

Chapter 11

The truck stopped, I woke up and peeked out through the cover on the truck bed. I was at a highway rest stop. I could see the blurred figure of the driver making his way to the public restroom. It was still dark outside. The night was and I could make out images through my squinted eyes by the light of full moon. I had no idea if I had been asleep for 30 minutes or 13 hours. I did the calculations in my head. I could still be in Texas or I could be somewhere like Alabama for all I knew.

I carefully climbed out of the pickup truck and looked at the license plate. The truck was from California. That was no help. There was a picnic area in a small ravine. Beyond that lie what seemed to be thick wooded area. I scampered through the parking lot, across the picnic area, up, down and then over the ravine. I scraped across a series of barbed wire fences and into the wooded area. There were no paths and the undergrowth was thick. It was a slow pace tramping through it, avoiding thorny bushes and sharp rocks. I continued moving without any thought or reasons as to why I was doing this, where I was running to or what I was running away from. I could only think about my next step, putting one foot in front of the other to keep moving.

I lost count of how many barbed wire fences I crossed and how many streams are tried to follow. For all I know I could have been walking in circles. I could tell day was beginning to break. I didn't even know what day it was. Was it Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday?

The wooded forest came to an abrupt stop at the edge of a pasture. The pasture was full of tall grass. It was as tall as my eyes. A gentle morning wind was blowing. For just a moment I

stood silently in awe watching the wind creating rippling waves across the pasture.

And then instantly, I broke into a run across the field. At the other end of the pasture was another wooded area. This area was not like the forest I had just emerged out of. It was an orchard of sorts. There were hundreds of trees planted in exact rows and columns no more than 15 feet high. I walked through the orchard noticing bushel baskets, ladders and buckets everywhere. At the back of the Orchard was a barn. I ran to the barn, unlatched the door and walked in. The barn had baskets full of peaches and bales of hay stacked to the ceiling. I walked to the very back to the barn, set down a bale of hay, and tried to catch my breath.

I was hungry and thirsty. Immediately to my left was a plastic bucket of peaches. I reached in and grabbed one and cradled it in both of my hands. It was the largest peach I'd ever seen and warm to the touch of my hands. I sunk my face into it and withdrew a large chunk of it in my mouth. Ice cold nectar burst into my throat and immediately cooled my body. I ravenously devoured the rest - peach nectar leaking over my face, all over my clothes and onto the ground. I gobbled it down to the pit and discarded the seed. I grabbed another and ate it, then grabbed for 3rd and ate that too. It was the most wonderful meal I'd ever had period

Sometimes during this forbidden feast, I became aware of an eerie squeaking noise happening outside of this barn. I moved ever so carefully to the crack in the door and peered through. There was a young girl just about my age sitting on a wooden box beneath one of the peach trees. She was playing what seemed to be a clarinet. She was playing it rather badly as a matter of fact. She had red hair-red like the rust colored earth packed

dirt beneath my feet in the barn. I squinted in efforts to make out more details. I struggled to obtain more details through my eyes- my myopic eyes than needed glasses so badly.

I shrugged my shoulders to myself. I was thinking clearly and calmly for the first time this week. I was just going over to sit in the hay a little bit longer to another peach or two. Have another peach or two and wait for the clarinet girl to go away. When she went away, I'd find the first phone I could and call somebody. I'd be back in my room in my own bed petting my dog and watching Beverly Hillbilly re-runs before the day was done. Just one more peach to eat...