelled at him."

"Where are the children," Chipeta asked.

"Inside with a couple of the ranch hands," Luke answered, then turned back to Reid. "Mac went wild. He won't listen to me or Marvin. It's keeping the children upset. I had some of the guys take Mac out to the barn." Luke was silent a moment, then added, "Thomas doesn't think Amelia will make it."

Chipeta ran a hand across Reid's arm. He smiled sadly as he looked at her. She turned and began moving toward the house.

Luke watched Reid as he slowly made his way toward the barn. It looked like he was having a good day. His posture wasn't rigid like it was when his back was hurting, and his breathing seemed relaxed. Luke took a moment to thank God for this and prayed the day would continue to go well, at least for his brother's physical body. Luke knew Reid's soul was already disturbed by the death of Ben Matthews and the approaching death of Mac's wife.

Luke turned around and headed toward the house.

Reid entered the barn to find three cowboys standing near the door. He stopped to look around, and one of the men pointed toward the corner of a stall. There stood Mac, covered in blood. He was snorting like a bull, and his eyes were wide. His mouth closed tightly, and his lips disappeared from view as Mac pressed them together. Then they would reappear and the bottom lip would pooch out for just a moment before he drew his mouth tight again.

Reid could tell he had already thrown a fit. Such a waste. But it was better than taking his frustrations out on a living person. Scripture came to Reid's heart: "*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*"<sup>1</sup>

Tools and tac were now scattered over half the barn. A couple of boards between the stalls were broken. So was the ladder to the loft. Two animals were loose and huddled restlessly at the far wall.

Reid had seen him throw fits like this before. He'd done it his entire life. Any time he was upset by something, it would happen but

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 25:28.

it usually ended quickly and Mac would be himself again. He always apologized for his outburst, but there would always be another one. It didn't look like this one had ended quickly.

Reid had also seen Mac turn to the children harshly when he was upset. Amelia had always intervened, and her husband would calm quickly. The children loved their father, who was affectionate with them. But most of the children also knew when to keep their distance.

Another scripture came to Reid's heart: "*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*"<sup>1</sup> Mac had no self-discipline.

Reid moved forward and found Marvin, the ranch manager, crouched just inside the stall where Mac stood.

Marvin was a good man and a Christian. He had a good business head on his shoulders and was calm. Reid had never seen him upset, and he got along well with everyone. That was good, because he was in love with Naomi. They planned to marry in just a few weeks.

Reid and Marvin looked at each other a moment. Reid cocked his head toward the door, telling Marvin to leave. As he moved out the door, the other men followed and the barn door slowly closed.

It didn't look like Mac had noticed Reid come in. It didn't look like Mac was seeing anything. Reid had seen this happen before too. Mac didn't seem to hear or see anything around him when he was seriously disturbed by something.

Reid took a few steps closer. Then he saw the pistol in Mac's hand.

"Mac?" Reid said.

Mac gradually raised his eyes and looked in Reid's direction. "She's gonna die," Mac said softly.

"I know. Luke told me."

"I can't raise those young'uns by myself." Mac raised the gun in his hand to look at it.

Reid took a step closer, reaching his hand out. "Mac, hand me the gun." Reid took another step. He could see in Mac's eyes what he was thinking, and Reid had no intention of letting Mac do it.

"Mac, those children need you."

"They need their mother. I need their mother."

"Hand me the gun." Reid demanded this time. He was just a few feet from his friend now and getting closer. Reid could see panic begin to show in Mac's eyes.

Mac began to raise the gun, and Reid lunged forward onto Mac's arm, slamming them both into the wall behind Mac, pulling down on Mac's arm with his body weight. Reid had dropped his cane and was struggling with both hands to pull the gun from Mac. Mac was still struggling to point the gun toward himself.

The gun went off, and Mac dropped to his knees, Reid clinging to him.

The barn door flew open, and Reid yelled, "Stay out."

Reid heard Marvin's voice calling to him.

"I'm okay," Reid responded. "Mac's okay."

Reid was still clinging to Mac, who had collapsed into Reid's arms sobbing. Mac dropped the gun on the ground and after several minutes began to calm. He asked Reid, "What am I gonna do?"

"It's going to be hard, but you aren't the first to raise children alone. Right now you need to pull yourself together and go be with Amelia. You need to be strong for her. She needs you right now. If she's conscious, she needs to see you. If she's not, she'll still know you're there. And she'll die knowing that you love her," Reid said firmly.

Mac got a sudden and scared expression on his face. Reid could tell he had not thought about Amelia needing him. Mac let go of Reid and stood up quickly, pulling Reid's hand roughly from his jacket. He ran out the barn door, headed for the house.

Reid stayed on his knees. His breathing heavier than just a few moments ago.

"Reid?" Luke's voice came from the barn door.

"Over here," Reid called from inside the stall.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7.

Luke got to his brother, and Reid seized Luke's arm to steady himself. The sheriff knelt in front of Reid and waited. When Reid said nothing, Luke asked, "Do you want to stand?"

"No. Just let me hold still."

Luke waited for Reid to recover from whatever had just happened. Luke didn't ask what the problem was, he knew. Reid was in pain. Luke had seen that face before. And he didn't ask what happened; this wasn't the time for questions.

Reid was usually able to control his reaction to the pain caused by his injuries. But when the pain was too great, it took too much effort for Reid to do anything else.

The daily pain slowed his activities and limited his movement. Even if someone knew about the injuries, they usually couldn't tell how serious the discomfort was. Reid hid the pain well. Reid would joke with Thomas, Luke, or his dad about his inability to do things; but he never talked about the pain.

When asked why he never complained, Reid would quote 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." And sometimes he'd add, "I thank God I'm alive and walking. God has given me strength."

After several minutes with Reid kneeling on the barn floor, he closed his eyes and let out a few deep shuttering breaths. When Reid opened his eyes again, Luke thought they looked strained. But Luke could also see the determination in them.

"Okay, I'm ready," Reid said softly.

Luke helped his little brother up but could feel a slight trembling in his touch. They started for the barn door. Luke stopped to pick up Reid's cane, handing it to him. Reid still held to Luke's arm as they moved outside and headed to the house.

Reid looked through the door to his left. The mortician was covering windows, pictures, and mirrors inside the large dining room. Apparently, this is where he would put the bodies.

Chipeta was holding the baby on her lap, sitting on the floor with a few books and toys. The other four children sat with her. Matt was the oldest at age eight. James followed at six years of age, and

then Stephen at five. The two girls were Abigail and Jeannie. Abigail had just had her second birthday, and Jeannie was only four months old.

Reid smiled and winked at his wife as he and Luke walked past her, letting her know that he was okay. They were headed for the room where Amelia lay.

Chipeta saw the troubled look in Reid's eyes, even though he had smiled at her. And she saw him holding to Luke. She knew something had happened to aggravate his injuries.

Reid wouldn't talk to any of his family about the pain, not even his wife. He seldom acknowledged it to anyone. He would talk to the doctor about it, but only when he had too. Even then he wouldn't give much information. It frustrated the doctor.

Chipeta had learned, during the years following his injury, when Reid would accept comfort and when she needed to leave him alone. Right now, she would leave him alone. He would come to her when he wanted support.

Chipeta stayed with the children as Reid disappeared into the room where Amelia lay. Luke turned around at the door and went to the desk beside the big window that looked out over the open field to the western horizon. The sun was setting, shooting clear sharp rays of sun across the open blue sky. The sheriff started shuffling through the papers and drawers, looking for any information he could find on who the two men were that had been there earlier to purchase horses.

The housekeeper prepared supper for the children. Then Chipeta took them to one of the bedrooms and put the youngest to bed. She was playing checkers with the older boy when Thomas came to stand in the doorway.

Thomas watched the game until Chipeta looked up. He shook his head slightly, and she knew that Amelia was gone.

"Reid's with Mac. He's telling him what to expect from them." Thomas indicated the children with a nod. "Listening to him, you'd think Reid had been through it. Papa must have talked about it a lot. Reid couldn't possibly remember. He was too young."

Chipeta got up and asked another child to finish her game. She walked to the door to talk with her brother-in-law.

“You were there right after Reid’s mother died, weren’t you?”

“Yes. I got there just a few days after it happened.” Thomas sighed.

Chipeta could tell he was tired. But it seemed like he wanted to talk.

“How did Papa react?” she asked.

“He was calm. So calm. But Papa was sick too. Papa, Brenda, Angus, and Colleen all had the fever. You react differently when you’re sick. But Papa already had a couple of days to grieve when I got there. His friend Mark had been with him.

“But the calmness was disturbing. Looking at him you would have thought he had given up. He was drained by the illness. But when you talked to him, you knew he still had hope.

“I don’t think Papa could have reacted any other way besides being calm though. It’s just not in him. I felt so bad for him. He had been alone a long time since his first wife died. Then he found Brenda. They were so happy together. These two”—Thomas pointed toward the bedroom where Amelia lay—“were married longer than Papa and Brenda were.

“I’d sit up with Papa after the children were in bed at night, and Papa would talk about Brenda and Colleen. He even talked about Sarah’s brothers some. But I never heard him talk about Sarah’s mother. I think the pain of her loss must have been too much for him.

“He came home after the war to find her and the boys dead. His home was gone. He was weak himself from what he had been through. And that’s when he found Sarah had been blinded too. His grandfather died right after he got home. I think all of it together weighed on him for years. Then giving up Sarah like he did. I just can’t imagine living through something like that. Then Brenda’s and Colleen’s death together.” Thomas shook his head sadly.

“If Mary hadn’t quit school when her mother died and come home to take care of the little ones, I don’t know what he would have done.”

“How did Angus and Naomi take their mother’s death?”

“They weren’t old enough to really understand. All they knew was that their mother and sister were gone. They kept asking for their mother. These are a little older”—Thomas nodded toward the two children playing checkers—“They’ll understand more. They know what’s going on now. They’re just waiting to see how their father will react. They’ll miss her, but they’ll react to how their father deals with her being gone more than they will their mother’s death.” Thomas was watching the two children as they started another game.

“Sarah and I had talked about it, and we were willing to take the younger children and raise them. But we both knew Papa wouldn’t let us. He always felt he had failed Sarah, so he was determined to raise the other children correctly.”

“Why did he think he had failed Sarah?” Chipeta questioned. She had not heard this.

Thomas answered, “Because he couldn’t take care of her after the war. The farm was gone, and he couldn’t find a job. He left her in Chicago with someone he didn’t know. He decided that was the only way he could get her the help she needed because of her blindness.”

“Does Sarah feel that way? That he failed her?”

“No. She always knew what was happening. She knew how he struggled just to feed her. She told me about the nights after they left the mountain that she would have just a handful of food and he would eat nothing. He’d lie to her, telling her he wasn’t hungry or that he had already eaten, but she knew what was happening. Sometimes he wouldn’t eat for days. If it hadn’t been for the man that...”

Thomas stopped talking suddenly, and he and Chipeta both turned toward the sound of movement behind them.

“No, Mac. You can’t!” Reid called as he watched Mac run out the door. The oldest child ran to the door where Chipeta stood, and Thomas caught him by the shoulders, pulling the child against him. Hugging him with both arms from behind.

Reid turned to look at the others. “I can’t keep up with him. Where’s Luke?” Reid sounded tired.

“He went back into town,” Chipeta said.

Reid leaned back heavily against the wall. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back, resting. "Lord, keep him safe and don't let him do something stupid."

"What's he going to do?" Thomas asked.

Reid shook his head. He didn't know. Maybe Mac would calm down. Reid knew that Mac really didn't know where he was going. His grief had taken control, and Reid hoped Mac was just letting off steam. Reid also knew Mac wouldn't find the men that killed his wife. Mac had no idea who they were or where they went.

"Let's go home," Reid said to Chipeta. "We'll take the children with us. We'll give him time to calm down. If he comes back and finds the children gone, maybe it'll get his attention and he'll come looking for them. I hope anyway."

Chipeta gathered a few things, and then Thomas helped move the sleeping children to the motorcar. Reid stood beside the automobile waiting. When he asked Chipeta to drive, Thomas knew Reid was in a lot of pain. Reid asked Thomas to help him as he got into the Ford. He put an arm around Abigail, who was asleep on the seat next to him. Matt, James, and Stephen climbed into the back seat.

Thomas handed the sleeping baby to Reid, then asked, "Can you hold her? You got her?"

"I got her. I'm okay," Reid responded.

But the doctor knew he wasn't okay. He'd seen Reid struggling earlier to stand and to move and he'd needed help to get into the Model T. Thomas could hear the strain growing in Reid's voice.

## CHAPTER 41



Early the next morning Thomas headed to his wife's brother's home. The doctor knew he needed to check on Reid and Thomas could use the children as an excuse for the visit.

Reid had built a home for his family where his father's house had stood years ago, where he had grown up, where he had stood guard on the porch eight years earlier, before the family home had burn to the ground.

The old road to the house was still there, but it was impassible by automobile or by wagon. So Reid had a road cut through the trees to his new home. This road connected to the one that ran past his family's homes. Driving into town, they would pass his father's house, then go between the pasture and gardens and past the family's stables. Then the lane turned to meet the small dirt road near Sarah's house. Turning right, it went to a few ranches. But turning left, the road passed Sarah's large home, then past Cleve and Jenny's place, then past Angus and Molly's and the medical clinic just outside of town.

The house was one story with a large porch across the entire front that circled around to continue down one side. There weren't many rooms, but the rooms were large. Reid had joked that when he fell, he didn't want to hit furniture. He wanted plenty of room. Reid had also said he wanted to be able to put his children to bed. Therefore, all the rooms were on one level so that his movement throughout the house would not be hindered by stairs.

But the doctor knew what Reid was doing. Reid was building the house so that he could move throughout in a wheelchair. Reid

had never spoken of his concerns, but the doctor had them too. The progress in Reid's recovery had slowed a couple of years ago, and they both knew that Reid could one day end up unable to walk.

Thomas arrived at Reid's house with his wife and youngest son, Curt. Chipeta walked out onto the porch when she heard the automobile. Three children followed her—her two-year-old son and two of the Piper children.

They greeted each other, and then Thomas asked, "Is Reid up?"

"No, he had a rough night. I don't think he fell asleep until just before dawn."

"Did you get any sleep?" Sarah asked Chipeta.

Chipeta laughed. "Not much with him restless and three little ones in the house. I was surprised that the others slept so well after what happened yesterday and in a strange place. I guess this is giving me a good idea of what it will be like when the next one gets here."

"Have you told Reid yet?"

"No. It just never seems to be the right time. I'll get around to it soon."

The doctor nodded. "You make sure you get enough rest. If we need to help, you let us know. We'll hang around this morning, if you don't mind, until Reid wakes up."

Chipeta invited them into the house. All the children were in the kitchen. Some had already eaten breakfast and Chipeta was feeding the others. Sarah took the baby and cared for her as they talked casually, freeing Chipeta to do her chores and take care of the other children.

The children all finished breakfast, and most of them had moved outside to play. Sixteen-year-old Curt went with them. He threw a ball back and forth to Matthew Piper while watching the younger children.

Sarah had passed the baby to Thomas and was helping Chipeta clean the kitchen and wash the dishes. After the baby girl let out a lusty belch and was calm, Thomas laid her on a quilt in the corner of the room to play.

Then Thomas said, "I'm going to check on Reid." And the doctor poured a small amount of coffee into a cup and walked from the room.

When Thomas entered the bedroom, he could see that Reid was awake. He lay on his side, staring at the wall.

Thomas loved Reid like Reid was his own son. Reid had been so quiet when he had first arrived in Denver to live with them. He was beginning classes at the university, just like his older brothers and sisters had done. But Reid had seemed different than the others. He was more watchful of other people's needs, more caring of their feelings. This was unusual in a young man his age.

Now, with Reid's injuries, Thomas felt he knew the agony Travis was in each time he saw Reid struggle. Thomas's heart was pulled too. He wanted to help Reid, to ease his suffering, but he didn't know how.

"Morning, Reid," Thomas called to get Reid's attention. "I brought you some coffee. How do you feel this morning?"

Reid moved his eyes to look toward Thomas without moving anything else. "Not one of my better days," he replied softly.

Thomas sat the cup on the table beside the bed. "What happened yesterday?"

"Mac tried to shoot himself. I had to wrestle the gun from him." Reid was looking at the wall again.

"Oh," Thomas said in shock. This was something he had not expected to hear. Thomas was quiet for a moment. The doctor knew this could have injured Reid badly, but he was glad Reid was successful in stopping Mac's rash attempt at suicide. "Tell me how you feel right now."

"I've had worse days," Reid said. "Would you pull the curtains closed?"

Thomas moved to close the curtains. He wished Reid would give him a straight answer just once. First, Reid had said it wasn't a good day, now he was saying he'd had worse. Typical answers that Reid would give that told Thomas nothing.

"I need you to be straight with me, Reid. I need to know how much pain you're in," the doctor said.

Reid continued to stare at the wall, saying nothing. Then he commented, almost defiantly, "Let's just say I was doing better yesterday, as far as the pain goes. But today I'm also stiff, and I can't seem

to move my right leg.” Reid cut his eyes at the doctor, not knowing what kind of a response he would receive after offering this last bit of new information.

“Okay,” Thomas said calmly. This was a better answer. Not a good one, but better. “Let’s look at your leg.”

Reid rolled onto his back, a grimace appearing on his face. Thomas saw it as he threw the covers back. He picked the leg up, then flexed the hip, the knee, and the ankle a few times while watching Reid’s face. Reid gave him no indication that this movement hurt him. He asked Reid to try to move it again. Nothing.

“There’s this new procedure being done,” Thomas said. “I’ve been reading about it and wondering if it would help you. It appears to be controversial. Some say it helps a lot. Some are calling it quackery. It seems similar to what we do with Papa’s shoulder, but it works the spine instead of the soft tissue. I’d like to try it, just to see if it would help you.”

“Can’t do much more damage,” Reid replied. “Go ahead.”

“Okay. I don’t know a lot, but we’ll see if I can figure it out as we go. I need you to take your shirt off and roll onto your stomach. Here, let’s put this pillow here,” the doctor said as he moved a pillow for Reid to lay on. Thomas helped Reid into position, then he began feeling for the areas the doctor knew were painful.

When Thomas had done everything he could do, the doctor helped Reid sit up. Then he asked him to try to move his foot again. Reid reached over for the coffee and downed it quickly. Then Reid sat with his eyes closed.

Thomas said, “Reid, be honest with me. Is your head hurting too?”

