

# Praise for *Reaping the Whirlwind*

“Mystery buffs will find a full plate in this book: love affairs, intrigue, murder, and intellectual controversy—all portrayed against an accurate geographical backdrop with historical personages mingling with fictional characters. The result is that this book is an enjoyable means of learning about one of the world’s great trials, and it sounds a warning of the dangerous consequences of scientific theory being accepted as proven fact.”

—**Richard M. Cornelius, Ph.D.**, Bryan College Emeritus Professor of English and Scopes Trial specialist, Dayton, Tennessee

“Tightly written and fascinating.”

—**T. Suzanne Eller**, author of *Blood of the Fathers*

“Rosey’s style reminds me of Jan Karon’s *Mitford Series*.”

—**Norman Rohrer**, founder of The Christian Writer’s Guild

“In *Reaping the Whirlwind*, Dow has taken what might have been dry, historical facts and woven them into a tale of intrigue and obsession. Under her capable pen, gray areas become clearly defined, while dark, consistent lines become blurred and change shape as the wind blows. The characters, while obviously living in another day and time, are pleasant to observe; suspects abound, keeping readers guessing. An excellent and surprising first!”

—**Patti J. Nunn**, *Charlotte Austin Review*

“If you love colorful historical characters and a good mystery, you will love this intriguing and intellectually stimulating work.”

—**Diana Kirk**, best-selling author of *Songs of Isis*

“An interesting, sensitive, page-turning look into that time in history.”

—**Linda Hall**, author of *Katheryn’s Secret*

“Entertaining, educational, thought-provoking.”

—**Dan Reynolds**, Creationism Connection

# **Reaping the Whirlwind**

**A Trent Tyson Historical Mystery**

**Rosey Dow**

To my mother, whose unfailing belief in my writing spurred me on when I wondered if my dreams would ever come true.

# Acknowledgments

To Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis, who mentioned the Scopes Trial during a seminar and sparked the idea for this story.

To Dr. Richard Cornelius, who welcomed me into his treasure trove of artifacts and carefully preserved newspaper clippings, who answered all my questions and read this lengthy manuscript. Without you, the historical quality of this work would have been impossible.

And thank you to Morgan James Publishing who agreed to give *Reaping the Whirlwind* a breath of fresh air with a re-release and for their support in helping me share the story for more readers to enjoy.

# Author's Note

The 1925 case of *Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes* has often been called “The Trial of the Century.” Hundreds of publications, including a Pulitzer Prize historical study, have dealt with the trial. In the creative arts, the trial has also been the theme of many songs, plays, poems, a novel, and now this historical mystery. The following issues of the trial have influenced millions of Americans, especially in the realm of education: academic freedom, governmental authority vs. individual rights, separation of church and state, creation vs. evolution, the role of the media, and interrelationships of educators, students, tax-paying parents, and school boards.

Since the Scopes Evolution Trial had many bizarre elements, the reader is advised that the trial is an outstanding example of truth being stranger than fiction. I have been painstaking in my research and meticulous in my attempts at historical accuracy. The reader is assured, therefore, that trial references which might strike the reader as figments of the author's imagination can generally be accepted as historical facts with a couple of exceptions:

Walter F. Thomison, Dayton's doctor at that time, had a clinic near the corner of Market and Main. Because of a doctor's intimate involvement in the fiction part of this story, the author chose to use a fictional character, Dr. Adam St. Clair, instead. Dayton's constable at that time was replaced by Deputy Sheriff Trent Tyson.

Following is a list of people who were actually in Dayton at the time of this record:

William Bailey, owner of Bailey's Hardware  
Katherine “Kate” Bailey, William's wife  
Clifford Bailey, William's son and friend of John Scopes  
Dick Beamish, reporter with *Philadelphia Inquirer*  
James Benson, witness  
William Jennings Bryan, prosecution counsel  
Mary Bryan, Will's wife  
William Jennings Bryan Jr., prosecution counsel  
John W. Butler, drafter of the Butler Act  
Rev. Cartwright, preacher who opened court on Day One  
Clarence Darrow, defense counsel  
Ruby Darrow, Clarence's wife  
Jim “Red” Darwin, owner of Darwin's Mercantile  
Maggie Darwin, Red's wife  
W.F. Ferguson, Rhea County High School biology teacher  
John Godsey, Dayton attorney  
Bluch Harris, Sheriff of Rhea County  
Paul Henderson, reporter with *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*  
Arthur Garfield Hays, defense counsel  
Wallace C. Haggard, prosecution counsel  
Sue K. Hicks, prosecution counsel  
Herbert E. Hicks, prosecution counsel  
Jack Hudson, witness  
Philip Kinsey, reporter with *Chicago Tribune*  
Dudley Field Malone, defense counsel

Benjamin Gordon McKenzie, prosecution counsel  
J. Gordon McKenzie, prosecution counsel, Ben's son  
Harry Lewis Mencken, reporter with Baltimore's *Evening Sun*  
Maynard M. Metcalf, zoologist  
George Fort Milton, editor of *Chattanooga News*  
W.A. Moffit, pastor of First Baptist Church  
Howard Morgan, witness  
Luther "Luke" Morgan, banker and Howard's father  
John Randolph Neal, defense counsel  
Austin Peay, Governor of Tennessee  
Bill Perry, reporter with *Nashville Banner*  
Charles Francis Potter, Unitarian preacher  
George W. Rappleyea, manager of Cumberland Coal and Iron  
John Tate Raulston, circuit court judge  
Thurlow Reed, barber  
Kelso Rice, policeman from Chattanooga  
W.F. Roberson, juror  
Frank Earl Robinson, owner of Robinson's Drug Store  
Clarke Robinson, Earl's wife  
Wallace Robinson, Earl's son  
F. R. Rogers, citizen of Dayton  
Quin Ryan, radio announcer for WGN, Chicago  
John Thomas Scopes, defendant  
Thomas Scopes, John's father  
Harry Shelton, witness  
Doris Stevens, Malone's wife  
A. Thomas Stewart, District Attorney General  
Rev. A.C. Stribbling, pastor of Cumberland Presbyterian Church  
Walter White, superintendent of Rhea County schools  
Virgil Wilkey, barber  
Alvin York, WWI hero

All others are completely fictitious and have no resemblance to any person living or dead.  
Courtroom dialogue is based solely on the court record.

~ROSEY DOW

# Prologue

*I like to think of myself as a gardener. A gardener loves flowers.*

*If he must root out a misshapen plant or snip off a dead head, that doesn't mean he loves his beautiful blossoms less. It means he's a tidy gardener.*

*He's doing the landscape a favor. No one can blame him.*

# Chapter One

Dr. Adam St. Clair moved his queen across the chessboard and said, "Check."

Hunched over the small table, Deputy Sheriff Trent Tyson twisted his wedding band and studied the position of his king.

"C'mon, Doc," he complained. "We've only been at it for twenty minutes. Did you have to go for the jugular already?"

St. Clair chuckled. A heavy chin anchored his face to a wide body that had softened during middle age and sagged after that. "You can always forfeit."

"Not on your life! Just sit quiet a minute while I think." Tyson stroked his heavy black mustache and didn't speak again for three minutes.

It was a rainy Monday evening in the spring of '25. The men sat in a room full of lace and fragile fixtures—a spinster's parlor.

Usually, the men played chess at Tyson's house, but today St. Clair's office hours had run late, and he'd asked Tyson to come to the house he shared with his sister, Sadie, instead.

