

Family Edition

"Angels Walk With Me"

"A Walk In Heaven"

"The House of Kyle"

First Chapters



Angela Buck



Kim Halcomb

Family Edition

First chapters of:

“Angels Walk With Me”

“A Walk In Heaven”

“The House Of Kyle”

Purpose:

To provide an introduction to the above books and to be a means of testing the eBook editions of these books for compatibility to individual reading devices.

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Family Edition

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*Angels Walk
With Me*



Angela Buck

Angels Walk With Me

This book contains the complete text of the 1997 perfect bound paper back edition

CHAPTER ONE

The Darkest Hour

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven. Matthew 18:10

The darkest hour is just before the dawn. It was 4.00 A.M. All the horrible things I had experienced the last few months pounded me like a heavy hammer. How the devil tormented me, "See, I told you," he said, "you are not called to preach".

Those words pierced my whole being and never was I more sure than now, that I was not called to preach, or do anything else for God.

As the bus pulled out of the depot for home, I closed my eyes, and tried to shut out Satan's tormenting words, but couldn't. "You'll never do anything for God. You're a deluded woman". I wanted to stop my ears as he flooded my mind with such thoughts.

Believing those awful words, I literally shook with cold chills. All the things that were said about me at my home church came back to haunt me too, and I couldn't get any relief from the torment. Again, I thought how nice it would be to see an angel. Such thinking seemed foolish, but I was glad for any pleasant thoughts at this moment, no matter how ridiculous they seemed.

Suddenly the bus stopped in the middle of nowhere. It was still dark out as I looked through the window at the lonely stretch of highway. "That's odd," I thought. All the times I'd ridden on a bus before, it had never stopped except at designated places. Straining to see out the window, I could see a peculiar looking man standing there.

Then a strange and exciting feeling came over me as the bus driver opened the door and He climbed the steps.

As He walked down the aisle toward me, God's Presence drew very near. Then He sat down directly across from me and one seat ahead of me. I couldn't keep from staring at Him. His clothes were drab and worn but appeared to be immaculately clean and the Presence of God was so powerfully strong!

"Could this be an angel?" I thought, "It couldn't be." At that moment I felt as if something wonderful was about to happen. But the devil's presence was strong too.

"Some angel," I heard him say, "Just a halfwit that can't drive a car."

Then the man raised his hand, and shaking his finger seemingly toward the seat in front of him, Said sharply and with authority, "Satan, the Lord rebuke thee."

Soon the bus stopped again in the middle of nowhere and he stood up as if to get off. Everyone else on the bus appeared to be either asleep or unaware of the whole thing. But, at that moment, I felt a hand at the base of my neck, forcing my head up. And suddenly I was looking into a face that shined brighter than the noon day sun. A face completely void of lines and wrinkles that so characterize the faces of men, as the result of burdens, worries and hardships of life here on earth.

It was impossible to tell His age. There was not even a sign of aging. For aging came into this world when Adam sinned and there is no sin in heaven. His face was all glory and joy, and as I fixed my eyes upon that face, that same joy seemed to penetrate into my very being like liquid fire, burning away all sadness and gloom.

Then, he smiled! Oh for just one glimpse of such a smile from heaven. Truly eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it even begun to enter into our earthly hearts all that God has prepared for us in heaven.

No words can describe that smile for it came from the very throne room of glory. And the expression on his face clearly said without any words, "Everything is going to be alright, I am going to bless you." Then he walked toward the front of the bus, and when the driver opened the door he seemed to fade away, and the bus started up again as if the whole thing never happened. But when God says He's going to bless you, dear reader, He's going to bless you, and nothing this side of Heavens glory can stop it!

As daylight approached, and with the glory of that wonderful experience still lingering, my mind started to trace back over the years to the beginning, when Gods hand first touched me.

(1947, Eugene, Oregon two years old)

How can you understand someone except you've walked in their shoes? Can you understand a timid, scared two year old, hugging a dirty blanket and peering out from under an old bed into a cramped room? I could hear the crackling of smoking kindling in a wood stove only six feet from where I lay. Pieces of wood shavings mixed with dirt and dust covered the torn linoleum. My baby brother Ben, slept within arms length of me on a soiled blanket, his scrawny eleven month old body was deathly still.