Reid barely nodded. Then he sat the cup down and looked at his foot. “Move,” he commanded softly through gritted teeth. Reid was able to make a small jerking motion with his ankle. That was it.

With Thomas’s help, Reid stood successfully and tried to take a step but his leg still wouldn’t move.

“Take your weight off of it a little,” Thomas said. The doctor hooked his own foot behind Reid’s ankle and pushed it forward some. This simple push allowed Reid to begin moving his leg. Reid

was able to walk the few steps across the room as Thomas held on to him.

When Reid turned, he looked at Thomas and calmly said, “Well, you did something. I’m not as stiff.” He smiled sadly at the doctor.

“Okay, let’s keep doing this for a little while and see what happens. Have you had trouble moving your leg before?”

“Couple of times. It’s always fixed itself.”

Reid truly frustrated the doctor. Thomas couldn’t take care of Reid if Reid wouldn’t tell him when there was a problem. The doctor knew Reid well, and fussing at him wouldn’t do any good. Reid did what he wanted to do, regardless of what others said. In fact, Thomas thought if he were to fuss at Reid, Reid would probably quit telling him anything. He knew Reid wasn’t being unkind when he did this. It was just his way of protecting himself.

Reid had also said he had a headache. Thomas wasn’t going to push him on anything if his head was hurting. Thomas was constantly watching for signs of brain damage, but the only symptom Reid seemed to have was the headaches.

“We’re going to work on that movement,” the doctor said. “Why don’t you go get some breakfast. And, Reid, eat the food this time.” Thomas picked Reid’s clothes up from the back of a chair and threw them onto the bed. Then he walked over to pick up the empty coffee cup.

“Thanks,” Reid said wearily.

Thomas patted him on the shoulder and turned to go back into the kitchen.

The Stewarts and Chipeta had moved outside with the children, leaving Reid to eat his breakfast alone. He wasn’t hungry and was pushing his eggs and potatoes around on his plate for lack of anything else to do. Reid picked up a biscuit and laid it back on his plate, then took a bite of fried potato.

He knew Thomas was right. He did need to eat, but after eating just a few bites, he was through. It was no use trying to force food down when he wasn’t hungry. That just didn’t work. It turned his stomach and made him feel worse.

Reid heard his father call to him from the porch. “Reid, ya in there.”

“Yes, sir. I’m here.”

Travis came to stand in the doorway. “I hear’d them chil’en all the way ta my house.” Travis laughed.

Reid smiled. “There’s a big difference between one and six. A lot more noise.”

“Reid, we’re leaving. I’ll be back this afternoon,” Thomas said, appearing behind Travis. “Papa, make him eat.” Then the doctor disappeared as quickly as he had appeared.

Travis sat down at the table with Reid. “How much have ya eat?”

“I don’t know. A few bites.”

“Eat a few more, an’ we’ll go rock far a spell,” Travis said.

Reid nodded and took another bite. Reid ate to please his father, he knew that. He’d do almost anything for his father. Reid laughed inwardly. He was happy his father didn’t ask for much.

Reid moved to sit on the porch with his father as they watched the children play, and Reid told his father of the previous day’s events.

“Mac never could get a handle on his emotions. He’s never been able to hold them in, but he could always get them under control after he would throw one of those fits. It was like he could see what he had done wrong and was embarrassed by what he’d done. But yesterday he just kept talking himself into another one. He wasn’t able to step back and see what he was doing. When he left, he said he was going to find the two guys and make them pay. I don’t know where he went.”

“The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved.”<sup>1</sup> Travis said.

“That’s really true in this instance. I saw Amelia correct Mac several times when it came to the way the children were treated,” Reid said.

Chipeta came onto the porch holding the four-month-old baby girl. “I can’t get anything done,” she said. “Who wants her?”

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 25:3b.

Travis put his hands out and accepted the baby with a smile. He tickled her face with his beard a few times, then turned the little girl around and sat her on his lap so she could rest her head against his chest. He continued to rock as they watched the other children play, letting the child play with his fingers. Eventually, Travis began to hum and then softly sing. Over time, the baby fell asleep.

The phone rang, and Chipeta called Reid. It was Luke. He had found Mac passed out drunk in the back of the hotel while making his morning rounds. Luke had taken Mac to the jail and was letting him sleep it off.

Reid had never known Mac to drink. This was a first. He told Luke that he had Mac’s kids and not to tell Mac. He wanted Mac to panic when he couldn’t find his children. Maybe that would get Mac’s attention and cause him to start thinking about caring for them instead of focusing on his own grief.

All day Reid waited for Mac to appear at their house looking for the children. And all-day Mac stayed away. When late afternoon arrived, Reid called Luke.

Luke told his baby brother, “Yeah, Mac left here a few hours ago. He was sober, but he sure wasn’t feeling good. He could have gone home and passed out again.”

Reid thought he would just wait for Mac. There was no phone at the Matthews’s ranch, and it was several miles out there. Reid wasn’t going to make that trip again unless he had to. Especially the way he felt today. They would have to figure something out though. The children were sleeping on the floor and had been allowed to miss school today. They needed beds and their clothes, and the older boys would need to go back to school soon after their mother’s funeral.

Mac’s father had been dead for years, and his mother had moved to Lawrence and married again. Amelia’s mother had died just about this time last year. Mac was the children’s only family left in town.

Mac also needed to make arrangements for both his wife’s and his father-in-law’s burial.

Reid called the undertaker to check; Mac had not talked to him yet. *Well*, Reid thought, *I’ll take care of it myself*. Reid made the arrangement for burial the next afternoon. The bodies were at the

ranch, but the undertaker would pick them up tomorrow and have them at the graveyard for the service.

Reid knew he needed to be patient with Mac. Reid wanted to be there to support his friend through the difficulty he knew Mac would experience. But Reid had his health troubles to consider. Mac never tried to understand that Reid could no longer do things he had been able to do in the past. Reid would often tell Mac, "I can't do that." A short time later Reid would have to tell him again.

Reid also had to leave town in two weeks to begin visiting the courtrooms. It was going to be hard enough to be away from home so much. Reid could either push himself and take the chance that he would wake up one morning and not be able to function, or he could take his time, knowing from the start that he would be away from home longer. Neither seemed a good option. He only had a limited amount of time to visit the scheduled courtrooms. If he missed this opportunity, it would be months before he could schedule them again.

Evening came, and they had still not heard from Mac. Thomas came to the house again and continued his attempt to help Reid with this new procedure that he didn't fully understand himself. After spending most of the day rereading some of the journal articles, the doctor decided he needed to learn more. He talked with Reid about this and made his decision. He would contact the developer of this technique and make arrangements to visit him in Iowa and learn directly from this doctor.

The next morning Reid drove out to the Matthews's ranch to let the people there know when the funeral would be.

Marvin met Reid at the Model T, telling Reid that Mac had come home yesterday bringing a bottle with him. He had spent the afternoon getting drunk again. Now he was on the back porch, staring at the field behind the house.

Reid looked at the ranch manager and suddenly felt exhausted. He was feeling better than he had the day before, but he still wasn't at his best. He didn't feel he had the energy to argue with Mac again. It would be much easier to just go home and take care of Mac's children and let Mac self-destruct. But he couldn't do that to his friend.

As Reid was getting out of the automobile, he told Marvin of the funeral planned for that afternoon. Then he walked through the house, glancing into the dining room where the bodies lay. Two of the ranch hands were sitting in the corner. Candles had been lit and set around the darkened room.

"Mac?" Reid called to get his friend's attention as he stepped out of the house onto the large veranda.

Mac looked at Reid and rolled his eyes, turning his back to Reid. "Go away."

"Mac, I understand what you're going through," Reid began.

"No, you don't! You have no idea. Leave me alone."

"Yes, I do," Reid said firmly. He sat in a chair next to Mac with a grunt. "When I got hurt and was lying in bed not able to do anything, there was a friend that visited me. I'd been gone five months and hadn't had any contact with my family. Nobody had told me that my baby had died. This friend was telling me, but I understood him to say the baby and Chipeta both died. I also thought he said my dad had been buried."

Mac turned to look at Reid as he spoke.

"For two weeks I thought all three of them were dead. All I could do was lay there and grieve inside. There was no relief from it."

"But they weren't dead," Mac said softly.

Reid could hear the bitterness in his voice. "No, they weren't. But I didn't know that," Reid continued. "I grieved. I grieved for them all. I had nothing left, nobody. Yeah, my brothers and sisters were there, but it's just not the same thing. But you have those five beautiful children. They're a part of Amelia, and if you have them, she'll always be with you."

Mac was listening. He was still and quiet, but he had turned back to look toward the field again.

Reid continued, "I couldn't go out and get drunk. And I couldn't go see their earthly shell. I couldn't go see where they had been laid to rest. I couldn't do anything. You have the opportunity to do all of that. You can go grieve for them now, and you can go to the funeral and be the father your children need you to be.

“They haven’t grieved outwardly yet. I haven’t seen one of them cry. They haven’t been to see their mother either. They will see her coffin this afternoon at the funeral and know she is inside. The older ones will grieve knowing exactly what’s going on. They need you with them.”

“I can’t do that. I don’t know what to say to them.” Mac looked like he was beginning to lose control again “How do I tell them their mother is gone? How do I comfort them when I can’t stop bawling myself?”

Reid leaned toward Mac. “They know their mother died. You don’t have to tell them. What you do have to do is accept Jesus’s comfort and know that he knows your pain. He’s grieving too. The Bible tells us that ‘Jesus wept’<sup>1</sup> at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. He wept knowing that he could bring Lazarus back to life. How much more does he weep for your loss? When you accept Jesus’s comfort, then you can comfort the children.

“Amelia was a fine Christian woman. Jesus weeps for her suffering and her loss. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He knows human emotion.

“(Jesus) was...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”<sup>2</sup> ‘Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.’<sup>3</sup> You hold to Jesus and you’ll make it through this.”

“I don’t have the faith that you have, Reid. I’ve always admired that about your family, the way you all knew Jesus so well. But I just don’t have that kind of faith.”

“Then just remember that God knows your tears. He tells us in Psalms that he ‘record(s) my misery; (and) list(s) my tears on (his) scroll—(they are) in (his) record.’<sup>4</sup> And in the book of John Jesus told us that he was ‘going to prepare a place for (us). And if (he went) and prepared a place for (us), (he would) come back and take (us) to be with (him) that (we would) also be where (he is).’<sup>5</sup> Amelia just got

<sup>1</sup> John 11:35.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 53:3a (ESV).

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 53:4a (ESV).

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 56:8.

<sup>5</sup> John 14:2b–3.

to heaven before we did, that’s all. Maybe she’s helping to prepare our place too. Maybe her death will help us understand our relationship with Jesus better. Maybe, because she lived, we will be better followers of Christ after her death.”

Mac remained in his chair, looking toward the field. Scripture came to Reid’s mind: “*I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*”<sup>1</sup>

“Yes, Lord,” Reid said silently. “I’ll let him process this. I won’t say anything else right now.”

As Reid watched him, Mac’s face began to twist slowly and he began to cry softly. Then the crying turned to sobs, and Mac slid from his chair to sit on the ground in front of Reid, releasing his grief onto Reid’s knees.

Mac asked Reid to go with him into the dining room to see Amelia. Reid agreed. They stood beside each other as Mac stared at his wife. Nothing was said between the two. There was no emotion on Mac’s face. Mac was told of the funeral that afternoon, but he made no comment. And he didn’t ask who made the arrangements. He looked at his wife’s body a long time, but Mac never glanced toward Ben Matthews.

As they walked back outside, Reid asked Mac if he wanted to see his children.

“No. I’ll see them this afternoon.” Mac continued walking into the field, leaving Reid alone.

Reid just didn’t understand Mac at all. He seemed like a different person toward his children. He had always been a loving, caring, and affectionate father. He may have gotten short with them a few times, but he accepted Amelia’s correction. It always seemed that Mac wanted to be a good father. So why was he avoiding his children now? Why wasn’t he taking care of them?

As Reid drove away, he saw the ranch manager and pulled over to speak with him. “Make sure Mac gets to the graveyard this afternoon, will you? And make sure he’s sober.”

<sup>1</sup> John 16:12 (ESV).

## CHAPTER 42



The singing had ended, and Brother Nick stepped forward to address those that stood around the caskets with him.

“We’re here to say good-bye to our sister Amelia Matthews Piper and our brother Benjamin Matthews. But I want to remind you that we will see both of them again.

“You may think what I’m going to say is a little strange. It’s not the way we usually say good-bye to someone. But hear me out and understand that everything in the Bible talks to us of our relationship to the Father and to Christ Jesus.

“Ezekiel was a prophet of God. He and the other Jews had been taken into captivity in Babylon, cut off from everything they knew. Cut off from their God whose presence had dwelled with them in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem. Now the temple had been destroyed and the Holy of Holies was gone.

“It was Ezekiel’s job to remind the people that God was still taking care of them.

“God took Ezekiel to an abandoned battlefield, and he was surrounded by the bones of the fallen. The prophet was standing in the midst of death.

“God asked Ezekiel a question, and by faith Ezekiel answered him,

‘Son of man, can these bones live?’  
(Ezekiel) said, ‘Sovereign Lord, you alone know.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 37:3b.

“Ezekiel listened to God when the Lord said,

‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them,  
“Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.”’<sup>1</sup>

“Ezekiel heard a rattling noise and the bones joined to each other. Then God told Ezekiel to call upon the wind to bring God’s breath to fill the bones and make them live.

“The question Ezekiel must have asked was: Is God here among the dead? Most of the Judeans at this time would have said, ‘No.’ They thought God had abandoned them when the city of Jerusalem fell to Babylon and many many of their people died.

“But Ezekiel believed, and God brought the dead to life. Just like when God breathed breath into Adam and made him a living being.

“Is it difficult to bring a dead body to life? Or to bring to life a being that has never lived? Is it so difficult to bring our spirit to God in heaven and let us live with him there? I will offer to you the chance to answer this question with a firm and faithful, ‘No.’ It is not too difficult for God.

“But the scripture makes it clear that we may feel abandoned by God sometimes. We will feel pain, brokenness, and loss when there is death in our lives.

“I know that this family feels like they are in that valley with dry bones all around them. But we, as Christians, know that death never wins. God’s breath brings life to the resurrected.

Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 37:4b–5.

them.<sup>1</sup> Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.<sup>2</sup>

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.<sup>3</sup>

“The God that raised Jesus from the dead will raise us too.

For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.<sup>4</sup>

“Our sister, Amelia was a good woman, a good mother, a good wife, and a true believer in Christ’s resurrection. We will miss her, but we will see her again.”

The pastor reached to the ground and picked up a handful of dirt. Several men stepped forward and lowered the casket that held Amelia’s body into the hole that had been dug.

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear sister here departed: we therefore commit her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 37:12a.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 37:13.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:10–11.

<sup>4</sup> John 5:28b–29.

the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Brother Nick threw the dirt in his hand onto the casket holding Amelia’s body. Those standing near the casket picked up dirt and threw it in also. Amelia’s children followed what Chipeta and Reid did.

Then the pastor repeated the same words and threw dirt on Ben Matthews’s casket.

Mac stood next to Chipeta and Reid. Stephen moved to stand beside his father and was clinging to his father’s leg. Mac put a hand on the child but said nothing. He had not acknowledged the children since he had arrived.

Mac had not participated in the burial ritual with his wife or his father-in-law either. All he did was stand stone-faced, looking at Amelia’s casket.

As people began moving away, some said a few words to Mac but he didn’t acknowledge any of them.

Chipeta had been holding Mac’s baby, and Thomas held the two-year-old, who kept reaching for and whimpering for her daddy. Thomas reached down and took the five-year-old’s hand, pulling him away from Mac. Sarah took the six-year-old’s hand and softly said, “Let’s go to the motorcar, Matt.” The three moved the children toward the automobiles.

Reid looked to his father, who was watching Mac. Reid began moving toward the Model T also, but Travis stood near the gravesites. He would stay a while and try to talk to Mac, if Mac would listen.

\*\*\*\*\*

A week after the funeral and Reid still hadn’t seen Mac. There had been no word from him. It looked like the Piper children were going to be with Reid and Chipeta for a while.

<sup>1</sup> Book of Common Prayer, Public Domain.

Reid and Chipeta took the older Piper children, and they gathered a few belongings from the Piper home. There was no sign that Mac had been there.

As they left Reid decided he would ask Cleve and Angus to help him bring a couple of beds to his house from the children's home. He would try to make the children as comfortable as he could. There was no need for them to continue sleeping on the floor.

Chipeta was getting in a routine with all the children. Reid thought her amazing. She had taken in these five children and hadn't altered much of her regular activities. Lunch and supper were still being served on time, only there was more of it. The clothes were still being washed, but there were more clothes too. The house wasn't as clean, but that was okay. Reid told himself that as soon as he felt better, he would help. But he had to leave soon too. He couldn't help if he was away from home.

One thing that had changed was that Chipeta wasn't bringing him coffee in the mornings. That was okay. Reid understood that she had other things that needed to be taken care of.

But the coffee sure helped him get started each day. If he moved around much before he had coffee, he would sometimes drag all morning. He was still getting occasional headaches caused by the head injury three years ago. Coffee helped. Reid was thankful Chipeta was at least making the coffee. It was always on the stove when he walked into the kitchen.

Sarah and Travis were coming to help with the children almost daily, but an additional five children caused a lot more work for Chipeta. Reid thought he would hire some help.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid had reviewed the schedules of all the courts he was to visit. He had arranged the visits to get the most efficient scheduling. He knew where he was headed and the order in which he would observe judges.

Now Reid lay in bed reviewing the information he had been given stating the qualifications the DOJ was looking for in their

judges. He would begin evaluations on this trip and be gone several weeks.

James and Stephen came to stand in the doorway. Reid smiled. The children had gotten used to the house and were opening up to both him and Chipeta. They weren't as quiet as they had been the first several days that they were there. Reid couldn't decide if this was a good thing or not. He laughed to himself. But these were good children, all of them.

"What do you need boys?" Reid asked.

Six-year-old James spoke. "Why do you walk with a cane? You're not an old man."

"The cane helps me walk. It helps me not fall down," Reid replied, laying the papers beside him on the bed.

"Walking is easy. Why do you need help?" James asked.

"Come here, boys. I can see you better if you're over here." Reid waved his hand, showing the boys where to stand.

The children came to Reid's bedside. They seemed a little apprehensive now.