The phone jangled.

Dr. St. Clair grimaced. "I hope that's someone for Sadie. Today I had to talk Essie Caldwell out of an appendectomy. I put twenty stitches in a kid's split head and treated a burned face besides my regular appointments. I'm beat."

"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

St. Clair let out an irritated grunt.

"Sorry, Doc. I know you don't believe that rot. Neither do I. Don't know why I brought it up."

"What I need is a two-week fishing trip."

On the third ring, the doctor let out a frustrated sigh and slowly stood. The phone sat on a table three steps away. He picked up the base and pulled the cup receiver to his ear. "Dr. St. Clair." He listened a moment and turned to Tyson. "It's for you."

Tyson lurched to his feet. The edge of his cuff hit a shepherdess figurine, and it toppled onto the chessboard. He grabbed for it and missed. The board landed on the floor, and chess pieces scattered across the tile like an avalanche.

Thoroughly disgusted with himself, he picked up the phone's base and spoke into the mouthpiece. "Tyson here."

"Mr. Tyson, this is Nessa McGinty," a soprano voice said. "Mama told me you were there. I'm sorry to bother you."

His grip on the receiver tightened. "Is Lori okay?"

"Your daughter's fine. I'm in south Dayton. I can't get Mrs. Ida Johnson to answer her door. I'm afraid something may be wrong."

"Give me the address." He pulled a notebook from his shirt pocket and jotted it down. "I'll be there in five minutes. Wait for me on the porch." He let the cup drop into the cradle and spoke to the doctor, who was on his knees retrieving his chessmen. "Ida Johnson won't answer her door. Do you want to come with me?"

Gripping the edge of the table for support, St. Clair heaved himself to his feet. "I'd better come, yes. Miz Ida's had a bad heart for years."

Tyson reached into the front pocket of his jeans for his keys.

St. Clair said, “We’d better take both vehicles in case I have to stay late.” He strode to a side door. “I’ll fetch my bag from the office, and we’ll be off.”

Tyson finished replacing the chess pieces as Sadie stepped into the front room. A tiny woman with the bearing of a general, she had been her brother’s right hand for forty years. She was also the local midwife, with training as a druggist. St. Clair left most female complaints to her capable hands.

She held a thick volume, one finger marking a page.

“Good evening, Miss Sadie,” Tyson said, giving her his rakish smile. “Studying for your doctor’s degree?”

“You should do some reading yourself, Mr. Tyson,” Sadie said, smile wrinkles appearing around her eyes. She always talked to Tyson as though she were a school teacher advising a naughty boy.

“It would expand your mind.”

Tyson chuckled. “My head’s already big enough.”

The doctor reappeared and Sadie looked at his black case. “What’s happened, Adam?”

“We’ve got to check on Miz Ida,” he told her, locking the door. “Nessa just called to say she won’t answer her door.” He fetched Tyson’s trench coat and fedora from the closet.

“Should I come along?” Sadie asked.

“Maybe you should. Miz Ida likes you better than me.”

Each man hustled through the dark and drizzle toward his own Model T, with Sadie trailing her brother. Dr. St. Clair’s vehicle was practically new with an automatic starter. It burst into a pleasing chug-chug at the touch of a knob.

Tyson’s eight-year-old Lizzy always balked and squawked when it rained. On a night like this, she could have made a preacher cuss, and Trent Tyson was no preacher.

He opened the right-hand door—the only front door that worked—and reached across the passenger seat to set the spark and throttle levers. While Tyson pulled the choke wire with his left hand and worked the crank with his right, Dr. St. Clair left his flivver idling with Sadie inside. He hunched his neck down into his turned-up collar and joined the deputy.

“Miz Ida’s an elderly widow,” the doctor said, standing near Lizzy’s fender. “For the past twenty years, she’s had a heart condition that gives us a scare every few months. She has Nessa McGinty come in once a day to cook and wash up. As far as I know, Miz Ida hasn’t been outside her house in ten years.”

St. Clair shoved his hands into deep coat pockets. “Lately she’s been restless and depressed. I’m afraid she may have hurt herself or had a heart episode.” Tiny droplets made a pattern on his derby.

Finally, Lizzy roared to life and settled into her normal pop-rattle-bang with the motions to match. Tyson scuttled through the door to reset the spark and throttle. St. Clair hurried to his vehicle and turned on the lights.

Tyson waited for him to back out the drive, then pulled Lizzy away from the curb behind the doctor’s smart flivver. Before they’d reached the turn, he’d soaked his handkerchief and sleeve trying to keep the mist off the inside and the rain off the outside of his windshield so he could see.

The two automobiles moved a block west on Main Street. Just after the Hicks Brothers Law Office, they swung left onto Market Street, the central thoroughfare crossing Dayton from north to south. A few minutes later, Lizzy’s headlamps shone on slim Nessa McGinty huddled under the wide porch roof out of the rain. She wore a knitted cloche hat and a thin black coat. Her face looked chalky in the glaring light.

Ida Johnson's house was the old frame type with a wrap-around porch and peeling white paint. Shrubs hugged the front steps, and a hundred-year-old oak spread its branches across the yard. A street lamp shone through the tree to make weird swaying shadows on the house and lawn. The front steps to the porch had a loose gate that screeched back and forth in the whipping wind.

Both automobiles stopped on the street. Tyson angled his car toward the porch so the headlamps could light their way. Leaving Lizzy chugging, the trio walked in together.

"Do you know how we can get inside?" Tyson asked Nessa when they reached the shelter of the porch roof. "Does she have a key hidden somewhere?"

"The only key is inside the house," she said, her eyes glistening in the harsh light.

Tyson tried the door. It was solid. The only way to get in would be to splinter the door jamb. He moved down the porch, trying windows.

"That's Miss Ida's window," Nessa called. "I tapped on it, but she didn't answer."

Tyson continued around the front and latched the banging gate. When he turned the far corner, a gust drenched him. Light glowed around the edges of a drawn curtain, but he couldn't see anything inside. He banged on the sash and shouted loud and long.

No answer. He hustled back to the others.

"You may be able to get in by the inside cellar stairs," Nessa suggested. "They enter into the kitchen. The door's kept locked, but the latch is old and rusty."

Without bothering to answer, he quickstepped off the porch and hurried around the house. The cellar had a ground-level entrance covered by double doors.

Blackness rose around him like murky water as he eased into the opening. Mold and dust and furnace smoke made the air smell thick. He struck a match and held it high. The heat touched his fingers. He blew at the flame and dropped it in one jerky motion.

A scuffling noise behind him made his skin crawl.

The match had allowed him a glimpse of a set of rough stairs across the room. Moving blindly, he barked his shin, found the railing, and climbed the steps. At the top, he shoved a shoulder against the paneled door. It screeched and gave way.

He felt a switch beside the door and flooded the kitchen with light. A brass key hung on a hook beside the back door. He grabbed it and reached for the latch.

The doctor was first through the door. Calling Miss Ida's name, he hurried toward the front of the house. Nessa and Sadie followed him with Tyson on their heels.

Tyson glanced around. How did the old lady stand it? Less than a minute, and he already craved fresh air.

A frail body lay over a writing table by the window. Half a second behind the doctor, Nessa ran toward the old woman's limp body calling "Miss Ida!" then drew back, horrified. She let out a shrill gasp and both hands flew up to cover her cheeks.

