

Chapter 18

The Old Man looked up at Angela, "Quickly child, go get the nurse!" Angela ran out the door and I followed. We ran back down the hallway to the front desk.

"Nurse, Nurse," exclaimed Angela trying to catch her breathe. "My grandmother. She's sitting upright in her bed and talking to us. My grandfather told me to run down here and get you."

"Simmer down, honey," said the floor nurse, "Now what room?"

"Room fifty-eight," answered Angela

"Fifty-Eight," echoed the nurse. She checked her folder and files for a few seconds and said, "Well...that's...not...possible."

"Come quick," motioned Angela to the nurse.

The nurse talked out from behind her desk and began a slow gallop down the hallway. When we got back to the room, The Old Man's wife was still talking to him. She saw me come back in the room. Her face lit up again, "Johnny. My Johnny, come hug your Mama, son!" She beacons to me with her arms.

Not knowing exactly what to do, I went to her. She embraced me. "Oh, Johnny. I've missed you so much!" She looked up that nurse and said, "Nurse! It's my Johnny!" She hugged me even more tightly.

The nurse called even more nurses. One of the nurses called some of the doctors. One of the doctors came with his bag. They were flashing lights in Angela's grandmother's eyes, taking her blood pressure, putting stethoscopes all over her, taking pulses and even sticking tongue depressors in her mouth.

They closed the privacy curtain, shuttering out our view. Angela and I on one side, The Old Man, his wife and medical staff on the other side.

I could hear her getting more and more excited saying things like "Oh, I'm just fine!", "Quit poking me with that!", "Just let me see my Johnny boy!", "Let me out of this bed." And "Walter, who are all these people and why am I here?"

Finally, I heard the doctor say, "Mr. Frazier, we need to sedate her. Her vital signs are off the chart right now."

There was a pause. I heard The Old Man say, "Better go ahead and do it then Doc, you know your trade better than I do." And it was only a few moments before the excited woman's voice fell silent again.

The Old Man peeked through the curtain barricade and spoke to us "You two better step out in the hallway a bit..."

We stepped out of the room. They stayed in for quite some time. Angela had a desk of cards that she had pillaged from somewhere. She taught me how to play twenty-one and gin while we waited.

Eventually, The Old Man and the medical people emerged from the room. They quickly walked down the hallway again paying no mind to us. We followed them in their fluorescent shadows on the linoleum floor. They went into an office and talked even more and longer this time. I watched through the office window. They seemed to be overly excited, using many hand gestures and at times getting up and stomping around the office. And after they had done this crazy ballet for what seemed like an eternity, they went up to the front desk and had The Old Man sign a bunch of forms and papers. Another man in a brown suit came in to join this conference. He seemed to be explaining everything to The Old Man. Every time brown suit man said something, The Old Man nodded and signed his name again to a piece of paper brown suit man pointed to.

When at last this all seemed to be finished, they all stood up and shook hands. The Old Man walked over to us and said, "Come on. We're done here for the day. Sun is already setting, and we've still got a long ride back home."

We followed him outside and he opened the truck door for us. We all got in. He started the truck and we pulled out on to the highway. After we had been driving for a few minutes Angela asked, "Paw-Paw, who was that man in the brown suit?"

"Lawyer for the state," replied the Old Man.

"What was he doing there?"

"Oh, he was making sure that I wasn't going to cause any legal problems for them, accuse them of doing something wrong or sue them for money."

"Well, are you?"

He took a deep breath, "No, child...no."

We drove another ten minutes or so. It was dark outside now. Angela spoke up again, "Paw-Paw, is Granny O.K. now? Is she well? What happened there today?"

The radio was on. There was country and western music playing on a distant station through static. I could hardly hear it over the hum of the tires on the highway. The Old Man turned off the radio and spoke. "The doctors call it a Sudden Awakening. Apparently, it's rare but not impossible. Clarisse has to stay there for a few more weeks while they do more tests on her. But if she continues to improve, she might get to come home in time enough to still eat a fresh peach off a tree or two. I'm going to have to make more trips to Jackson and work double hard in the orchard."

"We'll do whatever you need us to do, Paw-Paw," was Angela's reply.

"Doctor says there's a good farmer's market there in downtown Jackson. We may just come into Jackson every day or so with the peaches.

"Paw-Paw," begin Angela, "Did my Granny really think that David was my Daddy?"

The Old Man let out a heavy burdened sigh and said "Oh Goodness, child. Always a list of never-ending questions with you isn't it?"

She smiled and nodded.

"I'm tired baby girl. And I'm just as confused as you are. Let's get home, get some sleep and talk about it over breakfast in the morning."

"OK, Paw," she said yawning. She stretched her arms out and laid down on his lap.

She promptly fell asleep and slept the rest of the way back to the farm. Not a word was spoken between me and The Old Man. When we got to the farm, he pulled in and turned off the truck. He looked at her and said "I'm going to carry her in and put her to bed. You go in the kitchen and wait."

I got out of the truck, went into the house and waited in the kitchen. I looked at the clock over the stove. It was almost eleven p.m. The Old Man came into the kitchen and stared at me for what seemed like an eternity. "Well, son. It's late. Plum near midnight. No sense in trying to

get this all figured out tonight. You better go in there and get plenty of sleep tonight. You and I will talk in the morning."

"Yes sir, "I replied.

"And what a talk it will be, "he added.

I shuffled off to bed and was asleep in less than a minute.