"Several years ago, when you were just a baby"—Reid poked a finger in James's chest playfully—"and just before you were born"—Reid poked Stephen in the chest—"my back was injured in an accident. It hasn't healed right."

Reid took Stephen's hand, turning it palm up. "Do you remember several weeks ago when you burned your hand? You came to church with a bandage on it. Now you can't tell it ever happened. The burn is gone. It healed correctly, and it doesn't hurt anymore. You can't even see where it was, can you?"

Stephen shook his head.

"James, sit up here." Reid patted the bed.

James climbed up on the tall bed.

"Let me see your foot." Reid turned the dirty bare foot toward the inside. "But when you cut your foot, it left a scar. It healed, but it's not as good as it was before. Does it hurt?"

James nodded. "When my shoe is too tight, it does."

Reid continued, "When I hurt my back, it didn't leave a scar on the outside like on your foot. You can't see my scar. The scar is on the

inside.” Reid poked at his own stomach. “And it hurts sometimes. When it hurts, I can’t walk good. So I have to be careful not to do anything that will make it hurt. Like you need to make sure your shoe isn’t too tight.”

Stephen asked, “What makes it hurt?”

“Walking sometimes does. Standing too long, sitting too long. That’s why I lie down, it helps my back feel better. Running, twisting, lifting something...playing ball, riding a horse—all that makes it hurt.”

Stephen made a sad face. “Boy, you can’t do anything.”

“I can’t do a lot of things”—Reid made a funny sad face at the boys—“but I can read and I can drive the car. I can help my wife with some of the chores, and I can feed and rock Jeannie. I can play checkers and dominoes with you. And I can do my job, which lets me buy food for my family.

“Tomorrow we’ll go to my sister’s and Mr. Marvin’s wedding. Then the next day I have to leave to do my job. But Chipeta will be here with you, and I’ll be back in a few weeks.

“James, can you do your homework without fussing and help your sisters? And Chipeta, can you do what Chipeta asks you to do while I’m gone?”

The boys nodded. James said, “Yes, sir.”

“I know you will. You’re both good boys, and helpful too,” Reid said. “And when Mrs. Stewart or Grandpa come over, you mind them too, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir. I like them.” Stephen smiled.

“Me too,” said James.

Reid smiled. “I like them too.”

James asked, “Are Mrs. Stewart’s eyes hurt? Like you hurt your back. They didn’t heal right?”

Reid nodded.

Stephen added, “And Grandpa’s hand?”

“That’s right. They didn’t. And now Mrs. Stewart can’t see very well, and Grandpa can’t use his hand much.”

“Do they hurt too?” Stephen asked.

“No.” Reid laughed. “Mrs. Stewart’s eyes don’t hurt. She just can’t see. But sometimes I think Grandpa’s hand does hurt.”

Reid looked up to see Chipeta standing in the doorway watching.

She said, “Hey, boys, would you run outside and play with the others. I need to talk with Reid.”

“Yes, ma’am.” The boys left.

Chipeta moved to sit beside Reid. “I heard you tell them you were leaving Sunday.”

“I’m sorry. I should have told you earlier, but things have been so wild it never seemed the right time. Then we would get busy, and I wouldn’t think about it,” Reid replied.

“I understand. Things have been busy. But I need to tell you something before you leave.”

“What is it?” Reid said, drawing the first word out long. He lovingly ran a finger down her nose and then tapped the end of her nose twice.

“You’re going to be a father again.” Chipeta grinned, waiting for Reid’s reaction.

The smile grew bigger on Reid’s face. He tugged on his wife gently, and she gave in to his pull, lying down into his embrace.

## CHAPTER 43



Naomi and Marvin sat on opposite sides on the front row of the church. Naomi's family, a few friends, and a few of the ranch hands took seats behind them. Travis sat on the second row with Ruth, Sara, and Thomas.

Brother Nick stepped to the podium and spoke casually. He knew everyone in the room, and everyone there knew each other. Most were family.

"Friends, we are gathered here today to celebrate the marriage of Naomi Britt Pender and Marvin Wells. Naomi and Marvin asked Sarah to sing here today. But, with this couple's permission, Sarah changed things a little.

"It seems that years ago her father and her brother Reid would sing scripture together at home. They arranged the songs themselves, singing the words from the Bible that they wanted to worship the Lord with."

Reid looked up surprised by this mention of his name and of his singing. He had not expected this. It was a little embarrassing.

"When Reid went to Denver, he asked Sarah to sing with him at the chapel on campus. They would often sing scripture that Reid and his father had sung, using the arrangements they created together. Sarah tells me that Reid would teach her the songs and Sarah would sing the parts that their father had sung.

"Now, Naomi's father will sing his own part again, and Sarah will sing Reid's part. They have chosen today to sing from Psalms 91."

Sarah and Travis stood and moved toward the corner where the piano stood.

"This will be a special treat for us as we participate in their worship. I first heard Travis sing over forty years ago at his farm on a mountain in West Virginia. I'm told, this is only the third time Travis has sung in this church." Nick smiled toward Travis.

Travis stopped to look toward Luke and Cleve. They were the only ones that could have told the preacher this. Cleve sat with an odd grin on his face, and Travis knew Cleve was the chatterbox.

Brother Nick continued, "Sarah told me that her father sang here at her wedding. Cleve told me he sang at Luke's baptism." The pastor looked at Luke, turning his head slightly in jest. "It must have really been a time to celebrate."

The preacher began to laugh and sat down.

Sarah sat down on the piano bench and began to play. She started the song, and then Travis joined in.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most  
High  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my  
fortress;  
My God, in Him I will trust."<sup>1</sup>

When the song was finished, Travis and Sarah began moving toward their seats. But Sarah made a detour. She knew Reid was sitting two seats behind her, on the inside aisle. She went to Reid and touched his face, then kissed his cheek, then she returned to her seat. Reid had honored her by asking her to sing with him at the university. Now, Sarah hoped she had honored him.

Brother Nick stood again. "That was beautiful worship. These songs from scripture are truly from the Spirit. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 91:1-2 (NKJV).

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:16.

“Today I’m going to offer two scripture passages to consider. Please stand for the reading. From the Old Testament, Genesis 2:22–24...

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

“And from the New Testament, Romans 12:9–12...

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

The pastor continued the service, explaining how these passages applied to this marriage. Then he asked the couple to step forward.

When the ceremony ended, everyone went to the Stewart home for the marriage celebration.

Naomi and Marvin had made the recent decision to move into two of the outlying bedrooms at the Matthews’s ranch house. They knew that Mac might have them move out and back into the small manager’s home that Marvin had occupied previously. But until he did, they would stay at the big house. It would be more comfortable and was closer to Marvin’s work area. Ten-year-old Ruth would have her own room and the newly married couple would be able to have more privacy.

Travis kissed his daughter and granddaughter good-bye that night knowing he would not be seeing them very often. Naomi

would not be working at the medical clinic any more, and the distance to the ranch was just too great to visit on a casual basis.

Naomi and Ruth had lived with him for nine years. He would have to get use to the quiet at his house again.

## CHAPTER 44



A man stepped off the train and stopped to look around. Harris, it seemed to be a nice town. It was a nice size, several blocks in every direction, and outlying buildings could be seen across the open country.

Thig Ball walked toward the Harvey House Restaurant with the other passengers. He picked up a coffee and stood at the window looking out. There was a gun shop across the street. Surely this little town wouldn't have what he was looking for? He'd check it out.

"Can I help you?" Jake Monroe asked as the stranger stepped through the door of the gunsmith's shop.

Jake had been the owner and operator of the town's gun shop for more than forty years. His services weren't needed as much as they had been in past years, but there was enough business to keep the shop open. Travis sat at the counter replacing a firing pin in a rifle.

"Can I help you?" Jake asked again.

"Just looking," Ball said.

"We don't sell much. Just have a few used pieces over there." Jake pointed to the wall on the right.

Ball walked over to look at the two rifles, one shotgun, and three pistols on the rack.

Ball picked up a rather unusual piece. It was a recently made Colt revolver with a nickel-and-gold finish and an engraved initials TB on an ivory handle. The barrel and frame had Western-style engraving. It didn't show much wear. It hadn't been used much.

"Got that one about three or four months ago. Cowboy just walked in off the street and wanted to trade even for another one. I got the better end of that deal. I can tell you that."

"How much?" Ball asked.

"Oh, that's going to cost you," Jake said.

"How much?" The man raised his voice.

"Thirty-five."

Thig Ball pulled cash out of his pocket as he said, "Ammo?"

Jake walked behind the counter and laid a box on top.

Ball threw \$40 on the counter and turned around to walk out the door headed back to the train.

"Huh!" Jake commented and turned to look at Travis.

Travis was watching the man cross the street. "He's gonna cause trouble with that gun. I guarantee ya."

"Well, he's getting back on the train, so it won't be here," Jake said.

Both of the old men went back to what they were doing.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was a sign on the wall of the entry as Reid entered the courtroom.

*All Guns Prohibited, turn your gun into the marshal upon entry.*

This was the usual procedure. There should be no guns in any of the courtrooms. But Reid had his credentials with him. The identification would allow him to keep his weapons. He wasn't advertising who he worked for, nor was he advertising that he had a gun. It was hidden under his jacket.

He wore a shoulder holster. The usual belt and holster worn on the hip were too distressing for his back. Most people didn't know the gun was there, but if Reid was asked by the proper authority, he might relinquish it and not tell the authority that he was DOJ.

But Reid also carried a pocket knife in his pants pocket and a short blade cavalry knife inside a sheath in his left boot. His inside coat pocket also held a small pocket pistol. He would be at a disadvantage if he were to get in a fight. Reid told Chipeta these were his equalizers. She was the only one who knew he carried them all, and she felt better knowing that he would be able to protect himself.

Reid found a seat in the back corner of the courtroom in Golden, Kansas. He had arrived early. It wasn't a big room, maybe twenty or thirty chairs total with no room for standing. There were a couple of other people already seated and waiting.

The marshal had walked through a few minutes earlier. Reid now watched him move around the courtroom.

Reid had seen his father following this same routine. Straightening the chairs, picking up what was left following the last trial, wiping any dirt or grit off the tables, making sure the judge's desired supplies were in place, and either opening some windows or adding wood to the fire. This marshal was closing windows.

The morning was a little cooler than it had been the previous afternoon, but not cool enough for a fire in the stove.

This marshal was Cole Blackstock. They had seen each other from a distance when Reid was undercover, working within the human trafficking organization almost five years ago. But they had never spoken or had any contact. Reid thought this guy was probably taking some of the dirty money, ignoring what was going on behind the scenes in the town's private *Card Club*. But investigators had found nothing.

If this marshal wasn't on the take, he must be either really dense or totally blind. Too much of what went on at that club was out in the open. Even the ladies in town knew what was happening. Reid still had a bad feeling about him.

The marshal turned around and started back through the room. Blackstock eyed Reid as he came to a stop near him. "Do I know you?" he asked.

"No, just passing through town."

"What are you doing here in the courtroom?" Marshal Blackstock asked.

"I've got some time on my hands. I was just looking for some entertainment."

"There's a club down the street."

Reid gave a short laugh. "My wife would shoot me if I went in there." Reid laughed again. He could play the henpecked husband. He smiled at the marshal.

The marshal cocked his eyes toward the door. "Yeah, I know that." He turned to leave. "Enjoy yourself."

This was also something he had seen his father do. The marshal would try to get information on anyone he didn't know in the courtroom. If the lawman did his job well, he could spot trouble coming and either stop an altercation before it happened or he would be ready if trouble presented itself.

Reid sat through a couple of hours of court, observing one short case after another. He saw nothing unusual, and everything that was happening seemed to line up with the quality and observance that the DOJ expected. Then the judge called for lunch.

Reid continued to sit until most of the people had gone. He kicked his left foot under the bench and hooked his toe around his cane, pulling it forward until it was in front of him. Then he put his foot on the handle and rolled the cane upside down, grabbing the shaft with his hand, flipped it right side up, and grasped the handle. He had seen Hogan do this numerous times, and he had laughed inwardly every time. Now he did it out of necessity. It wasn't funny anymore.

Standing slowly, Reid looked up to see the marshal watching him from the front of the courtroom. Reid picked his hand up and gave a wave, turned, and started out the door.

A couple of doors down the street, the marshal caught up with him.

"I remember you now. You used to hang out at that club that shut down a few years ago. You came through here a couple of times. What were you doing? Running whiskey for them? You're not thinking about starting something like that up again, are you?"

Well, Reid hadn't considered being associated with that operation again. He had changed too much. He was also surprised this

marshal's memory was this good. The marshal had seen him briefly on the street, maybe twice, close to five years ago. But now this marshal recognized him. He had to get out of this some way.

"No, you're mistaken. I've never been through here before," Reid said.

"Yeah. Your face is too familiar for me to forget."

"Maybe you knew my dad. Marshal Travis Britt? I'm told I look just like him."

The marshal's eyes got wide. "Well, as I live and breathe! That's it! You look just like him. Come on, son. Let's go have lunch. Catch me up on what he's done since he retired." The marshal started walking but stopped suddenly. "He is still alive?"

Reid laughed and nodded.

Reid spent the rest of that day and the next two days observing this judge and the court proceedings. The marshal even introduced Reid to the judge and reminded the judge of who Travis was. It was a casual and close to enjoyable few days in Golden. Then Reid moved on to his next town, courtroom, and judge.

This court was held in a much more casual manner. There was no real ceremony, no observance of rites found in the usual court. The judge seemed harsh in his dealings, but the judgments were fair. If the courtroom were to be run correctly, much of the judge's course manner would be unnecessary. Reid would recommend keeping this judge, but he would also advise changes in the procedures.

Four days later Reid climbed aboard the train and left for his next destination.

The next case Reid observed was a woman that stabbed a man in the arm. The man had charged the woman with an unprovoked attack. The woman claimed he had attacked her, and she had stabbed him in self-defense. The man was a prominent businessman; the woman a cook and waitress at the hotel restaurant. The judge ruled in favor of the man and fined the woman. Reid thought the amount fined was rather large considering it was a minor injury and wondered if the woman would be able to pay or would she go to jail.

The second case was a hearing involving the murder of a man who had been hung from a tree. The man was a sharecropper living

on land adjacent to a large ranch. The man's son had seen this happen, but no one was listening to the child. Reid thought the child might be seven or eight. The child took the stand and told his story, but the judge ruled the testimony was not reliable, and the case was dismissed for lack of evidence.

Reid knew procedures were being followed loosely. As he watched these proceedings, Reid saw more and more offenses by the judge, who seemed to be seeking favors from the rich and powerful. Yes, he would recommend that this judge be dismissed. It seemed that power ruled in this town. There was no need to observe this judge again.

Five more courtrooms were visited, and Reid was able to make his decision quickly about the judge that presided in each one.

The only judge he could not make a decision on was the one in the town of Golden. Everything seemed to run smooth in the courtroom in Golden, and the decisions were appropriate. But there was something wrong. The record of convictions in this town was off. So were the arrests. It was an odd mixture of civil and domestic cases with a few nonviolent criminal cases thrown in. Reid couldn't figure this out. He would have to visit that courtroom again.

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke met Reid as he stepped off the train. Luke was often at the station when a train arrived. The sheriff could watch people getting off and back on and know who was in town and who was leaving. He had caught a few criminals this way and was certain his presence here had prevented trouble in his town.

The sheriff stepped forward with a smile to welcome his little brother home. Reid looked tired. Luke asked, "How was the trip?"

"Enlightening. I learned a lot. But it was a lot of traveling. How's everything here?"

"A little strange. Mac keeps showing up drunk. I'm going to have to track down where he's getting that liquor. And he says he knows how to find the person that killed Amelia, but he won't tell me. I've been out to the ranch and asked around to see if he's told

anyone else. Marvin says they haven't seen him in weeks. I looked over Mr. Ben's desk again and still don't see anything to tell me who those guys were. Marvin says he's checked everywhere he knows of. There's just no indication those guys were expected at the ranch. I told Marvin to go ahead and do whatever he needed to do with the stuff on the desk. I'm through looking at it."

"Has Mac been out to see his children?" Reid asked.

"Not that I know of. I think Chipeta would have told me if he had."

Reid sighed. "I'm going to go see if Angus can give me a ride home." Reid turned and headed toward the telephone exchange.

Luke followed and took the small bag from Reid, saying, "I'll walk you. Thomas left last Monday to see that doctor in Iowa. He took Sarah with him. Curt's been sleeping at Dad's. I think he's kind of offended that Thomas wouldn't let him stay at home by himself."

Reid chuckled. "I would be too. I was staying home alone for weeks at a time at thirteen. How old is Curt? Sixteen?"

Luke put his arm around his brother and squeezed him gently. "I was in town if you needed anything."

Luke again felt for Reid. This was just a reminder for him that Reid had spent most of his time growing up alone. Luke continued to talk, telling his brother about things that had happened while he was gone. Reid nodded occasionally, but he was through talking.

After being at home a few weeks, Reid left for another set of courtroom observations.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thomas arrived in Iowa convinced this new procedure would help decrease Reid's pain. Thomas spent two weeks of intense study of the spine and experienced hands-on clinical training in this new method.

Then Thomas was introduced to the visual aspect of the technique, and the method began to get more into theory and less into practical results. He understood how this system should work. But it

wasn't always working the way theory said it would. Thomas began to see why some called it quackery.

He also saw the result of the practical application of a set of skilled hands at work on a misaligned spine. But would this work when the vertebra was structurally altered by injury?

Yes, he would try this technique on Reid, but he would apply it slowly and carefully. Again, he hoped he would do no further harm to Reid's back. Thomas and Sarah left Iowa with new equipment and a new understanding of what Reid might be going through.

They returned to Harris, but Reid wasn't in town. He had come home and left again. Chipeta didn't expect him home for almost two months.

\*\*\*\*\*

Most of the towns Reid visited this trip were quiet and the court sessions dull.

Sometimes Reid would find a judge he really liked, and after court ended, he would introduce himself to the judge and invite him to dinner. Often, if the judge was married or had a family, he would ask Reid to come to his house for dinner instead of eating at the hotel. This was what Reid preferred. He could get to know a judge better if he saw him interacting with his family.

Most of the judges were adequate. Reid might see one or two small violations or find a judge that obviously didn't like a particular lawyer. Nothing that couldn't be addressed and changed. Occasionally, he would find an outstanding man that served his community well.

There were a few judges, however, that took justice too far. They were the ones the common people called the hanging judges. Some would actually stage hangings to scare off criminals. Some of these judges knew the law well and knew how to twist it to create their own form of justice.