Miss Ida lay with her arms at odd angles as though she'd been boxing with someone. A web of dried foam covered blue lips that drew back against her teeth in a ghastly smile.

Sadie turned Nessa around and urged her toward the door. "Let's wait in the kitchen, dear. The doctor will look at her and tell us what happened." She took the girl's hands. "You need a cup of hot, strong tea. Your fingers are like ice." They left the room, the murmur of Sadie's words slowly fading.

St. Clair straightened and shook his head.

"How long's she been gone, Doc?"

"I'd say two hours. Not more than three."

"Any guess about what killed her?"

“Look at her blue lips. I’d say it was her heart.” He glanced at Tyson. “I’ll call the undertaker.” He picked up the phone standing on the writing table.

Tyson shed his hat and coat and hung them from the back of a chair. His keen eyes started cataloging the room before St. Clair finished putting through the call.

Tyson hated loose ends. They ranked right up there with liars and loudmouthed women. At times like this, a skeptic inside his head woke up and whispered a series of *what-ifs* in his ear. He had to fit all the pieces into the puzzle or the skeptic wouldn’t go back to sleep. And Tyson wouldn’t sleep himself.

That pesky skeptic had banished him to Dayton six weeks ago because of a bootlegging case he couldn’t turn loose of.

He knelt to look under the sofa and let out a soundless chuckle. Here he was digging again. He hadn’t learned his lesson.

Nothing hid under Miss Ida’s sofa or the chairs. Not even dust.

The outer perimeter of the sitting room had nothing to offer Tyson’s probing eyes except bare tabletops and crocheted antimacassars.

St. Clair hung up the phone and turned away to pick up his bag.

Tyson moved to the writing table for a closer look at the dead woman. A moment later, he strode to the kitchen. Nessa sat at the table with Sadie and another woman whose matronly build and lined face showed that she’d lived half a century.

“Do you know Essie Caldwell, deputy?” Sadie introduced them. “She lives next door.”

“I’m Ida’s closest friend,” Essie said, looking distressed. She had a shrill, warbling voice and small, darting eyes.

Tyson acknowledged her presence with a curt nod and turned to Nessa. “Can you get me a damp piece of cotton wool? And a small glass bottle with a cork?”

Holding a steaming cup of tea in both hands, Nessa looked at him as if he’d lost his senses. He repeated his request.

Sadie said, “She’s upset, Deputy. And no wonder. I’ll get it for you.”

She reached into a cabinet and found a flat liniment bottle, clean and clear.

St. Clair strode in. “Ketcher’s on his way, Tyson. There’s nothing more for me to do here.” He stood beside Sadie and looked at Tyson. “Would you mind waiting for him? I need to make some notes in my office records about what happened tonight.”

“Sure thing, Doc,” Tyson said.

Essie turned in her chair to watch the doctor leave.

Sadie followed St. Clair to the door. “Oh, tell your mother I’ll be over to see her tomorrow, Nessa.”

“Of course, Miss Sadie.” She sent Sadie a weak smile and a limp-handed wave goodbye.

“Would you turn off my flivver, Doc?” Tyson asked. “She’s still running.”

“Will do.” Dr. St. Clair stepped into the night.

“When the undertaker leaves,” Tyson told the young woman, “I’ll drive you home.”

She nodded and sipped tea.

Essie sniffed into a handkerchief. “Poor Ida. I can’t believe she’s really gone.”

Returning to the living room, Tyson swabbed Miss Ida’s lips until the last traces of foam disappeared. Forcing the soggy cotton wad into the bottle’s narrow neck, he tried to cork it but the cork slipped and fell to the floor. He bent to retrieve it and stopped.

Beside the dead woman’s shoe lay a china tea cup in four pieces.

He finished corking the bottle and set it on the table. On hands and knees, he gathered up the china fragments and wrapped them in his handkerchief. He shoved both bottle and handkerchief into his overcoat pocket where it hung over the chair.

A moment later, Nessa watched him walk into the kitchen. Her cheeks had more color, but her eyes had lost their usual sparkle. She'd taken off her hat and her dark braid glinted red in the light.

"I'm sorry to bother you with questions now," he told her, "but it's part of police routine in a case like this."

"What happened to her?" she asked, looking directly at him.

"Doc said it was her heart." Tyson pulled out a chair and sat across from her.

He reached for his notebook and asked, "Does Miss Ida have any relatives that need to be notified?"

"She has a daughter in Chattanooga. Miss Ida and Bella never got along."

"Bella ran off and got married against her mother's wishes," Essie chimed in. "Ida never got over it."

"Do you know where to reach Bella?"

"Miss Ida has a letter box on her writing table," Nessa told him.

"Bella's address is sure to be in it. Her name's Smith, Bella Smith."

"Who had a key to the house?"

Nessa turned to look at the hook beside the door. "That's the only key there is."

"She have a fat bank account? How could she afford a maid?"

Nessa shrugged and touched her full mouth. "I don't know. We never talked about money."

"She had some investments," Essie said, "from her husband's retirement or something."

"He work in Dayton?"

The neighbor woman answered again. "Cumberland Coal. He was a manager for thirty years. Right steady James was, according to Ida. He was real careful with his money."

She would have gone on, but Tyson cut her off. "How long have you worked here, Nessa?"

"Five years, but I don't consider this a job. Miss Ida was more like family to me. She was a lonely old soul that no one cared about." Tears filled her eyes. She blinked and looked away.

"I cared about her," Essie said touching Nessa's hand. "I used to come over for tea three or four times a week. Sometimes we cut out quilt blocks, and sometimes we just talked."

She rambled on, "We both have rheumatism. But Ida didn't have my pleurisy or fainting spells. Lumbago's what gave her the most trouble, if you ask me."

He made a note. "If that's the only key, what if Miss Ida was sick and couldn't get to the door?"

Nessa said, "She'd take the key to her room. I'd tap on the window, and she'd hand it to me." Her blue eyes moved to Tyson. "You have to understand. She was old and . . . a little odd. She even kept her doors locked against Elmer ever since he accidentally killed her rose bush with too much fertilizer."

"Elmer?" he interrupted, jotting something down.

Essie answered. "Elmer Buntley. He lives in a shack behind the post office. He does gardening in summer and odd jobs in winter for a dozen people. You must have seen him around. He wears a brown leather cap with flaps over the ears, and a green plaid coat."

"Elmer never came into the house, then?"

Nessa studied the table, her lips pulled in.

Tyson waited.

“I felt sorry for him,” the girl said. “If Miss Ida was taking a nap, I’d sometimes let Elmer in for a hot cup of coffee. I didn’t have the heart to see him working in the cold and damp without giving him something.”

“Did Elmer come inside today?”

She nodded. “He cut some spearmint for us.”

“And you made tea with it.”

“Yes, I had a cup and left the rest for Miss Ida. Today was Miss Ida’s first cup of spearmint this year. She was enjoying it when I left her.”

Essie nodded. “She loved fresh spearmint.”

Tyson’s eye caught a bit of green on the counter. “Is that some of it?”

Nessa stood and peered at it. “That’s not spearmint. I don’t know what it is. It wasn’t here when I left at four-thirty.”

Tyson joined her for a better look. Five four-inch sprigs lay in a matted lump beside a china cup on the counter. “Do you know where there’s an envelope?”

“In the desk. I’ll get it.” A minute later, she handed him one.

Tyson scooped the plant inside and folded it closed. “It’s probably not important,” he said, “but it won’t hurt to save it just in case.” He returned to the table, and Nessa sank into her seat.

