

## Chapter 22

I moved carefully through the house to the porch door. I watched the two men in white shirts wheeling her to the house. When they got to the steps, they seemed uncertain whether to try to lift the wheelchair up on to the porch or try to lift her out of the chair to her feet.

After the initial hesitation, I saw her get up unassisted by herself and gently push the men to each side. The Old Man rushed to her and steadied her right arm, "There, there Clarisse. It's been a long time. Best take it slowly."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Walter. I'm fine. Let go of me. I can manage myself perfectly.

The Old Man let go of his wife, but stood only inches away from her side as she walked up on the porch and was suddenly rushed by the dogs by love and affection who until then had been lazily lying about the yard doing nothing.

"Get down you old hounds! Shoo now...shoo! I'll have time for you later, all I want to see now is My Johnny.

He dogs dispersed. She turned to The Old Man and said "Walter, where's Our Johnny?"

The Old Man seemed uncertain what to say but at that moment she looked through the screen door and saw me on the side. She drew in a long breathe of air, her eyes grew larger, she held out both of her arms, motioned for me and said, "Oh Johnny...there you are, come here to me, my darling boy!"

I knew I had a quick important decision to make. It was my now or never moment. I could turn around, run out the back door to the nearest phone, call my parents and resume my old life, or I could walk that screen door into that woman's arms and assume my new life and identity. In the span of ten seconds my mind changed directions a hundred times.

At long last, though, I took three steps forward, opened the door, a few more steps more towards her and felt her arms wrap around me lovingly.

"Oh Johnny Boy, so good to see you Son. I would have waited and waited forever. I knew you would come back to me!"

I wrapped my arms around her and said, "Hello. Happy to have you back here." I didn't address her by any title for I was unsure what I should call her.

Suddenly I was aware that Angela was there at our side, "Granny!" she said, "Oh Granny, you are awake and well."

Her grandmother relinquished on arm or her grip around me and pulled her granddaughter into our triple clutch. "Oh darling, darling," she said to Angela. "You are so beautiful and wonderful. I was there the whole time. I heard every word you said to me and felt every touch of your little hands while I was lying there paralyzed in that old smelly hospital."

She held us for what seemed like an eternity but finally, she stood up straight and let us go. "Merciful Heaven's!" she declared, "I got to go in and see my house. It's been so long. Come on you two, let get in there and have a look-see." She walked in, leaving Angela and myself momentarily on the porch looking at each other in awe.

Angela looked at me. I looked at her. She shrugged her shoulders at me. I shrugged my shoulder back at her. Hardly anything was making sense to me at this point. She thought I was her son come back to life. Who did she think Angela was? Did she know that Angela was her granddaughter, did she not see that both of us were twelve years old? It made absolutely to sense to me. I guess it only made sense to her in that mind and body that had laid dormant for a dozen years and in that soul, who had lost her only son in The Vietnam.

The only thing that made sense to me was that there seemed to be no yelling, screaming and arguing here. There just seemed to be love and peace.

Angela ribbed me in the side with her elbow and said, "Come On..." she paused and then said in a funny little voice, "Johnny...Boy" She winked at me and giggled.

She walked into the house. I followed. She didn't even seem to mind now about the sudden assumption of my identity and her grandmother's lapse in time perception. We entered the house. I left David Oliver out there on the porch and became Johnny Frazier as I walked into the house.