Others knew nothing of the law and gave some of the most absurd rulings imaginable. One judge fined a dead man. Another judge seemed to have a connection with a vigilante gang. When the vigilantes appeared before the court, they received preferential treat-

ment and rarely received the punishment they deserved. Their victims, however, received harsh sentencing.

Those judges, appointed or even elected by the community, had little real desire to dispense justice and were sometimes more violent than the accused.

Reid thought most of these judges were probably accustomed to the casual manner of the traveling judges. A few of the traveling judges would hold court any way they wanted to, in any location they wanted. Money, power, and violence often ruled.

After seven weeks of traveling this trip, Reid was ready to stay home until his new baby came.

Back in Harris, Thomas began working with Reid again. At first Reid could tell little difference, but over time the pain seemed to decrease at broad intervals. There would be no change, then Reid would wake one morning with noticeably less pain.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid got the children's things together and gave each of the three older boys a sack to carry. Chipeta had gone into labor, and the children would spend the next few days at Sarah's house. Reid loaded them all into the motorcar and took them to the Stewart home—four boys and two girls, the oldest nine, the youngest just about to turn one.

"Boys, you help Mrs. Stewart. Watch the girls and Esa. They'll get into everything. Don't let them pull something into the floor that Mrs. Stewart will trip over. You should be able to come home in two or three days. I'll call to let you know if it's a boy or a girl."

Reid kissed each of them as they got out of the Model T, then he climbed back in and waved. He drove away, headed home to his wife and their anticipated child.

Curt stood beside his mother on the porch looking at the children as they watched the automobile drive away.

"Well," Sarah said, "you take the boys and I'll take the girls."

Curt looked at his mother. "You taking Esa?"

"He's a boy, isn't he? He's yours." She smiled.

"But he's little. I can't take him to the stables or into town or to play baseball. He's too little."

"So you want me to keep three little ones?" Sarah was joking with Curt, but Curt was getting worried. He really didn't know what to do with little children.

"I'll take Esa," Matt said. He passed his sister Jeannie's hand to James and took Esa's hand.

"Oh, Matt, I'm just playing with Curt," Sarah said as she stepped forward and gave Matt a hug. "He'll stay with me."

"I'll stay with you too. I'll help with him and the girls," Matt said seriously.

"Okay, Matt. We can do this together."

The next morning, as the children were eating breakfast, the phone rang.

Curt answered and then just listened. He turned back to the others and said, "Y'all have a new baby brother. His name is Saamel."

## CHAPTER 45



Reid sat on the front porch reading and watching the younger children play in a bare spot of sand in the yard. Matt had given them a bucket of water; and Esa, Abigail, and Jeannie were enjoying splashing in mud and getting filthy.

Ten-year-old Matt was on the other end of the porch with tools. He was attempting to build something with the scrap lumber he had found in the shed. The wood was left over from the construction of the house. He had also found some nails, and the object was beginning to resemble a box of some sort.

Stephen and James were off at the edge of the trees and would disappear for a few minutes then reappear. Whatever they were doing, they were enjoying themselves.

Reid stopped to listen. There was an automobile coming, but he couldn't see it because of the thick undergrowth among the trees. Reid set the papers on the table beside him and moved a rock on top to keep them from blowing away. Cleve had been out earlier to deliver a package for Reid, and Thomas had left a few minutes ago. Thomas may even have passed this motorcar along the way. Reid waited to see who was coming.

The motorcar stopped a distance from the house. There was a glare on the windshield, and Reid couldn't tell who it was until Mac stepped out the passenger side door.

"Pa," Stephen yelled as he ran to hug his father. James trotted along behind. The children hadn't seen their father since the funeral. Reid hadn't seen him either.

The three little children looked up, but none of them moved. Matt stopped what he was doing long enough to see who it was, then he returned to his construction.

Reid looked over at Matt. Matt was such a good boy and a good big brother. He had felt responsible for his younger brothers and sisters when they had come home with Chipeta and Reid the night their mother died. He had cared for them the best an eight-year-old could have. But over the last year he had gotten bitter toward his father for ignoring him, and especially for ignoring the girls. The girls hardly knew who their father was and had started calling Reid Daddy.

Reid had tried to get them to call him by his name, but they just wouldn't do it. They were close to Esa's age and followed what Reid's son did.

"Hey, boy," Mac said as he patted his middle child on the back. But Mac's eyes were on Reid.

"James," he said as he squeezed his son's chin between his thumb and his index finger. But Mac didn't stop to hug the boys or to say anything else. He kept moving toward the porch and Reid.

Mac had ignored the girls, who didn't care who this man was walking across their yard, and he hadn't even looked Matt's direction. But Matt was watching his father, and Reid didn't like the look he saw on the boy's face.

"Hey, Reid. I'm glad I found you at home," Mac said in greeting.

"Mac," Reid replied, already disappointed in the way his friend was treating the children.

"I've been by here twice in the last few months, but you were out of town both times."

"Really? The children didn't tell me," Reid replied.

"Nah. It was during school. They weren't here to see me," Mac commented.

Now Reid was irritated. The two little girls would have been there. But Chipeta hadn't said anything about Mac visiting either. Reid knew Mac was lying.

Reid never thought that Mac would have acted this way toward his children. The children had loved their father, but Mac had turned

into a different person. They didn't know him, and he didn't know them. He didn't act like he loved them anymore.

"What do you need, Mac?" Reid asked calmly.

"Well, that's a fine 'how do you do.' I haven't seen you in months, and you act like I'm your trashy neighbor coming over to borrow your shirt!"

"What do you want, Mac?" Reid repeated, a little exasperated this time.

Mac had a chip on his shoulder that Reid had never seen before. His arrogant, self-centered attitude turned Reid's stomach.

"I just wanted to see my children," Mac yelled. "You keep them back here in the woods, hidden from everyone. Give me a break, they're my progeny."

Reid laughed. "Your what?"

"Progeny. My children. My lineage. My seed."

"Get over yourself, Mac. You haven't come to see them. You didn't talk to Stephen when he came to greet you. You barely noticed James. The girls are sitting right there, and you didn't look at them. You didn't even notice Matt." Reid flung his thumb in the direction of Mac's eldest son.

"Well, he's not there now!" Mac roared.

Reid stretched his neck as he turned stiffly to look further behind him and saw Matt gone. The tools and building project remained in place.

Stephen had been standing next to his father during the entire conversation. Reid saw the tears running down his face as he looked to Reid for reassurance. Reid knew he needed to calm himself and appease the situation.

"Okay, Mac. I'm sorry. Visit with your children." Reid held out his open palm, indicating the children on the ground in front of him.

Mac turned to the yard snarling. He looked down at Stephen, but said nothing. Stephen was crying. The only sound he was making was the periodic sniffing.

James wasn't bitter toward his father like Matt was, but he was now standing beside the girls and Esa. His face showed the stern

warning that a bully might see on the playground when he had picked on the wrong classmate.

"Oh, I see." Mac said, turning back around to face Reid. "You've turned my own children against me."

Matt appeared in the doorway. "No, Pa." But the "Pa" sounded a little sarcastic. "You did that all by yourself. You don't come see us. You don't care what happens to us. At least Mr. Reid cares. He and Miss Chipeta take care of us. That's more than you've done since Mama died. All you've done is chase after what you want. You don't care what we want."

Mac started up the steps, "You little smart—"

"Stop it!" Reid stood up and moved in front of the door where Matt stood. He spoke gently to the boy. "Matt, that's not the way you talk to your father. Please apologize." Reid turned to look at Mac.

"Why?" Matt asked with an attitude.

"Because the Bible tells us, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth,'" Reid replied with a more patient attitude.

Matt said, "It also says, 'Fathers, do not exasperate your children.'"<sup>2</sup>

"Okay, continue that verse," Reid said, turning to look at Matt again.

"Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord,"<sup>3</sup> Matt said.

"And are you getting training and instruction in the Lord?" Reid asked.

"Yes," Mac's oldest son said as he stepped forward to stand beside Reid. "But he's not teaching us"—Matt pointed at his father, then looked up at Reid again—"you are."

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 6:1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:4a.

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 6:4b.

Reid looked at Matt. “Your father is allowing you to stay with us. He’s allowing you to be taught God’s Word. He could have taken you home and kept you there with him or let a housekeeper stay with you. If he had done that, do you think you would be learning Scripture? Don’t you think you need to give him a little credit for that?” Reid asked.

The driver of the car opened the door and stuck his head out. “Come on, Mac. Let’s go!”

Reid looked up but couldn’t see the man well. The automobile’s door was blocking part of the man’s face.

“I’m comin’!” Mac yelled back in a hateful tone.

Scripture came to Reid’s heart: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”*<sup>1</sup>

Reid asked, “Mac, who’s your friend?”

“Met him in Summersville. Smart guy. I’m working with him, and he’s teaching me the ropes.” Mac turned to leave and walked right past his daughters and got in the car.

The two men made a circle through the yard and drove back through the trees.

Another scripture came to Reid’s mind: *“Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice.”*

God was telling Reid that this man was evil. Mac was making a serious mistake being with him. If Mac decided to separate himself from this man, there would be trouble.

Reid quickly turned his thoughts back to the children. He needed to take care of them right now.

Reid sat back down and took Matt’s hand. He pulled Matt close to him. “Do you remember Proverbs 6:20?”

“No, sir.”

Stephen came to the porch and stood beside Reid. Reid put his other arm around Stephen, still talking to Matt.

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 14:12.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 59:15.

Reid said, “I’ll help you. It begins, ‘My son, keep your father’s command, and forsake not...’”

“Your mother’s teaching,” Matt completed the scripture, then added. “But my mother’s not here to teach us.”

“But Chipeta is. She’s filling in for your mother because your mother couldn’t be here. Your mama was a godly woman. She would have taught you if she were here. Do you remember us talking about your father? Who’s your real father?” Reid asked.

“God,” Matt answered.

“That’s right. God’s your real father,” Reid said. “He gave you a father here in this life to fill in for him until you get to heaven, until you see God. It’s like Chipeta filling in for your mother.

“I know your earthly father isn’t doing a very good job right now, but you need to respect God’s choice for you. God’s not through working on your pa. He can change. Maybe his earthly father didn’t teach him right. Maybe his father didn’t teach him. How many generations of fathers does your family have to go through before someone stops and says, ‘No more. I’m going to follow the one true Father. I’m going to follow God. I’m going to do what’s right?’”

Reid waited for Matt to think about this.

Matt finally said, “It stops with me. I’m going to follow God. I’m going to love my Heavenly Father.”

“Good boy,” Reid said and drew the boy directly in front of him to give him a hug.

When Reid released Matt, the boy backed up a step. He looked into Reid’s face and asked, “But how do I honor him when I can’t stand to be around him?”

“You just show him God’s love. The more you choose to love him, the easier it will be,” Reid replied. “Maybe the first thing you can do is talk nicely to him.”

Matt nodded. “Yes, sir.”

“I need to be more patient with him too. He wasn’t raised by a godly father like I was. Your pa accepted Jesus as his savior when we were in school, but he doesn’t know Jesus as his friend or as his Lord. I’m going to be nicer to him too. I’ll try to help him understand. Now,” Reid said, “what are you making over there? It’s interesting.

Is it a treasure chest? Can you bring it over here and show me and Stephen?”

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke had been given a tip about a moonshine operation south of town at the old Smith farm. No one had lived there for years, and the house had fallen in, but the barn remained standing. There were other outbuildings still standing too. The privy, the smokehouse, and the chicken coop still looked to be in fair shape. The corral fence was down in two spots, but the wire around the chicken coop looked to be in good shape.

The overgrowth of prairie weeds and young saplings had taken over the farm and left the road hard to maneuver in an automobile or wagon.

Luke, his deputy, and the marshal left their horses a distance away and approached low across the open land. There was smoke filtering out an opening in the south side of the barn.

Luke sent the marshal to the left and his deputy to the right. They had to the count of twenty to get in place. Then Luke flung the door open.

Four figures in the barn jumped to their feet and ran in every direction. Luke was fast and caught one guy by the leg, and the man went down. Luke yanked him up and dragged him as the sheriff ran after another guy.

Then Luke heard a couple of shots, and there was silence. He couldn't hear anyone running or shouting. There was no other sound of movement.

“Frank! Earl!” Luke called.

No response.

Luke still had his hand on the man he had caught. The sheriff found some twine lying on the floor of the barn and tied the man's hands behind his back and took him outside. Luke looked over the chicken coop briefly, then put the man inside and closed the gate. He tied it with a piece of wire hanging from the fence.

The sheriff headed around the side of the barn in the direction the marshal had gone. There he found the marshal lying against an old wagon with a bullet in his chest. His eyes were open.

“Aw, Earl.” Luke said sadly. He knew the marshal was dead, but the sheriff checked for a pulse anyway. Luke reached over and closed the marshal's eyes. This was a young marshal, and he was fairly new in town. He handled his duties in town well, but he wouldn't be doing them anymore.

Luke heard footsteps and looked up. He pushed himself against the corner of the barn and waited to see which direction the footsteps were headed. This person was coming toward him slowly. Luke prepared himself. As the figure cleared the barn, Luke grabbed at the man.

But it wasn't a man, it was a boy. Joey McCain. He was kicking and squirming and cussing. Luke held on.

Frank came around the corner with another man—Joey's father. But the deputy also had blood on his arm. Luke could tell he was injured.

They had managed to capture two of the men they had seen inside the barn and this boy.

Luke looked at the deputy's arm and tied his kerchief around the wound. They found more twine and tied the boy and his father and added them to the chicken coop. Then he told Frank to stay with them, and Luke went inside to destroy the still and the moonshine.

Luke was making quite a bit of noise as he smashed jars on the floor, then he caught sight of movement in the corner behind crates. Luke stopped what he was doing and picked up his rifle. He began moving toward the crates.

“Okay, come on out,” Luke commanded.

“I can't. I'm hurt,” a voice responded.

Luke moved carefully around the wooden crates that were stacked as tall as Luke. The boxes began to move, swaying back and forth toward the sheriff. Before Luke could get out of the way the crates tumbled down on top of him, knocking him to the floor. Dazed, Luke pushed them aside and tried to stand. He looked toward the door to see a man slipping outside.

Luke got up and ran after him. He could barely see the path through the weeds in the dim light of evening, but he followed, moving away from the barn. He heard an automobile engine start and the gears grind.

The sheriff stepped out into a clearing in time to see a motorcar turn and the driver look his direction. Luke was convinced it was Mac.

\*\*\*\*\*

Luke got to his father's house just as the sun came up. His father was sitting on the back porch with his Bible in his lap and his eyes closed, rocking. Luke sat down but didn't say anything. He would wait until his father was ready to talk. Several minutes passed, and Luke closed his eyes too. He would take this opportunity to pray again for what he wanted to talk to his father about. He didn't know why he thought his father would have the answer, but during the night he had woke with the sudden thought that his father had a solution. When Luke opened his eyes, Travis was looking to the trees.

"Dad, we found a moonshine still last night. Me and Frank and Earl. There were four people inside the barn at the old Smith farm. We got three of them at the jail. Earl was shot." Luke stopped for a moment, then said, "He died before I got to him."

Both the men were silent. Finally, Travis said, "Don' his family live over in Summersville?"

"Yeah."

"Do ya want me ta go tell 'em?" Travis asked.

"No. I'm taking his body home this morning on the train. I'll be back tomorrow," Luke answered. "I already let the marshal over there know that I was coming. Didn't tell him why though. I didn't want the telegraph man to find out before his family did."

Travis nodded.

"Dad, do you remember Joey McCain?" Luke asked.

"Sure. I see him in town sometimes. Nice boy. I don' know how he survived with that father a his. How long has his mother been gone? Four years?" Travis said.

"Yeah, I think so. Well, his father was one of the moonshiners last night. He's the one that shot Earl. Joey was there and saw it all. I've got to find someone for him to stay with. I don't think anyone will want to take him because of his family. Do you have any ideas?" Luke asked.

"Not right off. If ya can't find somebody, he goes ta the boy's home in Lawrence, right?"

"Yeah. And he'll come out of there meaner than his father," Luke said.

The two men sat silent again. When Luke looked at his father the next time, his father's eyes were closed. Luke turned around and closed his eyes to pray too.

When Travis spoke again, he said, "Why don' ya bring 'im here. He can stay with me until we find a better place far 'im."

"Dad, I can't ask you to do that!"

"Ya not askin'. I'm offerin'. Ya keep lookin' far a family far 'im ta stay with. He's old enough I don' 'ave ta watch 'im ever' minute. He's a good boy. When we get him away from that pa a his, he'll change. He shouldn' be any trouble."

"I don't know, Dad."

"Luke"—Travis raised his voice slightly—"ya come ta me far advice. Now take my offer."

## CHAPTER 46



There was a sign on the wall of the entry as Reid entered the courtroom.

*All Guns Prohibited, turn your gun into the marshal upon entry.*

He'd seen the sign the previous two times he had been here but had ignored it. Apparently, everybody ignored it. Sloppy work on the part of Marshal Cole Blackstock. This trip though, God had prompted Reid to carry his rifle. Reid leaned it in the corner under the sign.

The night before Reid left home, he had read Psalm 7:11–13.

God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day. If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow. He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows.

Reid had stopped on this verse and had pondered it. God was using him to fight for justice. He would need his weapon because someone wasn't going to give in to the law established by the government. Someone wasn't going to yield or to surrender.

Reid had sat through two days of trial. The courtroom had been calm. It was a murder case. An outlaw had robbed a bank and had killed everyone inside.

This outlaw was a butcher. He had evaded capture for years and was wanted in Nebraska, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Kansas. He had finally been caught and was being tried on multiple murders that would put him away for good.

Now Reid waited in the courtroom like everyone else while the jury determined the verdict.

Marshal Blackstock had spotted Reid that morning and had invited him to sit near the front where the two could talk before the trial started. Reid had moved to sit on the front row of the gallery, behind the accused.

Reid wondered why there weren't more marshals in town. He had asked and was told there had been no trouble since the bounty hunter brought the outlaw in. The marshal had not seen a need to call in additional help. The prisoner had been calm and well behaved at the jail and had moved to the courtroom each day without any difficulty.

Reid thought about the situation. Would his father have asked for additional help? Probably. Reid knew his father was an extraordinary man. He could see trouble coming, and he could handle most situations alone or with very little help. He also knew when to withdraw and when to regroup.

Now was the time to regroup. This outlaw had too many followers and was too brutal. Reid could see the trouble coming. Something was going to happen at some point.