She rubbed her eyes with the heels of her hands.

“How did Miss Ida feel today? Was she depressed? Anxious?”

“She hasn’t been steady on her feet since last winter,” Nessa told Tyson. “She managed to get around the house, but she couldn’t stand up to cook or anything. Today, she was a little cranky, but that’s nothing new.”

“You left when?”

“I came at three to make Miss Ida a soft-boiled egg and a piece of toast like I always do. I washed up and left at four-thirty.”

“Why did you come back?”

“I forgot my purse.” She glanced around the tidy kitchen. “There it is beside the bread box.”

A loud knock shook the door. Tyson let in the undertaker and his son. They looked as tall and wide and flat as a rugged barn door. The younger man carried a collapsing stretcher and a white sheet.

They laid Miss Ida out, wrapped her up, and had her in their horse-drawn hearse in minutes.

Tyson had shrugged into his coat, ready to leave, when a lacy paper on the writing table caught his eye. Looking closer, he saw that Miss Ida’s head had been lying on an unfinished letter dated that day:

Dear Alice,

I can’t wait to see you when you come in June. I’ve been saving something special.

He folded the page and stuck it into his shirt pocket. Near the lamp was the wooden letter box Nessa had mentioned. Lifting the hinged lid, he looked through the stack of mail inside and chose an envelope to take along.

“Who’s Alice?” he asked, wedging a chair against the cellar door.

Smelling of liniment, Essie stood near him. “Alice is Ida’s favorite niece, in Chicago.”

He turned out the lights and locked the door. Essie trudged across the yard to her house, a two-story building with yellow light streaming from an upstairs window facing the driveway.

Nessa walked with Tyson to the car, her arms tight against her middle in the damp chill. He opened the passenger door, set the spark and throttle, and reached for the crank. Nessa climbed inside as he stepped to the front of the car.

*You're way off the beam this time.* He scolded the skeptic and gave the handle a twirl. The old lady was locked in with the only key hanging inside the house. And suicide is out.

Besides, only an inhuman fiend would knock off a harmless old lady. In Chicago or New York, he'd consider it. But in Dayton?

The skeptic wasn't buying it. Two or three pieces still didn't fit.

## Chapter Two

Leaving Front Street, Tyson turned north on Market. He strained forward through the open window to wipe the windshield, and a gust sent his hat flying into the back seat. Rain doused him, and cold water trickled down his collar.

He clenched his teeth and smacked the steering wheel. "Someday I'm going to get a set of windshield wipers and an automatic starter." He'd been making himself the same promise for five years.

Nessa looked over at him and raised her voice above Lizzy's racket. "Sounds to me like you should get a new car."

He grinned. "Lizzy's part of the family. I couldn't bear to part with the old girl." He glanced at Nessa. "I don't see you around the house much. You have a regular job?"

"I clean for the St. Clair's, the Robinson's, and a few others." She snugged her hat down in the back. It covered her forehead down to the top of her pert nose. "I wanted to go to college, but when Dad died we couldn't afford it. His pension barely covers the mortgage. I have to help Mama make ends meet."

"Too bad you can't get more boarders. The house is big enough."

"Dayton's not exactly a booming town," she called back. "There used to be lots of people and all kinds of attractions, but when the mine started wearing out, Dayton did too. There's talk the mine's going to shut down. If it does, I don't know what we'll do."

He wiped the windshield yet another time as they pattered past Darwin's General Mercantile and Bailey's Hardware. The store windows reflected Lizzy's lights and matched the black glare of wet pavement.

"What do you know about Bella Smith?"

"I've only met her a couple of times. She smokes long cigarettes, wears flimsy clothes, and smears on the face paint. Her daughter's a flapper, too. They come to see Miss Ida once or twice a year. Bella ran off with some city fellow twenty years ago. Miss Ida hasn't had much to do with her since then. Even when Bella's marriage broke up, she didn't come back."

"When's the last time Bella came to Dayton?"

"The last I saw her was at the state fair almost a year ago."

He refastened the top button of his overcoat. "You can't blame her. After living in Chattanooga, Dayton takes some getting used to."

"You should make some friends." Nessa glanced at him. "You've been here six weeks, and you still haven't come to church to meet anyone."

Tyson grimaced. "Dr. St. Clair and I play chess every Monday. I enjoy talking to him. He has some fascinating ideas."

Her voice became sarcastic. "I know—Darwinism and all that."

"You ever read Darwin's book?"

"Sure. I dated a college guy a while back, and he lent it to me."

"What did you think?"

"I ditched him. I'm not interested in any evolutionist." As an afterthought, she added, "It was no great loss. The poor guy had two strikes against him. He had a mustache."

Tyson twitched the bristles above his upper lip. Nessa McGinty looked like an innocent kid, but she sure knew how to take the wind out of a guy's sails. They drove the rest of the way in silence.

McGinty's Boardinghouse stood on the southwest corner of Fourth Avenue and Market, a sprawling clapboard structure with a wide front porch holding three rocking chairs. The landlady had half a dozen rooms for rent on the second floor. Tyson rented a two-room suite at the front.

The temperature had fallen ten degrees by the time Lizzy pulled into the driveway. With a quick goodbye, Nessa hopped out and headed for the back door and the family apartment. Wet, weary and disgruntled, Tyson bedded down the Model T and headed for the front door—the boarder's entrance.

A wide, dimly lit hall cut the house in half, with a staircase facing the door along its right wall. He hung his coat in the front closet and dropped his fedora on the shelf. He turned on a lamp on the hall table and drew an envelope from his shirt pocket.

Jiggling the phone cradle, he said, "Mabel?" and waited. A moment later he went on, "See if you can find a number for Bella Smith in Chattanooga, will you? Call me back when you get her."

He leaned against green-striped wallpaper, mulling over the events of the evening. What was it that bothered him about the old woman's death? He couldn't put a name to it.

The phone rang and he grabbed it.

"Here's your party, Deputy," a thin voice said.

"Thanks, Mabel." A click. "Mrs. Smith?"

"Yes?" She sounded as though she was chewing gum.

He gave her the news quickly and succinctly without voicing his suspicions.

"I'll be up tomorrow or the next day," she murmured. "I've got a job. I'll have to get off."

"Let me know when, and I'll open the house for you." He gave her the office number and broke the connection, relieved that she'd taken his call so calmly. Hysterical females made him nervous.

He turned out the light and took the stairs three at a time. It was close to ten, and he was beat.

His tiny sitting room was dark, lit only by the dim glow of a night light in the bedroom. He headed toward the light and leaned over the trundle bed beside his own.

Lori, the darling of his heart, lay with her fluffy curls across the pillow, her face so like Carrie's that he felt a stab in his middle. One pudgy hand lay beside her cheek, the other one—the shriveled, disfigured one—lay on the quilt. He lifted the cover and eased both her arms under it.

Five years ago, his wife had died in a hail of bullets on a street corner in Chattanooga, a casualty in a gang war she knew nothing about. Trent was left with an eight-week-old baby to care for. Six months later an orthopedic specialist told him Lori had a birth defect. Her left arm would never grow.

The little girl stirred and squinted up at him. "Hi, Daddy," she mumbled. "You came home."

"Yes, Chicky." He kissed her forehead. "Go to sleep."

She wrinkled her nose. "You smell good."

He smiled softly and touched her cheek. Her eyes drifted closed.