Reid still had a funny feeling about this marshal.

Now, sitting in the courtroom, Reid evaluated the jury and questioned possible sentencing. If the verdict came back "innocent" it would be because the jury had been threatened, blackmailed, or paid off. If the accused was convicted and got a light sentence, Reid would know something was dirty with this judge.

The accused sat confident when the jury entered after their deliberations. He turned to look at the gallery behind him with an arrogant smirk on his face. This man knew something was coming. Reid was now on alert.

Reid could tell the jury foreman was nervous. The foreman handed a slip of paper to the marshal, who handed it to the judge. The judge looked at the paper, then he looked at the accused.

“Mush Staples, the jury has found you guilty,” the judge said. “I hereby sentence you to incarceration at the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth for no less than ninety years. Ten years for each of those you killed during the bank robbery at Balden Creek.” Then the judge slammed his gavel onto the sounding board. It was done.

Noise grew in the room as those in favor of this decision and those opposed began talking to their companions and moving from their chairs. Some of the people in town were satisfied with the sentence; this man would die in prison. Some were outraged that he did not get the death penalty, and some were scared. Reid had heard the murmuring about possible retaliation from Staples’s associates. That was another good reason to have more marshals in town.

As the marshal reached to take the prisoner’s arm to escort him from the courtroom, a shot exploded from the rear of the room. The bullet caught the defense attorney high in the right arm, and the marshal pulled his hand from Staples and took a step back.

Screams were heard as a few more shots were directed at the jury and the judge.

The room suddenly quieted as a man in the back spoke loudly to the marshal. “You load him on that train goin’ out of town, and they’ll be loadin’ you in a coffin!”

Reid was close enough to the marshal to hear him softly say the man’s name, “Thig Ball.”

Reid had never met the man, but he knew the name. He had been one of the henchmen within the criminal organization that Reid had taken down in Chicago. He had avoided capture, apparently moving his loyalty to this heartless outlaw.

The marshal threw his hands up and backed away. Staples kicked his attorney in the leg and said, “Get the keys,” as he twisted to indicate the handcuffs that held him.

Staples’s attorney moved to the marshal, and Cole Blackstock handed the keys to the lawyer. Reid shook his head slightly as he watched the marshal. The man was just giving the outlaws what they wanted. There was no fight in this man.

The attorney moved back to his client and unfastened the handcuffs. Staples stepped back a few steps, intent on moving around the

table instead of through the tight space between the chairs and the railing.

Scripture came to Reid’s heart: “*But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would not otherwise be found out.*”<sup>1</sup>

God was calling Reid to handle this situation.

As Staples moved to within inches of Reid, Reid pulled his pistol and grabbed Staples by the belt. “Don’t think I can’t kill you before I hit the floor. Tell your men to back out the door.”

There were several people between Reid and Ball. Reid knew the man with the gun probably couldn’t see Reid’s pistol.

“Thig, back off. I’ll meet you outside,” Staples yelled.

“Now the others,” Reid said.

Staples looked over his shoulder at Reid, and Reid pressed the gun low into the man’s back. “Clint, Doug, get out of here.”

Reid saw the men move out of the room, then Reid spoke louder so a large part of the room could hear. “Clear the room. Now!”

People started moving from the room quickly.

The marshal started backing toward the door near the judge’s bench, but the judge remained standing where he was. “Britt? What are you doing?”

Reid’s eyes were on his prisoner, but his field of vision covered the entire room. He said, “I’m taking this man to the train. He’s been sentenced, and he’s not leaving here to continue his executions of good people.”

The marshal said, “Reid, you can’t think you can do this. Look at you! And you have no authority.”

“I’m DOJ. I’d show you my badge, but I don’t have enough hands,” Reid replied. “Now both of you get out of here.”

Reid moved his hand to the prisoner’s collar. The prisoner’s shirt pulled back against his throat as Reid pointed his gun at the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 10:14–15.

man's head. "You'll move when I say move. Stop when I say stop. Do you understand?"

Mush Staples turned his head slightly to look at Reid across his shoulder. Reid saw the defiance in his cold eyes. Reid wasn't intimidated by this and looked back at the man the same way. His prisoner saw that look staring back at him, and he slowly backed down—for now.

Reid knew what this man was thinking. He thought that since Reid was slow and had trouble walking that he would be able to get away easily and that Reid wouldn't be able to handle himself well. Man, was he wrong! Reid could move when he wanted too; he would just suffer for it later.

Reid pushed Staples toward the door, then stopped him in the outer entry. The DOJ special counsel reached over and took a strap of leather from the coat rack. It was probably wagon reins that had snapped and the owner had hung it there intending to pick it up on his way out the door, but it had been forgotten.

Reid tied a knot in it, made a loop, and slid the loop over the man's head. Reid pulled the strap tight around the man's neck.

He took the other end of the strap of leather and, making another loop, wrapped it around the man's wrists and tied it off. Then Reid grabbed the strap at the back of the man's neck and twisted it a few times around his own hand. The man gagged, but Reid didn't care.

"We'll make it together or neither of us will make it," Reid said as he pushed the man toward the door. Reid had dropped his cane and was using this man to steady himself. "Now open it," Reid demanded, holstering his pistol and taking his rifle from the corner below the sign that said "*No guns.*" He gave Staples a push toward the door.

They moved down the street. People ran to hide. Everyone knew who this man was. The people in town had hoped the trouble with the Staples's gang was over when the man had been captured. Then his gang had arrived in town, and everyone had given in to the outlaw's demands. Nobody wanted trouble.

But now, this quiet cripple man was in town and had intervened. No one had expected this.

A tall, rough-looking man stepped into the street. "Boss?"

Reid now recognized him from a few minutes earlier. Thig Ball.

"I don't have to tell you what to do," Staples yelled back as Reid tightened and twisted the strap more, making the man stop talking and gag again.

"You don't talk unless I tell you to," Reid demanded.

Reid rounded the next corner, and two men opened fire at them. Reid ducked tight against the man he was holding and picked up speed to reach the next door. He knew there was little chance of being shot if he stayed close to his prisoner and kept moving. The outlaws wouldn't risk hitting their boss.

Reid was pulling the man backward through a door. He was using Staples as a shield from the bullets even though the bullets weren't getting close.

They headed toward the rear of the barber shop and out the back door. A shot came from the roof across the alley. Reid pushed his prisoner forward and under some stairs. Reid raised his rifle with one hand and fired. Then he pushed the man he held toward the back of the next structure and around the corner.

Another shot came from the roof. Reid returned fire again, and this man went down, falling to the street.

They moved on down the street, and a horse came around a corner. The rider fired in their direction. Reid fired back, and the horse went down, throwing its rider. The horse got up and ran away.

"I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless,"<sup>1</sup> Reid spoke out loud the words the Spirit was speaking to him. God was with Reid and encouraging Reid to continue this fight.

Reid pushed Staples across the street. He was cautious but saw no one as he moved two more blocks toward the train station. The streets were deserted. There were no faces in the windows, no one looking out the doors.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 13:11.

Reid knew something else was coming. The resistance was too light. Reid had heard of this gang. They always came in groups and found their courage in numbers. These lone attackers were useless against anyone with any skill or experience.

As Reid and Mush stepped onto the platform beside the tracks, a bullet splintered the edge of the station. Reid pushed his prisoner to the floor, and they rolled over each other to come to a stop beside the building. Reid peered past the edge to see another man coming toward them, his pistol out.

Reid dropped his rifle and pulled his hand gun from the holster. The man beside him rolled across Reid, putting Reid on the outside, away from the building. It twisted Reid's arm and back painfully. Reid pushed the man, slamming his face into the wall, then jerked back hard, and Staples flew across Reid to his original position, leaving Reid sandwiched between Staples and the wall. Reid turned back to the approaching man. There were now three of them. They were close now, and a few shots hit the floor in front of Reid, sending splinters and dirt into his face. Reid jerked his face away, and his head started to spin. But Reid wasn't finished. He strained his eyes to focus and turned back toward the men to see what was coming at him. He fired back in a wild volley, and two of the men went down. The other was hit but still coming.

Reid dropped his pistol and reached inside his jacket. He rolled slightly, pulling his prisoner with him, then squeezed his eyes tight for a moment against the pain he felt. He opened his eyes to see the other man almost on top of them. Reid pulled the pistol from his pocket and fired twice. Two hits, the man went down.

His prisoner yelled, "Charlie!" But he gave in to his captor's pull and quieted. He had no room to fight without being choked. This little man was strong.

The final man ran at them. Reid twisted and pulled his leg up to grab the knife from his boot. As the man jumped to the platform, attempting to take Reid with his bare hands, Reid raised the knife and the man came down on top of the blade, burying it in his own chest. He went limp on top of Reid and Staples.

Reid struggled to push the man off, and the man slid to the wood floor beside Mush.

Reid tilted his head back to briefly look at the man on the ground closest to him.

Charlie Staples, Mush Staples's brother. These were two of the most deadly outlaws in the state.

Reid lay on the rough wood floor, watchful of any others approaching as he reloaded his pistol.

The marshal suddenly came around the corner of the building. Reid jammed the barrel closed and jerked his gun in that direction. The marshal threw his hands up. "Whoa! It's over. You got everybody but Ball and the guy holding the horses. They lit out of here that way." Cole Blackstock pointed north.

Reid rolled to his back to look at the ceiling.

Reid now understood why this marshal had given him such a bad feeling when they had first met five years ago. He wasn't crooked or on the take. He wasn't hiding anything, except himself. He was a good man, but he was a coward. He wouldn't take a stand if it meant putting himself in danger.

Scripture came to Reid's heart: "*Distress and anguish terrify him; they prevail against him.*"<sup>1</sup> Yes, this man was simply scared.

"*Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good.*"<sup>2</sup> Would this man be willing to die for anyone?

Another scripture came to Reid's heart, reminding him that he was also a government authority. He and the marshal both had a responsibility to the people.

"*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*"<sup>3</sup>

Yes, Reid had been put here by God; Reid knew that. The marshal was put in this position by God too. But Cole Blackstock was

<sup>1</sup> Job 15:24a (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:7 (NLT).

<sup>3</sup> Romans 13:1.

failing to follow God's leading. He wasn't fulfilling the responsibility God had given him.

*"Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.*

*"But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience."*<sup>1</sup>

Reid wondered if this marshal had a conscience. Was he haunted by the fact that he wasn't doing his job? Did he know he was working for God? Did he care? Was Blackstock more afraid of the criminals than he was of God's wrath?

*"This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them. If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect, if honor, then honor."*<sup>2</sup>

There was no honor in this marshal's actions. Reid felt sorry for him. You couldn't be fearful and hold a marshal's position. It put other people in harm's way. It left innocent people vulnerable to the wicked.

Reid rolled over slightly, putting his face more directly in line with the marshal. Reid's face was bloody and scraped by the splinters that came from the wood floor.

"Oh, son, we need to get you to the doctor," Blackstock said.

"No. Bring him here," Reid said. He remained on the floor, holding to the strap tightly, looking toward the marshal. Reid's eyes were fuzzy. He was having trouble focusing. His head hurt.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 13:2-5.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:6-7.

The marshal's job was to offer protection to those that needed it. Another scripture came to Reid: *"Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them."*<sup>1</sup>

Had God sent him, again, to protect the people that would have been hurt or killed if this man did not go to jail? Reid offered a silent, "Thank you for using me, Lord."

Reid thought, *"One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you."*<sup>2</sup> Yes, it only takes one to stand up and often others will follow. But this man in front of him was no leader.

Reid again felt pity for the marshal. Blackstock would probably lose his job because he was scared to do the right thing.

Reid rolled over, pulling Staples with him. Then Reid rolled from the porch in an attempt to stand and had to catch himself, his hand again twisted painfully in the leather strap he had around his prisoner's neck. Reid drew himself straight by tugging on his prisoner. Staples rolled to the ground from the pulling but landed on his feet.

"In there," Reid said, indicating the telegraph office.

Inside, Reid asked the telegraph operator, "When's the next train through here?"

"About two hours."

"Going which way?" Reid asked.

"East," the man answered.

"Does it stop anywhere else west of here?"

"Blanchard Hills. About thirty minutes away. Hasn't gotten there yet," the telegraph operator said.

"Good. Send a message." Reid waited for the man to get his pencil ready. "Marshal or sheriff, stop. Need assistance to transport prisoner immediately, stop. Take next train to Golden, stop. Sign it Britt, DOJ SC."

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 12:5.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua 23:10a (ESV).

Reid watched the operator as he sent the telegram. When the man was finished, he turned to Reid and said, "Done."

"No, it's not," Reid said sternly. "You didn't send what I told you to say. Now you get back on there, and you tell them you made a mistake, and you send it the right way."

Reid moved his gun to point at the telegraph man.

When the telegram was sent correctly, Reid said, "Marshal, what's this guy's name?"

"Jason Whittingham."

"Okay, Jason. You better come up with a doggone good excuse for what just happened 'cause you will have to give it at the inquiry you'll be attending soon. Now you sit down right there, and you don't move. Be quiet. I want to be able to hear that machine when a reply comes in."

Reid was still holding to his prisoner as he dropped into the operator's chair behind the counter, pulling his captive down with him.

The marshal had been standing in the door watching. He had picked up Reid's rifle and was holding it. He glanced over his shoulder and said, "Reid, the doctor's here."

Reid didn't comment.

The doctor came into the room, and the marshal pointed him toward Reid. The doctor cleaned the blood off Reid's face and pulled out several splinters. He held bandages over a few spots until they stopped bleeding. Reid sat stone-faced through it all, his hand still holding tightly to the strap behind Staples. Staples had dropped to his knees beside the chair when Reid sat down. It was the location with the least amount of tension from Reid's twisting and pulling.

When the doctor finished, he said, "That's it. That's all I can do."

"Thank you, Doc. Why don't you sit down? Stay a while." The doctor looked around. The young man he had just helped was holding a gun on one man and had another bound, under his control. The marshal was standing on the far side of the room. The doctor thought it best to comply with the man's request.

The judge walked in the door and moved past the marshal. Reid looked in the direction of the door to see who was coming in, his gun

moving to point toward the judge. The judge's expression changed when he saw Reid's face. It now showed the sympathy and concern he felt for Reid.

"I brought your cane," he said.

"Thanks." Reid lowered his gun into his lap.

"Department of Justice, huh? What have you been doing here in town? Why were you here to begin with?" the judge asked.

"I was here to evaluate you. Changes are coming in the judicial system, and you were on a list of questionable judges," Reid replied.

"Really?"

"Yeah. But don't worry. You're not the problem in this town." Reid looked past the judge to the marshal. The marshal was embarrassed and looked down at the floor. He now realized the others knew he was incapable of executing his duties correctly.

The judge turned in the direction Reid had looked and saw the marshal too. "Oh, I see."

"You knew he wasn't doing his job," Reid said.

"Yeah, I knew," the judge said sadly. "We don't have a lot of crime in this town, and everybody likes Cole. I should have said something but..." The judge let his voice drop off. He really didn't have a reason that he had not spoken up about the marshal's cowardness.

Reid said, "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load."<sup>1</sup> It was his responsibility, not yours."

Just then the answer came on the telegraph. Reid listened closely then asked the telegraph man what it had said. Reid received the correct translation.

"Y'all got another telegraph man in this town," Reid asked the judge.

"Barney Thompson."

"Go get him please."

When the judge returned with Thompson, Reid addressed the marshal. "Take this guy," he said, indicating Whittingham. "Do

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 6:4-5.

something with him, lock him up. I don't want him near these wires until tomorrow night. Make sure it happens."

"I will. I'm sorry, Reid," the marshal offered.

When the marshal and Whittingham were gone, Reid told Thompson to send a telegram.

"Now you send a message to Harris. To Thomas Stewart and Luke Britt. Meet me tomorrow east-bound train. Sign it Reid. That's it. Nothing else." Reid listened as the message was sent correctly.

Reid wanted to close his eyes, but he couldn't do that. Not until another marshal arrived. His breathing was getting heavy as he fought against the pain in his head and to keep his eyes open. His head was spinning, and he struggled not to fall from his chair.

The train finally arrived, and a marshal stepped off. The judge called him into the station, and Reid told the marshal about the prisoner and the attempted escape.

The first impression Reid got of this marshal was that he was capable. He would see the prisoner safely to another town and another jail. There Mush Staples would await transport to the federal prison.

"What's your name? For my report," Reid asked the marshal.

"Wes Reeves."

Reid nodded. He knew the name, and everything he had heard had been good.

When the prisoner was removed, Reid said, "Doc, I need you to help me onto this train. Hand me that rifle." Reid indicated the rifle Cole Blackstock had stood by the door. Reid took it and placed it in the crook of his left elbow. Bending his arm, he wrapped it around the gun and pressed the rifle against his body.

His left hand was red, throbbing and frozen in place from the tight wrap that had been around it for the last several hours. Reid couldn't move that hand.

Reid took his cane in his right hand and said, "Come on, Doc. You're going to have to do most of this. I can't move."

"You don't need to get on that train," the doctor replied sympathetically. "I'll take you to my office. You can rest there."

"No. Get me on that train. I'll be home tomorrow, and I'll rest then," Reid said blankly.

The doctor had to almost lift Reid from the chair. As Reid and the doctor started to move from the office, the judge came to assist. The doctor sat Reid in the corner with the marshal and Staples. Reid leaned against the wall next to his seat and closed his eyes.

Then he spoke to Wes Reeves. "Marshal, please tell the conductor I get off at Harris. The sheriff will be waiting for me."

When Reid opened his eyes again, Staples and the marshal were gone. They had reached a town where Staples could be jailed and they had gotten off the train.

## CHAPTER 47



When the train got to Harris the next day, almost everyone got off. It would be a short layover, but people wanted supper. The Harvey House Restaurant and Inn was open next to the tracks, and the passengers depended on the meals and fast service to sustain them through their travels.

Thomas was standing on the platform watching for Reid, not knowing why he was meeting his brother-in-law.

Luke walked up and said, "You here to meet Reid?"

Thomas nodded. Luke and Thomas watched each other for a few seconds, a single thought crossing both of their minds. Had something happened to Reid? But neither spoke of their concern.

The conductor called from the steps of a rail coach, "Sheriff, in here."

Luke and Thomas moved quickly up the steps and into the coach. Reid sat, still leaning against the wall in the corner, his eyes barely open.

Thomas sat beside Reid carefully, placing a hand on his face to examine the small but numerous red and swollen scratches.