Tyson slipped off his shoes and emptied his pockets. Loose change and keys he placed on the dresser. Pulling a sheet of white paper from a drawer, he wrapped the items from Miss Ida's house, tied the bundle with string, and, holding it close to the faint light, addressed it to an old friend: Charlie Greene, Pathologist, Chattanooga Police Force.

He undressed in the darkness and slid under heavy blankets.

He had never dreamed he'd end up in a place like Dayton, alone, with a child to raise. Closing his eyes, he let his mind wander.

Trent Tyson had seen a lot of life since he enlisted in the army on his eighteenth birthday. Seven years later he landed in France to fight a war he had no interest in. When he got home he met Carrie, enrolled in the police academy, and got married all within one year.

Fifteen months later, Carrie was gone. He had a baby to raise, and a future to face when he'd rather crawl into the casket beside his wife.

Blotting out his pain, he focused on his career. He studied homicide investigation under a battle-scarred, street-smart warrior. The lieutenant's raw wisdom and keen insight reminded Tyson of his own father, a retired police officer who'd walked a beat for thirty years.

Before long, Tyson was a precinct detective with his sights on joining a homicide division. Another year or two on the Chattanooga force and he would have made it.

Six months ago, he and his partner received a big case assignment. After four months of late-night stakeouts, dangerous shadowing jobs, and hours of sifting through a haystack of facts to find a needle of evidence, they had a bootlegging boss dead to rights.

They celebrated with a steak lunch and then delivered the goods in a fifty-page report. The next day the police chief killed the case.

The crook happened to be an old crony of his.

When Tyson got the word he didn't speak for two hours. That night he stared at his bedroom ceiling until dawn then got up to pace. At eight o'clock he phoned the mayor and blew the whistle.

What had he gotten for his noble gesture? A few days later he stood in the police station clenching a yellow termination slip.

He stared at his wooden cubbyhole as though it had betrayed him, his cheek muscles working in and out, then he shoved the paper into his pocket without bothering to fold it. His years on the detective squad played out behind his eyes like a silent movie. He was twenty-nine years old, keen in mind and body, with success brushing his grasping fingertips.

His ambitions had just vaporized.

Without saying a word, Tyson shouldered past his partner and stormed outside. Bitter cold sucked the air from his lungs. He tucked his head down as though ready to charge and pulled in a ragged breath. If not for Prohibition he would have gotten stewed. He was tempted to do it anyway.

Instead, he fired up the Model T and drove aimlessly around Chattanooga until time to pick up Lori from the sitter's house. A week later he took a train north and stopped in every town along the route, looking for a job. If he had to be a custodian at the jailhouse, he'd take it. A little girl depended on him. In Dayton, Sheriff Bluch Harris's aging deputy wanted to retire, so Tyson got his job on the spot.

Tyson had knocked on fifty doors in Dayton trying to find someone who would board them and watch five-year-old Lori while he was out. Finally, he found McGinty's place. Heddie liked Lori from their first meeting. Too bad she disliked Lori's daddy.

He rolled over to his side on the creaky bed and pulled the quilt around his ears. His thoughts returned to Ida Johnson's sitting room, and he began to snore.

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"Wake up, Daddy! It's morning." Lori bounced on his chest, her face glowing. She giggled when he squinted at her, then she buried her face in his neck.

"Morning, Chicky." He patted her back and gave her a squeeze.

She sat up and announced, "Heddie's making pancakes."

"In that case, let's get downstairs before Micky eats them all."

He flung back the covers. She slid down to her trundle bed, still bouncing while he struggled with her buttons, and slipped a yellow dress over her head.

“Go down to the dining room. I’ll dress and be there in five minutes.”

She watched him with big eyes. “No, you won’t, Daddy. You have to shave.”

He rubbed his bristly chin. “Oh, yeah. Make that fifteen minutes.”

She trotted away, her empty sleeve swaying, and banged out the door. She was finishing her pancake when Tyson reached the dining room. A pink ribbon tied back her dark hair, the work of Nessa or Heddie. Lori thrived here.

She sat in a chair on a thick catalog next to Micky, Heddie’s fifteen-year-old son, a stout, likable lad. Micky didn’t look up. A six-inch stack of hot cakes had his full attention.

Heddie McGinty arrived with a steaming platter of pancakes when Tyson took his seat. Middle age hadn’t affected her much. She had the barest of smile wrinkles and glossy black hair, wavy and thick, pulled up into a French twist. She’d lived in America for forty years but still carried a touch of an Irish brogue.

Wearing a corduroy jumper, her braid lying forward over her shoulder, Nessa came into the room with her tiny mother, carrying a brown bottle and a small spoon—Lori’s tonic, Dr. St. Clair’s special blend. Nessa McGinty had an internal energy that put springs in her shoes.

Tyson took a second look at the girl’s bright eyes. She showed no lingering effects of last night’s shock. Suddenly aware that he was staring, he dug into his pancakes.

“Here, Lori. Open wide,” Nessa said to the little girl. When the brown liquid disappeared, she kissed the top of the child’s head and took a seat beside her. “Miss Sadie said she’ll try to visit you tomorrow,” she told Heddie, eyebrows raised. “I thought you two quarreled last week.”

“Just a little misunderstanding, me love. I called her last night and apologized.” She looked meaningfully at Tyson, her chin up. “A person should never be too good to admit he’s wrong.”

Tyson picked up his coffee cup, fighting irritation. That crack was directed at their last discussion. Opinionated Heddie had started in on the labor union crisis during supper. By eight o’clock Tyson had had enough and tried to ease out gracefully. Finally, he retreated to his room in self-defense.

Heddie adored Lori. That was enough to keep him here. Lately, he had to remind himself of that whenever Heddie started one of her tirades.

He turned to Nessa for a quick change of subject. “If you think of anything more about Mrs. Johnson, please let me know.”

“Wasn’t that a pity?” Heddie asked. “Poor Ida had such a lonely life.” She lifted the bacon platter and left the room.

Nessa smiled, crinkling the corners of her blue eyes. “Please don’t take Mama too seriously. She’s got a kind heart.”

Tyson stifled a wry comment.

“I like Heddie,” Lori piped up. “She’s taking me to Robinson’s yard this afternoon. They have a tire swing and monkey bars.”

Tyson reached for the pancakes. For all her faults and outdated opinions, Mrs. McGinty could cook like an angel.

He was finishing his fourth serving when someone knocked on the door.

Micky lurched from his chair to answer it.

“Hi!” a husky voice cried.

Wearing a red coat and matching babushka, Anna Joy Mullins stepped into view. Her wide mouth stretched into a loose-lipped grin; her almond eyes narrowed to slits. She lived next door with her widowed mother.

“Come in, Anna Joy,” Nessa called, smiling. “Would you like a pancake?”

“Mama made me scrambled eggs this morning,” she proudly replied, beaming.

“I’ll be there in a jiff,” Micky said. He gulped half a glass of milk and dropped his napkin on the table.

Anna Joy walked to school with Micky. She did household errands for an elderly lady who lived next to the school and returned with Micky on his lunch hour. She could have walked the two blocks alone, but her mother worried that her mentally-challenged daughter would try to cross a street without looking first.

Micky grabbed his book bag and coat and dashed out, Anna Joy trotting behind him.

Nessa’s mother finally sat down to her own breakfast.

A light double knock brought Nessa to her feet. “That’s the mailman. I’ll get it, Mama.” She returned with a narrow brown envelope and handed it to Heddie. “It’s the pension check.”

“Thank the good Lord,” Heddie said, tearing it open. “Cumberland Coal is so unreliable. They were late last month and the mortgage is due . . .” Her face blanched. She stared at the check. “They’ve cut it in half!” She gulped and fanned herself with the slip of paper. “Nessa, Nessa what are we going to do?”

Her daughter grabbed the check. “How can they do this to us?”

Trent sipped coffee. He wasn’t sure they remembered he was there. Maybe they didn’t want him to know their private affairs.

Nessa slumped against the back of her chair, staring at nothing. In a moment, she glanced at Tyson. “Three years ago, a support piling slipped and hit Dad in the head. He died instantly. His company gave us a full pension for him, just as though he’d worked thirty years and retired. It wasn’t as much as we were used to getting, but we’ve managed to scrape by. Now, this.”

A hopeless expression flickered across her face. An instant later, her chin came up, and she looked at Tyson. “How can two women earn eight hundred dollars? If the mortgage were paid off, we’d have plenty to live on.”

Lori slid out of her seat. “I’m going up for my picture book.”

“Come and give me a kiss, Chicky,” Tyson said. “I’ve got to go to work.” She hugged his neck, planted a wet smacker on his cheek, and skipped out.

Turning to the ladies, he said, “I’ll think about your problem today. Maybe I can come up with a good idea. We’ll talk about it tonight, all right?”

“Oh!” Nessa cried. “I’ve got to run across to Bailey’s!” She darted into the hall and opened the closet. “Bye, Mama. Bye . . . Trent.” The door banged after her.

A second later, Tyson looked out the window to see her flying form pause on the sidewalk then run across to Bailey’s Boardinghouse on the opposite corner.

Tyson swallowed the last of his coffee and strolled outside to crank Lizzy. She turned over on the second swing. One morning out of fifty she surprised him.

How could two women earn such a sum? Tyson made a hundred a month, good wages for a man. A woman couldn’t earn half that much, especially as unskilled as Nessa and Heddie were. He held the question at arm’s length and looked at it from different angles.

It was a puzzler.

The day was bright and cool with the fresh smell that follows rain. Trees in the courthouse yard showed the first signs of misty green.

Tyson stayed on Market Street until he reached the south side of town. Leaving Lizzy idling by the curb, he strode into the tiny post office, laid a quarter and his package on the counter, and swapped howdys with the lady clerk.

On his way out he almost tripped over the town vagrant, a scrawny man wearing a hat covered with stars and stripes—a relic from a long-forgotten Fourth of July parade. Dirt filled every crack and pit on the man’s face and hands, and his scraggly beard lay matted to a chicken-like neck. He gripped a broom.

“Watch out, Sammy,” Tyson said. “I almost clipped you.”

“Howdy, Deputy.” His voice sounded like a branch scraping a window pane. “See what I got me here?” He held open his tattered coat to show a kitten peeking from its inner pocket. The creature looked as unkempt as its owner. “I found her in a ditch this morning. Crying as though her little heart would break.” His breath was eighty-proof.

“That’s nice, Sammy.” Tyson tried to think up a line to free himself. Sammy would keep talking forever if a person let him.

Sammy’s ladder was a few rungs short, but—aside from his potent breath—he was harmless.

“I’m on my way to work,” Deputy Tyson told him with just the right amount of impatience in his voice. “See you later.” Tyson adjusted his hat and left the steps. Where did Sammy get the hooch?

It was an old question that no one would answer.

Whistling, the deputy returned to Lizzy, still doing her pop-rattle-bang dance.

“Hey, mister!” a boy called. “Got a nickel?”

Tyson slowed up when he saw a cluster of boys hustling his way.

The oldest youngster stood a fraction under five feet, with a shock of unruly hair that was a mixture of blond and red, mostly red. He wore a filthy overcoat that hung to his knees. His shrewd green eyes sized up Dayton’s new deputy.

Tyson had often seen the gang hanging around town when they should be in school. Sons of miners and their families lived in shotgun houses on the wrong side of the tracks. This was the first time they’d asked Tyson for money.

“Good morning, gentlemen.” Tyson paused six feet from his vehicle, his manner pleasant and relaxed. “Do you mind my asking what you need a nickel for?”

“The bakery sells day-old rolls for a penny,” the spokesman said. He tugged at his coat front but kept his eyes steadily on the deputy.

“As it happens, I’m on my way past there.” Tyson stepped toward Lizzy. “Care for a ride over?”

A ripple of pleasure swept the group. Deputy Tyson pulled open the door and slid behind the wheel. The boys piled in, five in the back seat and their spokesman in front.

“Why aren’t you fellows in school?” Tyson asked casually as they turned north.

“We don’t have proper clothes,” he replied in a matter-of-fact tone. “Mr. Rappelyea cut back Pa’s check again. Pa says we’ll have to leave the valley if things don’t pick up soon.”

An urchin in the back seat added, “My dad says the mine’s going bunked. We’s a-going to West Virginy this summer.”

The car lurched to a halt in front of Peal’s Bakery, and Tyson dug into his pants pocket for a quarter. He lipped it to the biggest boy.

“Here. Get yourselves something hot to drink, too.”

A dozen eyes widened.

“Thanks, Deputy,” said the boy. He clutched the coin and pulled at the door handle. The next moment he turned to glare over the seat at his comrades.

On cue, a whisper of “Thank you’s” wafted toward Tyson. The boys tumbled out to the sidewalk.

“Hey, wait a minute,” Tyson called after the door slammed.

They gathered around the window.

“You fellows like to play baseball?”

The big boy shrugged. “We don’t have no ball or bat.”

“I’ve got both. How about a game Saturday afternoon at three . . . in the high school field?”

“Swell!” he said.

“Round up some more fellows. I’ll see you then.”

He pulled away from the curb, and the boys went into an excited huddle. Tyson grinned. Things were looking up.

## Chapter Three

Near the corner of Main and Market, Tyson stopped in front of Robinson's Drug Store beside the three-story Aqua Hotel. Again, he left Lizzy running. The old girl was so hard to crank, he hated to turn her off.

Narrow and deep, the drug store had glass counters down both sides. Along the walls stood glass-fronted cabinets stocked with Robinson's wares. Several round tables filled the center section next to a fully-equipped soda fountain. A wide sign—F.E. Robinson Co., The Rexall Store—hung on the back wall.

In an ad campaign several years before, Earl Robinson had called himself "The Hustling Druggist," a name that stuck. Robinson had been hustling all his life. Scarcely out of school, he had used the daily train to provide Daytonians with laundry service, fresh flowers, newspapers, and any special-order item no one else could locate. With his profits, he bought into a drug store, then went to pharmacy school to make the most of his investment.

The store smelled of coffee with a vague antiseptic aftertaste. Two men relaxed at a table, their faces half hidden by newspapers.

One of them glanced up, twitched his mustache, and muttered, "Morning, Deputy." The other simply caught Tyson's eye and nodded.

Giving a general hello, Tyson picked up a *Chattanooga Times* from the array of newspapers stacked beside the register.

"Howdy, Deputy," Robinson said. The druggist stood two inches shorter than Tyson. His easy grin made his chipmunk cheeks puff up. "What can I get you, Deputy? Coffee?" he asked, wiping his hands on the white apron covering his pudgy middle.

"Just a paper this morning, thanks." Tyson plunked a nickel onto the counter. "Say, you need any help in the store, Doc?" Folks had started calling him Doc after he got his pharmacist's degree.