Reid jerked his head away, then squeezed his eyes tight.

"Thomas!" Reid said softly. But he didn't wait for acknowledgment, and Thomas knew Reid had not looked at him. He had just trusted that this was the doctor. "I can't move."

"What happened?" Thomas asked.

The only answer he received was, "I had to fight."

Thomas left to move the Oldsmobile to the other side of the train, away from the platform and closer to the steps of the coach.

Then he and Luke helped Reid from the train and into the motorcar. They drove to Reid's house along the bumpy and rutted road. Luke had an arm around Reid as Reid leaned on his brother in the back seat. Luke's other hand was on Reid's chest, helping him stay in an upright position.

Luke tried to talk to Reid, asking questions about what had happened the last few days. But the most he got from Reid was a shake of the head and a few grunts. As they neared the house, Reid whispered, "Mush Staples is goin' to prison. His brother is dead. Thig Ball got away."

Luke knew that if the fight had been with Mush and Charlie Staples and their companion Thig Ball, the fight had been fierce.

Reid was asleep before he was in bed good.

Thomas said, "Let's let him rest. Luke, I'll take you back into town and then run by the clinic to pick up a few things. Chipeta, boil some water and then let it cool. I'll be right back. I'll bring Sarah to help with the children."

\*\*\*\*\*

It took Thomas longer than he thought it would to get back. After dropping Luke off in town Thomas went to the medical clinic for a few supplies and the medication he thought Reid might need. There he found Dawson Buchanan and his son Tate waiting for him. Tate had fallen from an untamed horse and hit a railed fence. It appeared that he had cracked a couple of ribs. Not serious, but the young man was complaining loudly of the pain.

Thomas had the young man remove his shirt, and the doctor wrapped the ribs. Thomas commented, "That's a nasty scar on your shoulder. Did you get shot?"

"What of it?" Tate replied in a hateful manner.

"Nothing. Doesn't look like it was taken care of very well. It bothers me when I see something like that, that's all," Thomas said.

Dawson and his son lived way out of town, closer to Summersville than to Harris. They didn't come to Harris much. All Thomas knew about them was that they both had a nasty attitude.

He wouldn't spend much time with them. There was no need. And Thomas wanted to get back to Reid.

Thomas went to the next room as Tate put his shirt back on.

"Pa, you think that gunsmith still has my Colt? It's been over a year. We've had no reaction to that rancher I shot." Thomas heard Tate talking.

Dawson replied in a hushed tone, "Shut up! Don't even think about that gun. Nobody's going to remember you, but they'll remember that gun. You don't know if any of those ranch hands saw it. You should have learned to keep your mouth shut after all that mouthing off you did right after I got rid of it. Now keep your mouth shut!"

"But, Pa, you had that gun special made for me."

*Pop!* Thomas jumped. It sounded like Tate got slapped.

"And that horse was going to be a gift too, but you messed that up."

Thomas kept his back to the men as they left, but he gave a cordial, "See you guys," as they walked out the door.

Thomas commented to himself, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."<sup>1</sup>

The doctor picked up the telephone receiver to contact the operator. He quickly asked for Luke, but no one answered the phone at the sheriff's office.

Thomas called the telephone exchange again.

The voice came on the line, "Exchange."

"Judy?"

"No, Thomas. It's Molly."

"Molly. I'm looking for Luke—"

But he was interrupted. "Aren't you going to ask why I'm handling the phones? Everybody else does."

Thomas was in a hurry. He was uneasy about what he had just heard and wanted to move on and get back to Reid. The doctor didn't mean to, but he got short with his sister-in-law. "Molly! I need Luke! I'm headed to Reid's. Find Luke and have him call me there as soon as he can."

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 32:35.

"Thomas, what's wrong?"

"I'll tell you later. I really need Luke." The doctor hung up the phone.

Molly went across the hall to her husband's office and told Angus of the strange and disturbing phone call from Thomas. "It's just not like him to be so blunt, you know that. Something's going on. He's headed to Reid's. Do you think something happened out there?"

"I don't know. I'll go out there to see. Call Cleve. I'll pick him up on the way, then find Luke," Angus told her.

\*\*\*\*\*

The children got home from school before the doctor made it back. Chipeta had told them all to be quiet and had sent the boys into another room with the younger children.

But Matt wouldn't stay with the younger children. He kept coming to the bedroom door to look at Reid.

Chipeta sat in a chair next to the bed holding Saamel. She had tried to put the baby down a few times, but he would fuss loudly each time. He knew something was upsetting his mother and that upset him. Chipeta didn't want Saamel to disturb Reid, so she continued to hold him.

Chipeta finally said, "It's okay, Matt. You can come in."

Matt moved to Chipeta's side, and she put an arm around him, leaning into him, giving him a hug. She hoped for one in return, but Matt stood frozen watching Reid.

Matt asked, "What happened to him?"

"I don't know," Chipeta replied. "He got off the train this way. Luke had to almost carry him inside." She was about to cry, Matt heard it in her voice, but she managed to hold back the tears.

"Thomas went to his office for something. He's coming back. He ought to be here by now. I don't know where he is. Can you stay with Reid while I go call Sarah and find out where he is? Call me if he wakes up."

Matt sat down in the chair Chipeta had gotten out of. He watched Reid. This was the man he had grown to love more than his own father. He'd seen his mother in bed injured, and she had died. Matt didn't want Reid to die too. Reid rolled his head, now facing Matt. His eyes were still closed.

Matt reached out to touch one of the cuts on Reid's face. Reid jerked away and squeezed his eyes tight. "No, don't," he said weakly. "Who's there?"

Matt answered, "It's me."

"Matt?"

"Yes, sir. It's me. Does your face hurt?"

"Yes, it does. Please don't touch it. You can take my hand if you want to."

Matt reached over to grab Reid's hand, but Reid's hand was also sore. "Gently, Matt. Be gentle with me. Where's Chipeta?"

"She went to use the telephone. She's looking for Dr. Thomas. He was supposed to be back, but he's not," Matt said.

"Okay. That's okay," Reid whispered, relaxing a little.

"Are you okay? Do you want anything?" Matt asked Reid. It was the same questions Matt had heard Reid ask Chipeta when she was in the bed right after Saamel was born.

"No, I'm not okay. But right now, I just need to lie still. I'll be okay when I rest."

Chipeta heard Reid talking before she entered the room. "Reid, you're awake. Thomas is coming. He got stopped by someone with an injury. He's on his way now."

"That's okay. I can wait." Reid smiled.

Chipeta started to laugh. "You'll have to, won't you?" Turning to the boy, Chipeta said, "Why don't you go back with the others?"

Matt started to stand up.

"He can stay if he wants to. You've got the baby to take care of," Reid said. "He's becoming a man. He can help." Reid smiled, then added, "I'm tired." Reid rolled his head a few times looking for a comfortable spot on the pillow, and then he stopped moving.

## CHAPTER 48



Thomas arrived and immediately sent Chipeta to get the water for the intravenous hydration. The doctor had been using this for years, unlike many of his colleagues, on the unconscious and seriously ill. He had discovered that the fluid helped as much, and sometimes more, than any of the medications he would give a patient.

When Thomas talked to Reid, and Reid's mind was clear, he told the doctor to use the hydration. But when Reid's head hurt and he actually needed it, Reid would object. In his confused state, Reid didn't understand why it was being done and didn't want the needle stuck in his arm.

Chipeta took Thomas the water, and then she was told to make some coffee.

Angus and Cleve arrived right behind the doctor, but there was nothing they could do to help. Thomas didn't have time to tell them why he wanted Luke. The two watched the activity and tried to stay out of the way. Jeannie came into the room; and Angus picked her up, talked to her briefly, then sent her back to the sitting room with Sarah.

Thomas said, "Angus, come hold Reid's arm. He's going to jump when I stick him. Hold him good. Chipeta, you hold on to him too. He's probably going to fight me, you know that. See if you can keep him calm."

Chipeta started to put Saamel on the floor, but the child objected loudly. She picked him up again; but Cleve reached to take his nephew, bouncing him a few times, then holding him close.

Angus took Reid's arm as Chipeta sat on the edge of the bed and leaned into Reid, cradling his head. The doctor turned to wake his patient.

"Reid, Reid, I'm going to put the needle in your arm. Do you hear me?"

Reid woke. "No," he said softly, then got louder. "No!"

Chipeta began talking to her husband softly. "It's okay, Reid. I'm here. I'm watching out for you. It's just Thomas. You know he needs to do this. It's okay."

When Thomas stabbed Reid's arm, the man in the bed jumped and he tried to pull his arm away, but Angus held tight. Cleve watched as Chipeta put her body weight on Reid to hold him to the bed. She was still talking to him, telling him everything was okay and all this would be over in just a minute.

"I'm sorry, Reid. Hold still," the doctor continued to talk to his patient also. "I need to get the needle in. You hold still, and I'll get it done faster."

Reid objected loudly, but his arm held still. He tried to pull the rest of his body from the bed. Cleve and Angus could both see Chipeta straining to hold Reid.

Thomas understood that Reid didn't like to be held down. When his head was hurting, Reid didn't understand why they were holding him down. All he remembered was being held down while being beaten in Chicago. Thomas knew this, Reid had told him about the beatings. But the doctor also knew he wouldn't get the fluids into Reid unless Reid was forced.

Thomas also understood this wasn't Reid. This was the result of what had happened to him almost five years ago. The ordeal that Reid had been through remained hidden in his mind. Thomas would see signs of it from time to time, especially when Reid's head was hurting. Thomas thought it a miracle Reid's mind was as clear as it was. And the doctor understood that in his confused state, Reid was just trying to protect himself. They would always know when he was confused because he wanted the curtains on the window closed but didn't want the room dark.

Thomas spoke to Reid firmly. "Reid, stop it! Stop fighting us." Then his voice softened but was still forceful. "That's just going to make your head hurt more. I know this hurts. It will be over soon. I'm going to take care of you. Nothing's going to happen to you."

Reid submitted, but his body trembled slightly, and he remained tense. A hesitant smile came to his face. Those in the room heard Reid whisper, "Thomas. It's just Thomas."

When the doctor was finished, Angus backed away and they all saw Reid's body relax. Chipeta continued to hold Reid, her arm wrapped around his head, gently rocking it.

"Angus, go get him some coffee from the stove. Reid, open your mouth," the doctor said. Chipeta held still and loosened her hold on her husband. "Reid, I've got to be able to get the spoon in."

The doctor spooned a reddish-colored liquid into Reid's mouth. Chipeta reached for the coffee cup as Angus returned. She held it to Reid's lips, still holding his head with her arm. Reid took the coffee without question, then rolled his head back into his wife. He recognized her touch and found comfort in it.

Thomas hadn't seen Reid exhibit some of these behaviors since the first months following his injuries. Thomas knew Reid's head was hurting bad. He was now afraid the brain injury he had been watching for would present itself.

The doctor was careful as he began the examination of the cuts on Reid's face and of Reid's swollen hand, remembering how careful he had to be when Reid was first brought home from Chicago. Each time Thomas touched Reid's face, he would say, "Reid, I'm going to touch your face. It's just me. I'm not going to hurt you."

And each time Reid would remind himself of who was touching him. He'd whisper, "Thomas. It's Thomas."

When the doctor was finished, he pulled a chair beside Matt and sat with him, watching Reid sleep.

Cleve had taken Saamel outside and had walked around the porch talking to him. Saamel had calmed, and Cleve had taken him to Sarah. When Chipeta left Reid, she took the cup back into the kitchen. Cleve and Angus followed her. They asked her what had happened. She didn't know. She couldn't answer their questions and

couldn't hold her emotions inside any longer. She began to cry, and Cleve took her into his arms to hold her. As her sobs began to slow, she collapsed onto a chair at the table. She sat trying to get control of herself before she went back to her husband.

Reid's brothers returned to stand in the doorway, watching their brother sleep. There was nothing else for them to do. They still didn't know why Thomas wanted Luke, but it didn't seem important now.

Over the next few days, Travis stayed at Reid's house from sunup to sundown. He sat with his son, prayed for him, and sang praises to the Lord as Reid rested. He spoke to Chipeta with encouraging words and scripture and held her as she cried.

Jenny came to get the four younger children each morning and brought them home after supper. In the evenings, Travis spent time with his grandchildren. Then he would go home to pray more.

Joey came home after school with the other boys and helped with the chores. He fit into the family well. Travis read the Bible to the children each night before he and Joey went home.

Matt stayed with Reid often. He helped Reid with supper each night, and he watched the clock above the fireplace, reminding Chipeta when Reid needed to be cared for, according to the doctor's instructions.

Reid had not gotten disturbed again, and Thomas was thankful no other signs of brain damage had presented itself.

The third day he was home, Reid called for Cleve and Cleve came to record Reid's report. Cleve had objected to doing this while Reid was still suffering, but Thomas had encouraged him to go. The doctor had said Reid needed to talk and get the events off his mind. Cleve was told that talking would help Reid heal. So Cleve did it. And, once again, Cleve was amazed at what his quiet little brother was able to do. Reid had not included the information about his injuries, so Cleve added his own note to Barrett Batterton. Then Cleve sent both to Topeka.

That same night Reid asked Matt to read scripture to the family. That night, and the evenings that followed, all the children gathered on the floor near Reid. Chipeta sat in the chair with ten-month-old Saamel, and Matt sat on the bed beside Reid. Matt read from the

Bible just like Reid had always done before bed, and like Chipeta had done when Reid was out of town, and like Travis had done the last few nights. Matt stammered through some parts as he read, but Reid knew the Bible well. Even with his eyes closed and his head hurting, Reid was able to help Matt when he stumbled over words.

Reid asked Matt to take on this responsibility every night that he was unable to do it, whether he was ill, like he was now, or when he was out of town. Matt agreed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chipeta had gotten up and fed Saamel, then she had gotten the older children off to school. The little children were next. They were now dressed and fed too. Then she made coffee. This was her morning routine. Finally, she helped Reid out of bed and helped him dress.

Reid was now sitting in the wheelchair in the kitchen while Chipeta prepared his breakfast. He was holding Saamel on his lap. The toddler was chewing on and playing with a few vegetables that lay on the table.

Luke called from the front door, "Everybody awake?"

"Well, if we weren't, we are now." Chipeta said softly where only Reid could hear her. Reid chuckled. She turned to see Luke coming into the room and spoke louder. "I'm glad none of the children were napping."

"Oops, sorry." Luke said, truly apologizing. "I didn't think of that. It's too early in the morning, I didn't think that would happen this early."

"It's possible," Chipeta said.

Esa came running into the room. "Uncle Luke!" He threw himself at the sheriff. Abigail and Jeannie were right behind him and attached themselves to Luke's legs.

Luke laughed and began waddling around the room with the little ones hanging from him while he whooped and hollered along with the children.

"Okay, out you go," Chipeta said as she pulled the children off Luke and sent them from the room.

Luke made a pouty face as he waved to the children, then he turned to Reid, instantly serious. "Listen, Reid, I wanted to come by and let you know I got a wanted poster in yesterday. It's Mac."

"What?" Chipeta stopped what she was doing to turn around to look at her brother-in-law.

"Seems he shot six guys at a ranch between here and Summersville. Three of them died. Report said he just walked into the house and shot everybody in the room. Four men. Two of those were Dawson Buchanan and his son, Tate. They both died. Then he shot two more guys as he was leaving the ranch.

"I figure Mac thought the son must have been the one that shot Amelia. It goes along with Thomas's story. I'd wager they didn't even realize Amelia had been shot.

"I went by and talked to Jake. He described the guy he got a fancy gun from. He said anyone would remember that gun if they saw it. It had the initials TB carved in the handle. Apparently, it was the only gun he had gotten in years where Jake didn't know the seller. The description sounded like Dawson. Jake sold the gun to a stranger from the train. No telling where it is now."

Reid sat staring at the table as Luke spoke, then commented, "(God's) in charge of vengeance and payback... the day of their doom is just around the corner, sudden and swift and sure."<sup>1</sup> Reid still sat looking at the vegetables on the table.

Luke couldn't tell if his expression was sadness or exasperation or defeat.

"I'm going to have to tell his boys. They don't need to hear it at school." Reid sighed.

"You want me here when you tell them?" Luke asked.

"Nah, I can do it," Reid said sadly.

\*\*\*\*\*

Travis had been at Jake's shop most of the afternoon. All he had left to do was finish putting the shotgun back together. He was

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 32:35 (MSG).

almost done. He looked out the front windows just as Stephen ran past. He shouldn't be alone. Where were his brothers? And Joey?

The door was open, letting the fresh spring air in. Travis hollered at the boy as he got up and moved toward the boardwalk. Stephen heard Travis call to him and turned around.

"Grandpa, Joey and James got into a fight. Matt tried to help them. They're in trouble and have to stay after school. Mr. McClelland wants to see our father."

"Are they all right? Who's Mr. McClelland?"

"James was beat up bad. His mouth and nose were bleeding, and his head is busted. He got hit with a rock.

"Whose Mr. McClelland?" Travis asked again.

"The new teacher."

Turning back into the room Travis called to Jake, "Get Thomas on the telephone an' ask him ta come ta the school. Tell him the boys were in a scuffle."

Travis left the shotgun lying on the table, and he turned in the direction of the school.

When Stephen and Travis arrived at the school, they found James, Matt, and Joey, along with three other boys, in Mr. McClelland's classroom.

The teacher looked up from his desk to see Travis enter and go straight to James.

"Grandpa!" James said and put his arms around Travis.

Travis gave the boy a brief hug, then put a hand under the boy's chin and lifted his face to look at the injuries. There was a fresh cut on his lip, and a little dried blood remained around his nose. Someone had put a bandage around his head, and blood was showing through the wrapping. "Can ya see straight? Is ya eyes fuzzy?" Travis asked.

"I think I'm going to throw up. I'm dizzy, and my head hurts," James said, a nauseated look on his face.

Travis pulled the boy toward a chair and sat down, pulling another chair out for James to sit on. He pulled the bandage up and looked at the wound, then pulled the boy forward to give him another hug. He held James against his chest as he looked to Matt and Joey. "Are ya okay?"

They both nodded.

Mr. McClelland spoke. "The boys are fine. They need to complete their punishment, then they can go home. Are you their grandfather? Do they live with you?"

Travis said, "This boy is hurt. He needs ta be taken care of." Travis still had his arms around James, holding him tightly.

"He can go home as soon as he completes the task I gave him."

Travis turned to Matt. "What happened?"