Robinson shook his head. "I just hired me a fellow from the high school."

Tyson sketched a two-finger salute and turned back toward the door. "My flivver's running. I'll see you later."

"Have a good day!" the druggist called. A bell pinged when he opened the cash drawer.

Shoving through the door, Tyson came face to face with a lean fellow wearing round spectacles. Pulling up short, he said, "Good morning, Coach! How's life?"

John Scopes gulped. His cheeks were red spots, his words came in gasps. "I'm late. I'm down to five cigarettes . . . so I ran down to get a pack before school. The grocery didn't have my brand . . . I should have been at school ten minutes ago."

"I'll drive you over."

Scopes's pale eyes lit up. He looked more like a high school student than a teacher. "Thanks!" He dashed inside. The shy teacher boarded with the Bailey family on the opposite corner from McGinty's Boardinghouse.

Scopes's mild manners could be misleading. Last fall when a bully challenged him, Scopes did a fast-ball windup and hurled an eraser at the troublemaker's head. A direct hit. After that, no one dared defy the new teacher again.

Scopes dived into the car and slammed the door. Tyson set the throttle, and they shot ahead with a whoosh and bang.

"You're giving final exams now, aren't you?" Tyson asked.

“They’ll start Monday. I’m due to give a physics review in . . .” he pulled out his pocket watch, “half an hour. Mr. Ferguson is sick so I have to give the biology review, too.

“It’s tough having to review for a class you didn’t teach,” Scopes complained. “Mr. Ferguson left me his notes. I’ll have to do the best I can, I guess. Biology isn’t my field, but with Ferguson sick someone has to do the review. I guess I’m the goat.”

The moment Lizzy paused before the school, Scopes scooted out of the car. With a quick wave and “Thanks!” he sprinted across the expanse of lawn toward a side entrance.

Tyson turned around and set a course for the sheriff’s office behind the courthouse. This was day number thirty-two as Harris’s deputy.

On day one, Harris had pointed to the front desk. “That one’s yours, Tyson. You mind the door and the phone. I hope you know how to keep yourself occupied. The most we ever get around here is a traffic ticket or a vagrant.”

He chuckled deep in his chest. “A vagrant. Sammy Buntley. He’s our guest ever’ month or so. He stays drunk most of the time, but I can’t figure out where he’s gettin’ the stuff. He doesn’t have the brains to run a still.”

He paced to a second desk about ten feet behind Tyson’s and off to the left. “Dayton’s been dry since nineteen-aught-three. Prohibition don’t mean a thing to us. We’re used to it.” He picked up a folded copy of the *Chattanooga News-Free Press*, dropped his bulk into a squeaky metal chair, and flipped open the paper.

Tyson had dropped his hat on a wall peg and looked around. Besides the desks, the office consisted of a single filing cabinet, a closet, and a trash can. A thick door with a small barred window divided the right wall in half: the Rhea County Jail.

For thirty-one days he’d twiddled his thumbs in the office or strolled Dayton’s streets looking for someone to shoot the breeze with and kill some time.

Turning onto Third Avenue, Tyson thought of Miss Ida’s passing. Maybe today would be different.

He eased Lizzy into a parking space beside the office entrance. A wide brick building with a single door and three windows in front, the sheriff’s office had a four-car parking lot across the face of the building and a hitching rail along its side. A motorcycle with a rusty back fender leaned across one parking space.

Tyson slid across the seat and slammed the door behind him.

As usual, his boss had arrived first.

Sheriff Bluch Harris looked like a bulldog wearing a suit and tie. He sat propped at his desk drinking coffee and reading the *Chattanooga Times*—the same paper Tyson carried under his arm.

“Morning, Sheriff. If I’d known you were buying a *Times*, I would have picked up a different paper.” He poured himself a cup of coffee from Harris’s thermos. It smelled strong, the way he liked it.

The big man grunted and turned a page. “You should-a saved your nickel. This is nothing but a propaganda page. There’s another article in here about the Butler Act.”

Sheriff Harris scanned the news sheet before him. “It says here, ‘Their pot shot at science will prove a boomerang.’”

Tyson set his coffee cup on the front desk. “Pot shot at science?”

“Yeah. The editor claims that outlawing evolution in the classroom keeps children from having a proper scientific education.”

Disgusted, the sheriff threw the paper to his desk. “He ought to be run out of town on a rail.”

Tyson didn't comment. The topic was too hot to touch. A month ago, Tennessee's legislature had approved Butler's bill outlawing evolution in Tennessee school rooms. The aftershock still rocked the nation. Six states had already introduced anti-evolution bills, but only two had adopted them—and even those dealt only with minor points. Tennessee was the first to make a felony of teaching evolution, including a mandatory fine.

Tempers ignited whenever the subject came up. Tyson had quickly learned to keep his opinions to himself.

Moving slow eyes to his deputy, Bluch eased back in his seat and clasped both hands behind his head, elbows out. "I heard you had some excitement last night."

"Dr. St. Clair and I found Miss Ida Johnson dead in her house. The doc said she had a bad heart."

Watching Tyson, Harris digested the information. "You got another idea?"

Tyson turned his chair to face Harris and sank into the seat.

The sheriff leaned forward, meaty hands folded around his coffee mug. "Let's hear what's on your mind."

"Miss Ida had a shell-shocked look on her face, Sheriff. It didn't seem natural to me. And white foam had dried on her lips. I swabbed her mouth and sent the cotton to Chattanooga to be tested."

Harris's dark eyebrows drew up. "You think she was poisoned?"

Tyson sipped coffee and set the cup down. He told Harris about the locked house and the unfinished letter.

Harris nodded. "Nobody would want to hurt Miz Ida. When I was a kid she used to give me cookies for raking her leaves." He leaned back, grabbed his paper, and shook it out.

Tyson reached for his own copy and opened to the editorial page. At ten minutes to nine, the phone rang. He swiped up the cup receiver. "Sheriff's office."

A shrill voice whined into his ear. "This is Bella Smith. I'll be coming up tomorrow around three."

"I'll meet you at the house," Tyson said.

She rang off and Tyson swiveled toward Harris who was still deep in his paper. "I believe I'll go back to the Johnson house and look around some more. Want to come along?"

Harris turned a page. "You've still got some doubts, don't you?" He shrugged. "Go ahead. I'll mind the store."

Tyson stepped outside. A warm breeze chased brilliant sunbeams across hedges and fields. He folded back Lizzy's canvas roof and snapped it down. A dozen buzzing honeybees hovered over the pink azalea bush next to the hitching rail.

When the engine roared to life, he hopped across to the driver's side of the car, flipped his fedora to the seat beside him, and took off. Five minutes later, Lizzy's tires crunched against the gravel in Miss Ida's driveway. Tyson grabbed his hat and pulled it down tight.

This time he entered the porch by the front steps where the gate had banged last night. Bending slightly forward, hands shading his eyes on the glass, he peered through the window on the front door. Through a crack between curtain panels, he could see a parlor furnished with a camel-backed sofa under a dust sheet and tasseled lampshades. Cluttered tables filled the corners. A thick coating of dust told him no one had used the room in years.

He sauntered around to the kitchen door and turned the key in the lock. Inside, the cellar door hung on weary hinges, its broken lock a sad reminder of the night before.

The dim, musty interior gave him an eerie feeling. The sitting room's heavy chairs seemed like hairy trolls crouched in the shadows, waiting to spring. A floorboard creaked under his foot, and the back of his neck tingled. Something felt wrong here. Something intangible yet very real.

He tried the door on the west wall and found a bedroom, a long, narrow affair with a popcorn quilt on the single bed and an antique chest of drawers beside the window. The room was barely wide enough to fit a ladder-back chair and night table beside the bed.

Pulling out his notebook, Tyson listed everything. A pincushion, brush, and mirror lay on top of the chest of drawers. Beside them, a manila prescription packet had "heart medicine" scrawled on it. A magnifying glass rested on a black Bible with yellowed pages.

He checked through the drawers: clothing and some letters tied with blue ribbon, the newest one dated twenty years ago. He looked under the bed and in the night table.

The grandfather clock in the dining room struck eleven as he started on the kitchen. Fifteen minutes later he tucked his notebook away and stepped into the sunshine.

"Hello!" a warbling voice called from across the drive. "Yoohoo!"

Essie Caldwell ran heavily across the adjoining yard. The wind tugged at the skirt of her house dress.

"I was afraid I'd miss you," she gasped, out of breath. "I've got to . . . catch my breath. Asthma, you know." She dabbed a handkerchief at her face. "Are you looking into Miss Ida's . . . umm . . . passing?"

"Ma'am, Miss Ida had a bad heart for years."

She waved him off. "I know that, Deputy. But if you're satisfied she died of heart trouble, why are you looking over her house?"

She had him there. He drew in a breath and tried to think up a pat answer that would put her questions to rest.

"No, don't say anything. I know police work is confidential and all that." She leaned a little closer and whispered, "I thought you ought to know that Miss Ida's daughter, Bella, came to see her the night before she died."

The woman looked directly into Trent's eyes, her expression conveying volumes as she raised her eyebrows and lowered her chin. "Bella stands to inherit, you know."

"Did you actually see Bella, Mrs. Caldwell?"

"She came in a motorcar. The noise woke me up around midnight. I saw her get out of the car and go into the house. My bedroom window faces the driveway and there was a moon that night."

He pulled out his notebook. "Would you spell your name and give me your full address?"

He wrote down her statement and continued to his car. When Bella arrived tomorrow she'd have to face some questions. He hoped she knew the right answers.

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Restless and irritable, Tyson paced around the office until noon then walked south to Robinson's for an ice-cream-sundae lunch. Charlie Greene wouldn't have the lab results on Miss Ida for at least two or three days. Tyson wished scientific wheels turned a little faster.

Shoving the matter aside, he thought about his landlady's dilemma and stopped at a few stores to ask if they needed a clerk. No one did.

At half past four Lizzy's war dance faded away, and she settled into her parking space at home. Tyson pulled up her roof in case of rain and headed inside the house. As always, he walked through the door with two things on his mind: Lori and supper. He tossed his hat into the closet and remembered he'd left his trench coat in the car. He shrugged. He'd get it in the morning.

“Hi, Daddy!” Lori called from the parlor. She and Nessa sat on the sofa with a wooden jigsaw puzzle of a barnyard before them on a table.

“Hi yourself, Chicky.” Tyson planted a kiss on top of her head.

“Hello, Nessa. I’ve been thinking about your problem.” He sat beside his daughter.

Nessa fit a cow’s head to its body and asked, “Did you come up with anything?”

“Sorry. I asked Darwin, Robinson, and Bailey if they needed any help in their stores.”

She laughed deep in her throat. “So, did I. The answers were all the same.” Sobering, she said, “I found Micky a couple of lawn-cutting jobs. Besides that, there are always strawberries to pick. Mama, Micky and I can work sunup to sundown. We’ll make a penny a quart.”

Tyson pulled out his notebook. “At that rate, each of you will have to pick two thousand quarts every day for two weeks. And no time off for Sunday.”

“Every penny does help. Micky will get a quarter for each lawn. That’s fifty cents a week for the summer . . . six dollars?”

Lori held up a puzzle piece shaped like a star. “Look, Daddy. Put this one in.”

“Let’s see.” Tyson smiled down at her. “The barn needs a door, don’t you think?”

She nodded and picked up another piece.

“I knocked on a few doors and applied for more cleaning jobs,” Nessa went on. “I’ve got three spring-cleaning assignments—a dollar a day. Mrs. Bailey will take at least three days to do her house. Every year she scrubs the ceiling in her attic and takes a needle to clean out the nail holes.” She grinned.

Tyson’s stomach gave a groan. “What’s for supper? I’m starved.”

“Chicken and dumplings.”

“Too bad your mother can’t bottle her cooking. She’d make a fortune.”

Nessa sat up straight, her almond eyes wide. “That’s it! That’s the answer.”

“What?”

Lori looked from Nessa to Trent. She hopped up. “I’m going to see if supper’s ready,” she said and darted out.

“A lunch room,” Nessa said, cheeks turning pink. “We could start a lunch room. We’re only a block or two from town. Everyone knows how good Mama’s cooking is. At church suppers, her food’s always the first to go.”

“Where would you have it?” Tyson had his doubts about the practicality of the plan.

“Right here.” She scooted out the door calling, “Mama, listen to this!” leaving a stunned young man in her wake.

Tyson shook his head. That girl had more energy than a pack of huskies at feeding time.

At dinner, Nessa and her mother argued the lunchroom idea up and down. Tyson kept out of it. Lori watched the women like a spectator at a tennis match. Finally, Nessa won out.

Tyson grinned behind his glass of tea. Maybe Heddie had a weak spot after all.

Heddie said she had several tables around the house that she could bring downstairs. They’d take the long dining room table to the kitchen and replace it with several smaller ones.

“I’ve got some red gingham curtains packed away in the attic,” she added, warming to the idea. “I can rework them into tablecloths, and I’ll wash up my good china.”

“Oh, Micky,” Nessa said, “I almost forgot. You’re cutting grass for the Riesbeck and Harris families this summer. You’ll start as soon as the grass gets a little taller.”

He stared at her. “I wanted to play baseball this summer. The fellows have picked out teams already.”

“You’ll have time to play,” she told him. “Baseball doesn’t take every minute of every day, does it?”

“Speaking of baseball,” Tyson broke in, “I’m organizing a little sandlot ball on Saturday at three. I could use a hand. How about it, Micky?”

“Sure, Mr. Tyson.” The boy’s expression lightened.

“If everything goes right, I want to put together a team from those ragged kids on the street. To give them something to do, you know.”

“That’s a marvelous idea.” Nessa looked at Tyson, wonder in her expression.

He told them about a team he’d organized for street urchins: the Chattanooga Sluggers. “I don’t want to mess up your summer plans, Micky, but if you’d like to help me get the boys in shape, I’d appreciate it.”

Micky grew thoughtful.

“Think it over and let me know.”

“Yes, sir.” Micky dug into a fat dumpling.

The phone rang. Nessa threw down her napkin and hurried across the hall.

“Who could that be?” Heddie wondered. “And at supper time, too.”

Two minutes later, Nessa rushed into the room, her eyes glowing.

“That was Ben McKenzie, Miss Ida’s lawyer. He said he’ll be reading Miss Ida’s will after the funeral, and I should be present.”

“You?” Heddie’s eyebrows reached for her hairline.

“Know what this means, Mama?” Nessa wrapped long arms around her mother. “Miss Ida must have left me some money. They wouldn’t want me there otherwise, would they?”

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