Matt explained, pointing to the other three boys. "They started it. They were calling Joey and James jailbird orphans, telling them that we were all going to have to go to jail too. They pushed Joey down, then James took a swing at that one." Matt pointed at one of the boys. "Then they all three came at him. They had him on the ground when that one"—Matt pointed at another child—"picked up a rock and hit him. And he"—Matt pointed at Mr. McClelland—"just stood there and let it happen."

Travis looked to the teacher. "Did ya hear the name-calling?"

"Boys will be boys. I don't make it a practice to interfere unless there is a chance that someone will get hurt seriously," McClelland said.

"Ya don' think he got hurt?" Travis raised his voice.

Thomas walked in the door and stopped, putting a hand on Stephen's face to look at it, then moved on to Travis. He pulled the chair James had sat in over some and took James from Travis.

"Are you Mr. Piper?" the teacher asked, looking at Thomas.

"I'm the doctor," he replied without looking up. He was focused on James, who was still holding to Travis's shirt with a tight fist.

"Good afternoon, Marshal—" Carol Yates said as she entered the room.

But the doctor interrupted her greeting.

"Carol!" Thomas looked at the woman coming in the door. "This boy is hurt. I should have been called immediately." Thomas looked to the other boys and asked, "Are any of you hurt?"

They all shook their heads. They were dirty, but Thomas saw no sign of injury. He reached down and picked James up. James immediately laid his head on the doctor's shoulder.

"I'm taking him to the clinic." Thomas gave a stern look at McClelland and then at Carol Yates. "Next time, you let me put the bandages on." He walked out the door carrying James. "Come on, Stephen. You come with me."

Travis calmly repeated his question. "Ya didn' think he'd get hurt?" And the former marshal gave the new teacher that cold hard stare that made the teacher feel a little ashamed. Then Travis added, "What was Matt's part in this fight?"

McClelland wasn't as sure of himself now, but he didn't back down. "Matt was pulling the boys off James. He should not have gotten involved."

Travis looked to Matt. "So ya were tryin' ta stop the fight?"

Matt shrugged his shoulders.

Travis looked at the teacher again. "Which is somethin' ya should a done. Joey, what were ya doin'?"

"When they started hitting James, I went to get Mrs. Yates," he replied.

Travis turned to Carol Yates. "This is over. I'm takin' the boys home. If either a ya wanna talk ta Reid, ya can go ta his house. But I'm askin' ya ta drop it right here. Come on, boys."

As they left the school Travis said, "Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God's hand for that person."<sup>1</sup> Ya both done right."

By the time Travis, Matt, and Joey got to the medical clinic, the doctor had put James to sleep and had sewn the cut closed on his head.

Thomas said, "I called Reid and told him what happened, at least what I got from Stephen. He'll be okay, but he'll have a headache for a few days. Can you ride with us and hold James? I'll take them home."

Travis climbed into the Oldsmobile, and Thomas put sleeping James next to Travis. Matt, Joey, and Stephen climbed in for the ride home.

When they arrived at the house, Reid was in the wheelchair on the porch waiting for them. Thomas carried the boy to the porch, and Reid put his hands out. "Let me have him."

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 3:27a (MSG).

Thomas had told Reid that neither the cut nor the concussion was serious. But the doctor could see the concern in Reid's face. He knew Reid was upset by the child's injury. It was a head wound, and Reid knew what that felt like.

Thomas laid James in Reid's lap, and Reid hugged the boy to his chest, laying his face against James's head.

"Just what did that teacher think he was doing?" Reid asked no one in particular.

Travis said, "I told him he was wrong far not stoppin' the boys that were pickin' on 'um. But James didn' need ta try ta hit the boy either. I told that teacher ta drop the matter. I'll go back tomorrow an' make sure ever'thin' is straightene' out the way it should be. An' if that teacher don' talk ta the other boys' parents I'm gonna. I also told that man teacher an' Carol Yates that if they want ta talk ta ya they would 'ave ta come 'ere."

"Carol was there? She didn't stop this?" Reid sounded even more upset now. Carol was a friend. Reid didn't understand why she hadn't stopped the fight.

"I don' think she saw it 'appen. She was involved after it was over," Travis said.

"And I'm going to have a talk with the school board," Thomas said. "Anytime there is a head injury of any kind, they need to call me to look at the child. You can't just wrap a bandage around a wound like that, then send the child back inside and expect them to do schoolwork."

Thomas could still see that Reid was upset. Reid sat holding the boy with one arm wrapped around the child's head, the other arm straining to keep James on his lap. Reid's eyes were now closed. His breathing had been heavy since the doctor had arrived. Thomas moved closer to Reid and said, "Reid, look at me."

Reid nodded several times, squeezed his eyes tight, then squinted his eyes to look at Thomas and softly said, "The sun hurts my eyes."

Thomas looked at Reid a moment. Reid had never told his this before. The doctor moved to pull the wheelchair back into the house. "I want both of you in bed."

In the bedroom, Thomas put them both in Reid's bed. Reid put his arm out and pulled James closer to him. James stirred and rolled in Reid's direction, lying his head on Reid's shoulder as Reid wrapped his arm around the boy.

Reid quietly said, "And God will wipe away every tear from (our) eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."<sup>1</sup> Lord, when will it stop? When will people quit hurting one another? 'Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress."<sup>2</sup>

Thomas gave Reid a dose of the medication that sat on top of the bureau across the room. "Chipeta, please get him some coffee and keep them both here until I come back in the morning. Don't let either of them get up."

Thomas reached down to touch Reid on the shoulder. "James will probably sleep through the night. You go to sleep too. Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'<sup>3</sup> Find his peace and rest. James will be okay."

Travis said, "I'll stay with 'em," and he sat down in the chair closest to the bed. As the others left the room Travis began to hum, then softly sing.

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song  
is with me—

a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten  
me?"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 21:4 (NKJV).

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 33:2.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:27.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 42:11, 8–9a.

This was a song that Reid knew. He and his father had sung this together, putting Psalm 42 to music. Reid listened. His father's singing had always had a calming effect on him. Reid began to softly sing with his father. His voice wasn't as pretty as it had been in the past, but the words were clear, the notes strong. Travis continued to sing, and a gentle smile came to his face as he listened to his son sing along.

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?  
 Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?  
 My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me,  
 saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?"  
 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?  
 Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him,  
 my Savior and my God.<sup>1</sup>

As Reid continued to sing, his voice got softer until his father couldn't hear him anymore. He had fallen asleep.

Dusk approached, and an automobile could be heard approaching the house. Chipeta and Matt stepped out the door to see who it was. Carol Yates and Dan McClelland stepped out and came to the porch.

"Good evening, Chipeta," Carol said. "How's James?"

"Thomas put him to sleep to sew his head up. He has a concussion. Thomas said he'll have a headache for a few days. He's still asleep," Chipeta replied.

"I'm so sorry. I didn't think it was that serious. Mr. Poe from the school board called me. Apparently, Thomas called him. I thought we'd better come out here and straighten things out. Mr. McClelland and I have talked." Then Mrs. Yates stopped. She needed to start

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 42:11a, 9b-10, 11.

this conversation over. "Well, is Reid available? We'd like to tell you both."

Chipeta took a long moment to think about this. Thomas had told her not to let Reid or James out of bed. She knew Thomas meant for Reid to rest. He didn't need to get upset again. But Chipeta knew that Reid would want to hear what the school administrator had to say. Reid was now awake. He was lying in bed talking with his father.

Chipeta nodded, "Come on in."

They passed the other children who were in the sitting room as Mrs. Yates and Mr. McClelland followed Chipeta through the house and into the bedroom. Matt followed them and sat on the foot of the bed beside Reid. James was still asleep on Reid's shoulder. Travis was standing at the window. He had seen the teachers drive up and had told Reid they were coming inside.

"Good evening, Reid. Hello again, Marshal," Carol Yates said and nodded to each of them. Then she faced Reid again. "Reid, this is Dan McClelland. He's Matt's teacher."

Reid nodded slightly in greeting but didn't extend his hand when Dan McClelland offered his. The man in the bed still had his right arm wrapped tightly around James.

"We wanted to come out and apologize for the way things were handled this afternoon," she continued.

Reid could tell that Carol was a little uncomfortable about talking to him in the bedroom. She had come only as far as the doorway and had stopped there. She hadn't entered the room. Reid didn't care how uncomfortable she was. If she wanted to talk to him, she would have to do it here.

"Mr. McClelland and I have discussed it, and I explained the situation with the children to him." She stopped for a moment to look toward Matt, then continued, "We're both going to be more watchful with the children. It was a simple miscommunication on my part to not let Mr. McClelland know what was going on when he first arrived. And I didn't fully explain our correction and discipline procedures either. We were so rushed to get him in place in the classroom after being without a teacher for so long. Most of this is my fault. I'm sorry. Mr. McClelland was used to a more, can we call it

natural setting, where he last taught. The children took care of their own problems, and the instructors stayed out of the student's affairs."

"Where was that?" Chipeta asked.

"On the Apache reservation in Oklahoma," McClelland answered.

"How long were you there?" Chipeta wanted to know more.

"Two years. I was part of the Christian Mission there."

Travis asked, "Why'd ya leave?"

"Men that were teachers were not accepted well there. We were thought to be weak, like the women who taught. But the parents still expected me to teach what they considered to be the more masculine ways," McClelland explained. "I tried, but I just wasn't comfortable doing that." He cocked his head to the side slightly. "I guess I learned more of their ways than I thought I did."

"Uh-huh," Travis offered, chewing on the inside of his bottom lip. "You're awfully young. Was that your first job?"

"Yes, sir. Right out of college," McClelland replied.

Travis nodded and turned to his son. "Reid? Can we agree that if the other boys leave our boys alone, we can drop this matter and move on?"

Reid nodded. "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."<sup>1</sup>

McClelland looked at Reid a little surprised and a slight smile came to his face. Carol Yates had told him Reid and Chipeta were Christians and kind people. But it still surprised him that his apology was accepted so easily. McClelland replied, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."<sup>2</sup> Thank you for being so understanding."

Turning to Matt, his teacher asked, "Matthew, I made a mistake. I'm sorry. Is everything okay between us?"

Matt replied, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all."<sup>3</sup>

McClelland smiled. "That's very good, Matthew. I'll see you tomorrow. Good night Mr. Britt, Marshal, ma'am." Then McClelland put his hat back on and turned to leave.

Reid's wife walked the teachers back outside. On the porch, Carol stopped to talk further with Chipeta. "Reid hasn't been to church for several weeks. I thought he was probably out of town. But I saw the wheelchair in the bedroom. Is Reid having problems?"

Reid didn't talk about his injuries, and his wife wasn't going to either. Reid accepted what God sent him, both the good days and the bad days. Chipeta would answer this question the same way her husband would answer. "He's fine."

<sup>1</sup> Romans 14:19.

<sup>2</sup> James 3:17 (ESV).

<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:17 (ESV).

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER 49



A few nights later the children gathered in the bedroom as Reid lay in bed. Chipeta had just put Saamel in his bed, and she moved to sit beside Reid. Matt opened to 1 Samuel 17 and began reading about how David's father, Jesse, had asked him to take food to his brothers that were fighting in the king's army. David had taken the food; and while he was there, the giant, Goliath, had mocked the God of Israel. The men in the army were doing nothing in response, and David was talking to the men about Goliath.

David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

When Eliab, David's oldest brother heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

"Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

Six-year-old Stephen interrupted, "Why was his brother being so mean to David?"

Reid answered, "Eliab didn't know that God's Spirit was living inside of David. He didn't understand that David was able to do what he said he would do. We don't know what God knows and other people don't know what we know. Maybe God is talking to Matt, but I don't hear God. Or maybe God will talk to you but not to Abigail.

"David knew he could kill Goliath. But all Eliab saw was his pesky little brother." Reid smiled. "You know what that feels like don't you?"

"Yes!" the reply came.

"So do I. But God doesn't care about our size if he wants to use us."

"You're a lot smaller than the sheriff. But you won when you fought those outlaws in Golden," Matt commented.

"That's right. Size doesn't matter. God doesn't see what the person looks like on the outside. He looks at your heart, at what's on the inside. We don't have to dress in fancy clothes or even dress alike." Reid reached over to touch Chipeta's Indian-style dress.

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."<sup>2</sup> We don't have to be big and strong to win a battle if God is on our side."

Matt continued reading the story, and there was more conversation about what they read. Then each of the little children stood on a stool so they could hug and kiss Reid good night. James and Stephen followed as Chipeta put the younger children to bed.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 17:26–33a.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12.

Matt stayed behind, like he always did, to tell Reid good night alone. Matt had heard Reid and Chipeta talking and knew that Reid hadn't been sleeping through the night lately. "Mr. Reid, I hope you sleep good tonight," Matt said.

"For His anger is but for a moment, his favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning."<sup>1</sup> These nights won't last long. I think God just wants to talk with me. I'm waking up to listen," Reid explained.

Matt quoted from the book of 1 Samuel: "Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"<sup>2</sup>

Reid smiled. "That's right. God wants me to know something, and I'm waiting for him to tell me. I'll be sleeping good again when God's through talking to me. Don't you worry about me. I'll be fine." This boy had such a tender heart. "Good night, Matt," Reid whispered.

That night Reid woke again, just like he had done the last several nights. But this time he heard a voice speaking to him.

*"Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, (Reid), that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special. When the Message we preached came to you, it wasn't just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions."*<sup>3</sup>

Reid pondered what was said to him. God was happy with him, but God also had something else for him to do. It wasn't fear that he felt now but an uneasy feeling of dread. It felt like his heart would pound out of his chest.

Reid spoke softly, not wanting to wake his wife. "Lord, have I not served you? Do I not serve you now? Have I not suffered for your work? Yet, 'I am the Lord's servant.'<sup>4</sup> Show me what you want me to do, Lord. I'll do it."

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 30:5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 3:10b.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5 (MSG).

<sup>4</sup> Luke 1:38a.

And the Lord spoke. "*I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*"<sup>1</sup>

Tears came to Reid's eyes as he felt the love of God surrounding him, cradling him into a peaceful sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reid sat in the chair on the front porch. Chipeta and the younger children had gone to Jenny's to explore her attic. Jenny thought she might have something the children could wear. She had told them they might be able to find a few toys. All the children were excited. None had been in Jenny's attic before, and they all wanted to go. They were certain they were going to find a long-lost hidden treasure.

Travis had taken the three older boys and Joey to the far end of the pasture for some target practice with the rifle. He had even suggested Matt might try the pistol today.

Reid sat alone on the porch. He had his Bible in his lap and had enjoyed some rare quiet time with his Lord.

Chipeta and Matt had helped Reid from the wheelchair to a rocking chair. Then Matt had played with the younger children, pushing them around the house while they waited for Chipeta. They had left the chair in the house when they had finished playing.

Now Reid sat listening to the wind blow and the singing of the birds in the trees. There were a couple of frogs somewhere close by. He heard some crickets, and occasionally, Reid would hear a squirrel bark. He could also hear the rifle shots. Sometimes he could tell that one of the boys had hit their target. It was a peaceful afternoon.

There was a motorcar coming, Reid could hear that too. Reid watched for it to clear the trees. No, he didn't know this automobile. He had no idea who this was.

The automobile circled in front of the house and stopped a short distance from the porch. Mac stood up from the passenger side to look over the top of the car at Reid. "Hey, Reid, my young'uns here?"

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:2b.

“No, not right now,” Reid replied.

Mac jumped from the running board and trotted past the motorcar to the steps of the house. “Where are they?”

“Dad took the boys shooting. The girls went to Cleve’s house with Chipeta.”

“They’re never here when I come! I came last week, and there was nobody here,” Mac said in frustration.

Reid felt annoyed and shook his head, but he spoke gently. “No, you didn’t. I was here.” How could Mac continue to lie to him like this. They had been good friends and had trusted each other. Scripture came to Reid’s heart: *“You love evil more than good, falsehood more than speaking what is right.”*<sup>1</sup> There wasn’t a thing Mac said anymore that Reid trusted to be the truth.

“Are you callin’ me a liar? You sayin’ I wasn’t here?” Mac yelled.

“Mac, I haven’t left this house for more than two months. You would have to sneak in for me not to know you were here,” Reid replied sadly.

“Well, I was here! I came right up here on this porch and yelled, ‘Anybody home?’ Nobody answered me!”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t hear you,” Reid apologized, although he had no reason to.

“Well, you had to be asleep or something not to hear me! Why don’t you open your ears and listen!”

“Mac, we’ve been friend’s a long time,” Reid said sadly. “I said I was sorry. Why do you want to argue?”

A voice suddenly came from the open driver’s side door of the automobile. “Well, we’re not friends!”

Reid looked up to see Thig Ball stepping out of the motorcar.

Reid leaned his head back on the chair, thanking God that no one else was home. He would pretend ignorance.

Reid looked back at the man walking toward him and called, “Good afternoon.” Then turning back to his friend, Reid added, “I finally get to meet your friend.”

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 52:3 (NASB).

“We’ve already met, and you know it! I’ve been sitting out there tryin’ to figure out where I know you from. Golden. Mac, this is the guy that took Mush to the train! Shot six of our guys, including Charlie!” Thig exclaimed, getting louder as he spoke.

Mac said, “You sure? This guy’s a lawyer. He’s no marshal.”

“Yeah. I remember him. He was in the courtroom every day of the trial. Walked in with a cane that had an animal’s head on the top of it. Looked just like the one that Russ Hogan use to carry back in Minneapolis.”

Reid sat unmoving, the expression on his face didn’t change. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw movement. Reid turned his eyes that direction to see Matt running toward the house. Mac followed Reid’s gaze and also saw his oldest son coming their way.

“Well, here he comes,” Mac said loudly. Reid knew it was for Matt’s benefit.

When Matt saw his father, he slowed down to a walk, cautious of approaching the two men.

Reid spoke softly to Mac, “Please. Don’t do anything in front of the boy. He wants to love you.”

“There’s my boy. Come to your pa.” Mac put his arms out like he was going to give Matt a big hug.

Matt walked to his father and stopped a few feet in front of Mac. “Hi, Pa.”

Mac stepped forward and put an arm around the boy, pulling him close to his side and turned toward Reid. “See, we’re buddies.”

Ball spoke. “Britt, why don’t you get in the Ford, and you and I can go for a drive.”

“I don’t think I can do that, Thig,” Reid said calmly.

“Aw, sure you can. I’d hate for something to happen to you here.” Ball smiled at Matt.

Reid watched Ball for a moment, then said, “Matt, would you go inside and get the wheelchair?”

Mac allowed Matt to pull away from him, and the youth ran toward Reid. Reid nodded. “It’s okay. Just get me the chair.” Matt disappeared into the house.

Mac and Thig watched Reid without saying anything. Reid didn't take his eyes off them either.

Reid finally said, "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend."<sup>1</sup>

Mac stared at Reid unmoving, like he didn't understand what was being said, but Reid knew Mac understood. Reid was letting Mac know that he was hurt by the betrayal.

It took longer than it should have for Matt to return with the chair. Reid thought he probably had trouble turning it around or maybe he ran into something and had to get it untangled.

When Matt came out with the chair, he pushed it beside Reid and moved to stand in front of Reid the same way Chipeta did when she helped him to and from the chair. Matt put his hands out for Reid to grasp.

Reid looked at the boy a moment. He was large for his age and strong. But was he strong enough to do this? "Why don't you go get my cane? It's beside the bed," Reid told Matt.

When Matt went into the house, Mac said, "How long have you been using that?" Mac indicated the chair.

"Couple of weeks. My legs quit working," Reid told Mac.

"I'm sorry, Reid." Mac truly looked sorry.

But Reid didn't need anyone to feel sorry for him. He took what God gave, both the good and the bad, as God's will for his life. He was fine.

"Quit your blubbering, Mac! Get him over here, or I'll take care of him right here in front of the boy," Thig Ball said loudly.

Matt returned with the cane and helped Reid move to the wheelchair. Reid leaned heavily on both the cane and the youth as Matt strained with the movement. Reid dropped into the chair and got situated. Matt picked Reid's feet up to place them on the footrests.

Matt began pushing Reid toward the far side of the porch, but his father ran to catch up and shoved the boy away. "Go back in the house. I'll take him," Mac said.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 55:12-13.

Matt stopped, but he didn't go in the house.

"Hurry up! Come on!" Ball yelled.

"Go on, Matt. Do what your father says," Reid told him calmly.

Mac pushed Reid around the corner of the porch and headed for the thin ramp that would allow the chair to reach the ground.

"Take it slow, Mac. I don't want to fall on my face," Reid said.

Reid put his hands on the sides of the chair to grab the wooden seat below the cushion so that he wouldn't slide going down the ramp, something he did every time he rode the chair to the ground. But his right thumb hit something below the cushion.

He repositioned his hand so that his index finger was also between the cushion and the seat. He felt the object. It was his pocket pistol. Matt had realized something was wrong, and was giving Reid a way to defend himself.

Reid needed to reposition himself slightly to be able to get to it.

When the wheelchair hit the dirt, it got more difficult to push and Mac put a little muscle into pushing the chair. The initial jolt caused Reid to grunt. The cane slid from his lap and went under the chair.

Mac stopped pushing to reach for the cane. When Mac leaned over, Reid had the opportunity he needed. He leaned slightly, slipped the gun from under the cushion and pushed it behind his back. As they moved around the corner of the house and closer to the automobile, Reid put his hand behind his back, leaning sideways a little. He continued to push his hand further behind himself, covering the pistol as much as he could with the palm of his hand while trying to get his hand in position on the gun.

His back arched slightly, and Reid gave another grunt.

"Does it hurt?" Mac asked.

Reid replied, "All the time."

Reid looked up to see Ball standing at the bottom of the steps. Reid hadn't gotten the pistol into a good position yet. Now he wouldn't be able to with Ball watching him.

Matt came out the door, pointing Reid's rifle at Ball.

"No, Matt," Mac yelled. "Get back in the house."

“You get out of here,” eleven-year-old Matthew said sternly. His eyes narrow and focused hard on Thig Ball. Reid didn’t want Matt to get hurt, and he didn’t want Matt to shoot this guy either. He was too young to kill a man. It would haunt him for years.

But when Ball turned toward the youth, it gave Reid the opportunity to pull his pistol and fire. The bullet hit Ball as Reid yelled, “Get inside!”

Matt turned and ran as Ball hit the ground. But Reid knew Ball wasn’t dead. Ball raised his hand and fired a couple of shots toward the house.

Mac yelled, “No!” and started running for the house. Reid’s friend was now between him and the man on the ground. Reid couldn’t shoot again without the possibility of hitting Mac.

He waited for Mac to get out of the way, but Ball fired again. Mac jerked and stumbled but kept running toward the steps.

Thig Ball was now crawling under the porch. The steps offered protection.

Reid felt like a sitting duck. He couldn’t move, and he had no place to hide. If he tried to move the chair, he would have to drop his gun.

Reid tried to push his foot to the ground. It moved slightly. He pushed again, and it fell from the footrest. He slammed his foot harder against the ground and threw himself forward, the chair tumbling over backward just as Ball turned the gun in Reid’s direction.

Reid heard a shot and saw Ball jerk and go limp. Ball wasn’t moving now.

“Reid! Reid!” the voice called from behind the automobile. Reid saw his father pulling himself to an upright position against the back fender.

“I’m okay, Dad,” Reid replied. “Find Matt! Go find Matt!”

Travis moved up the steps and into the house calling Matt. The boy was in the middle of the sitting room next to his father. Mac had a bullet in him and was lying on the floor, propped against a chair. The injured man was looking at Travis, his gun pointed straight at the former marshal.

Matt stood up and moved toward Travis, hugging the old man around the chest. Travis put an arm around the boy and calmly turned his body to put himself between Mac and his son. The rifle was still in Travis’s hand. He raised it slowly to point toward Mac. That icy stare told Mac he needed to back down. Reid’s father had never looked at him like that before. Mac didn’t like the look in the former marshal’s eyes.

Travis let go of Matt. “Go check on Reid.”

The boy obeyed.

Travis reached down slowly and took the pistol by the barrel to move it out of Mac’s hand. The tone in his voice showed pity. “What happened, Mac? Why did ya ’ave ta kill those men?”

Mac could hear the disappointment in Reid’s father’s voice. This man had taught him how to shoot. He had taken him fishing as a boy. He had shown him how to skin a deer. Mac had been fourteen when his father died. This man had sat with him all night and offered him comfort. He had tried to talk to him at Amelia’s funeral. This man had been a federal marshal and raised his own children alone. Yet he still had time to take Mac into his life.

Mac now realized this man had tried to teach him his entire life. And all Mac could do now was hang his head in shame.

They heard another motorcar coming. Travis knew this would be Cleve and Luke, maybe Thomas too. Travis had heard the yelling as he and the boys were returning to the house. He had sent Joey, James, and Stephen for help. They had taken Bella with them.

Travis walked outside to see Matt on the ground beside Reid. Thomas jumped from the motorcar headed toward Reid at a run.

“Mac’s in the house,” Travis told Luke.

Cleve spotted the dead man under the porch and went to pull the body out.

Travis turned back toward his youngest son. Thomas was helping Reid back into the wheelchair. It didn’t look like he was hurt. “Thank you, Lord,” Travis said softly.

“Watch this, Thomas,” Reid said. He jerked his foot from the footrest again. Then he slid the other foot off too. Reid looked up and smiled at his father.

Luke came out the door and sat Mac on the steps, calling the doctor. Thomas smiled at Reid and patted his shoulder, then he moved to check Mac's bullet wound.

Matt stood beside Reid, watching his own father. "Why do men do these bad things?" Matt asked Reid.

"They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart,"<sup>1</sup> Reid replied.

Matt helped Reid move the wheelchair toward the porch. They stopped and watched as Thomas dressed Mac's wound. The bullet had gone completely through Mac's side. It wasn't a serious injury.

Mac said, "Matt, You were brave goin' up against Thig like that. It was kind of like David goin' up against Goliath."

Matt replied, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty.<sup>2</sup> If God is for us, who can be against us?"<sup>3</sup>

"You've taught him good," Mac said, looking to his longtime friend. "Reid, I'm either going to jail for a long time, or they're gonna hang me. Those children don't need a father like me. You take them. Give them your name. You be their father. That'll give the boys someone to be proud of. Will you do that for me?"

"Are you sure you want to give them up?" Reid would ask the question, but he wasn't going to press it. He and Chipeta had taken care of the children for eighteen months, and he felt like the children were his own already.

"You take them. You're already a better father to them than I ever was."

"Cleve, can you draw up the papers?" Reid asked.

"Sure," came the response. "We can sign before you go to trial."

Reid looked at Matt. There were tears running down Matt's face. Reid put an arm around him and asked, "If it's okay with you?"

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:18 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45b (ESV).

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:31b (ESV).

Matt nodded sadly. Reid was already his father but it still disappointed Matt that his own father didn't want him.

Reid added, "And, 'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" And you'll be my sons and daughters too." Reid squeezed Matt. "Can you forgive your father for what he's done? For not being here for you?"

Matt nodded sadly. "I guess."

"Can you tell him so? Can you tell him you forgive him?" Reid asked.

Matt looked at his father. He stared at Mac for a long time, then said, "Pa?" The boy didn't say anything else. He just walked over and gave his father a hug.

Mac put his arms around his oldest son, buried his face in the boy's chest and began to cry. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." That was all Mac could find to say.

When Mac let go of his son, Matt returned to Reid with tears in his eyes and grabbed Reid's arm tightly. He laid his head on Reid's shoulder. Reid put a hand on Matt and softly said, "That's good. You did good."

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:18.

## CHAPTER 50



Cleve took the adoption papers to the jail for McDaniel Piper to sign custody of his five children over to Reid and Chipeta Britt. The adoption would be final in a few months. Mac also signed the deed to his father-in-law's ranch over to Reid who would become trustee until Matt, James, and Stephen were old enough to take it. Marvin Wells had been managing the ranch for years and had taken full control since Ben Matthews's death. Reid would let him continue.

Thomas continued to work with Reid, and Reid improved slowly. Whatever Thomas was doing to Reid's back was helping. Reid wasn't in as much pain as he had been in the past, even though he wasn't moving around as well. Reid thought it was a good trade. He and Thomas were both hopeful he would continue to improve.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cleve drove to Reid's house with three passengers in the motorcar. Matt met them on the porch.

Cleve said, "Matt, this is Mr. Elshout, Mr. Batterton, and Mr. Warsh. Gentlemen, this is Reid's oldest son, Matthew."

"Well, good afternoon, young man," Barrett Batterton stuck his hand out toward Matt.

"Hi," Matt replied as he shook hands with Batterton.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Matthew," Daniel Elshout said as he offered his hand. "I've heard some mighty good things about you."

Matt smiled, then put his hand out toward Homer Warsh, who accepted it but said nothing.

Cleve asked, "Where's your dad?"

"Mom's getting him. Come on inside."

The three walked through the door as Reid was making his way into the sitting room. Chipeta helped Reid into a chair and leaned two crutches against the wall near him. Barrett Batterton and Homer Warsh stepped forward to shake Reid's hand and say hello to Chipeta. Reid said, "Hello," to Elshout as he gave a wave from across the room.

Matt stood next to his father. Warsh eyed the youth suspiciously. The children in the kitchen got into an argument, and Chipeta excused herself and left to quiet the girls who were squealing loudly. Thirteen-month-old Saamel came into the room and grabbed his father's legs. Matt reached down and picked the child up, placing him on Reid's lap. James and Stephen came in to see who was there. They spotted their Uncle Cleve and went to him with their hands outstretched, palms open. Cleve laid a piece of hard candy in each hand. The boys said, "Thanks," and ran from the room, returning to what they had been doing. Abigail came in and crawled into Cleve's lap, giving her uncle a great big noisy hug, got her piece of candy, and relaxed into his lap sucking on it noisily.

Batterton laughed at the activity, and Elshout commented every time another child came through the room. Warsh didn't seem amused. Chipeta returned, holding Jeannie's hand, and sat on the arm of the chair beside Reid. Esa ran through the room headed to join the other boys.

Batterton finally said, "Reid, we want you to know that your reports have been reviewed all the way to the top. Outstanding work. Again. The recommendations you made are being looked at seriously, with one exception. The judge in Summersville. He's being relieved of some of his responsibilities."

Reid had a questioning look on his face. "There were no recommendations for him. He was doing a good job."

Batterton smiled, "I know. Hear us out."

Walsh explained, "Mr. Britt, as you know the judge in Harris was never replaced after the last one retired. When was that?" Walsh turned to look at Cleve briefly, then turned back to Reid. "A little

over seven years ago? The district was split between Summersville and Cantwell. Well, there's been a population shift, and now redistricting is taking place. We're putting a district court back here in Harris. We'd like to appoint you judge."

Matt slowly smiled and asked, "That means no more traveling, right?" Then he looked to his father. Reid's eyes were closed. Matt was immediately concerned, "Dad?"

"I'm okay," Reid said, but he kept his eyes closed. A smile came to his face as he listened to God speak within his spirit: *"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.<sup>1</sup> So, friends, confirm God's invitation to you, his choice of you. Don't put it off; do it now. Do this, and you'll have your life on a firm footing, the streets paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."*<sup>3</sup>

"Well, not as much traveling," Batterton continued to explain. "There might be a little every once in a while."

Reid looked at his wife and tried to continue smiling. She smiled at him and put her arm around his shoulder. But the smile left Reid's face as he thought about the Spirit's last statement, "Much more will be asked." Then he spoke to his son, "So, what do you think?"

Matt replied, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."<sup>4</sup>

Reid replied, "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly."<sup>5</sup>

Matt looked to Homer Warsh and said, "He'll take it."

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> Colossians 4:6 (ESV).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 1:10–11 (MSG).

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:48b.

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 31:8–9.

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 19:15.

Six weeks later the entire family gathered in the courtroom in Harris. There had not been a trial held here in years. The town had continued using the building for town meetings, and the local judge occasionally held court here. But most of his business was conducted in the room next to his office.

This courtroom was rundown and dirty. Angus and Cleve, along with their older boys, repaired the broken gate and molding on the judge's bench. A few boards in the floor were replaced and hinges were reset on one of the doors. Then they threw out broken furnishings and replaced two window panes. Molly, Jenny, and some of the children cleaned and scrubbed until the woodwork shined.

The group then moved to what would become Reid's office. They washed and polished and gave the room a new coat of paint. Thomas had contacted his sons in Denver and had gotten Reid two brown leather cushioned high-backed swivel chairs. One to go behind the oak desk in the judge's chambers, and one for the courtroom.

Chipeta and the four youngest children sat on the front row with Travis and Joey while Jake Monroe, Nicholas Gatte, Barrett Batterton, and Daniel Elshout stood against the back wall with Luke. Sarah and Thomas sat on the front row, opposite side of the aisle with Stephen, James, and Matt. Angus, Molly, and their four children took another row. Cleve, Jenny, and five of their six children sat on two more rows. Ruth sat between her father, Marvin, and her mother. Naomi held Emma, who was just about to have her first birthday.

The Stewart's eldest sons, Joshua and Joseph, along with their wives and five children, sat on two more rows. They had come to deliver Reid's chairs and to set up an X-ray machine at the Harris clinic. They were teaching their father how to use the equipment and making sure he remembered how to interpret the X-rays. They had taken this opportunity to bring their families for an extended visit. Chloe, her husband, and two children had come also and sat on another row.

The editor of the *Harris Weekly* had a camera to photograph the event and was busy adjusting the equipment.

Thomas helped Reid stand and move past the partition that divided the gallery from the court floor, then he returned to his seat. Reid moved forward a few more steps and turned to look at his family. “Dad, come here. Look at this.”

Travis joined his youngest son and turned to look back into the room.

Reid said, “They are the children God has graciously given (his) servant.”<sup>1</sup> Imagine what this would look like if Mary, Dylan, and the rest of Sarah’s children were here.”

Travis looked at his family, and Reid could see the moisture in his father’s eyes.

Reid said, “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Travis turned to put a hand on top of Reid’s hand that held one of the walking sticks he was using. He said, “We’re all proud a ya. I know that ya will ‘consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict.’<sup>4</sup> God is gonna use ya in a mighty way, son.”

Matt came to Travis and took his hand. “Come on, Grandpa. Let’s go sit down. I think they’re ready to start.”

“Wait, Matt,” Reid said. “Dad, would you come hold the Bible for me.”

Travis smiled and nodded. The two men moved to stand in front of the judge’s bench.

Reid took time to set his feet firmly in place, putting his right hand on his father’s shoulder to steady himself. Travis took the walking sticks and passed them to the judge that had come from Golden to preside over the swearing in. Then the marshal handed Travis the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 33:5b.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 22:17a.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 17:7 (ESV).

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chronicles 19:6b.

Reid put his left hand on the Bible that his father held. He took a deep breath and smiled at his father. “I’m ready.” He let go of his father and raised his right hand.

“I, Reid Britt, do solemnly affirm that I will administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me as district judge under the Constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oath of Justices and Judges, Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School (June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 907; Pub. L. 101–650, title IV, § 404, Dec. 1, 1990, 104 Stat. 5124.), [www.law.cornell.edu.uscode/text/28/453](http://www.law.cornell.edu.uscode/text/28/453).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jean DeFreese Moore received her bachelors of fine arts degree from Louisiana Tech University. She spent most of her career in the media relations office of the athletic department at Louisiana Tech University where she was able to use her talent in desktop publishing and graphic design.

Jean's writing began in high school where she was awarded membership into Quill and Scroll, a national honor society for high school journalist. She continued her writing as a contributor to her hometown newspaper.

Jean researched and completed a collection of stories on the DeFreese family history dating as far back as pre-revolution in American history and into Europe pre-Reformation. She has now completed her second work of religious historical fiction. The first, *A Father's Love: Faith and Family*, and now the continuation of the story, *A Father's Love: Truth and Justice*, tell of a family holding to their faith in God as they navigate the struggles of life. A third part to the family's story is in the works: *A Father's Love: Joyous Hope*.

Jean was one of many contributing artists to paint the entry-hall mural at the Lincoln Parish Historical Museum housed in the Kidd-Davis Home built in 1886. She also served several years as set designer for a dance academy and has taught art at a private Christian school.

Jean is an accomplished artist. Her exhibit "The Life of Jesus in Acrylic Pour" was shown in four separate venues. This exhibit was scheduled to be a part of the showing, "Risen: An Easter Celebration," which opened the same week the Covid-19 lockdown hit her city.

The exhibit was quickly changed to an online exhibit and was viewed over 31K on social media and 1.2K in video form.

Jean now enjoys a full-time role as grandmother to seven and part-time as church secretary. She is also involved in her church's children's ministry and active in her local Painting with Prayer group and the in the Community Men's Shed.