Voices drifted from the small cluttered kitchen, then moved slowly toward me. A light flickered and I shuddered. Fearing everything, I quickly ducked back under the security of the bed.

"If that sh__ (referring to me) and that bast__ (referring to Ben) mess with my things again, I'll ...," Hiiee slammed her purse on the table and scowled. "I can't keep anything around those brats," she said, glancing around to see if we were within slapping range.

Even though sound asleep Ben seemed to sense what was coming, and he suddenly awoke and crawled into the corner behind mothers bed.

Then another boy, who from all appearance was from a complete opposite scene, came out of Hiee's room wearing crispy new clothes from Sears and Roebuck. Though only a year and half older than me, he seemed much taller as he stood there clutching a shiny red truck. Glancing over at him, Hiee's expression quickly softened. The cruel hatred she had for Ben and me, wasn't there for my older half brother.

She despised my father and seemed to enjoy the fact that Gene's father was some man in an army uniform. Although she wasn't sure which one, she spun her own stories, making him out to be a hero and horribly degrading Ben and I.

Completely unaware of the cruel sufferings of his younger siblings, Gene continued to stand there, carefully examining his truck with a happy look on his face. He was distant and untouchable and I dare not get too close, lest I feel the cruel sting of Hiee's heavy hand come down on my head or back.

(1948, three years old)

It was late morning, and steady rain pattered against the dirty window sills as I watched mother sitting at the table splashing another coat of bright red to her manicured hands. I was fascinated with her bleached hair that seemed to glitter so bright in spite of the dimly lit kitchen.

I was only three but something deep inside me silently cried, "Do you love me, mommy?"

But staring out the small window, outlined with dirt stained worn wood, mother's thoughts were far away from that cramped four room house that was so void of happiness and peace.

I too strained to see out, and it seemed a ray of light peeked out of the darkened sky and squeezed past the dusty window, beaming down on me. With child like hope I reached out my hand in vain to catch some of it.

Just then Ben, who was now two, began to cry. He wasn't yet old enough to know what the consequences would be, and without warning Hiiee reached over and slapped him. I winced at the sound of her hand on his head and tried to stay hid behind the stove. Instantly Ben began

to scream loudly. I pleadingly glanced over at mother but she went right on with her finger nails, unaware of it all.

Shadows were beginning to form in the late afternoon and my stomach told me I was hungry, but daring not to utter a word, I kept quiet. A big, angry hand, often laying blows to my head and back had taught me never to plead with my mouth, but my eyes would silently plead as do the eyes of so many hurting children who live in a harsh, cold world where people, preoccupied with their own burdens, will not hear.

The world was my enemy, and I believed it to be so, for I was told repeatedly that it was. I could hear the repetitions of Grandma Hiiee, "Your just no good, a good for nothing wretch." But the God who created me, no matter what anyone else thought of me, loved me as much as He loved the most beautiful child ever born.

Dirt and soot clogged my mouth and nose as I huddled under the bed as far against the wall as I could. I had to go to the bathroom but was too scared to come out. Looking up at broken springs in the bottom of the bed, I was fully aware that this was my only refuge. This, and withdrawing into my own mind. The latter becoming so

much a part of me that for years to come, I would greatly struggle to overcome it.

Finally I couldn't hold it anymore and soon a chill shook my body as I lay on the cold floor in wet clothes. But no one would care as long as I stayed out of the way. A long time seemed to pass and, though hungry, damp and cold, I fell into a fitful sleep.

I was crying uncontrollably and the more I cried, the more Hiiee hit me. After hitting me again and again I fell to the floor. Stumbling over trash on the floor, she looked at Ben and swore, "D___ you." His little body shook with fear as she raised her hand to hit him, and he scrambled as fast as he could to the corner behind the stove.

Her frustration mounted as she again turned toward me, and soon a blow to the back of my head numbed me. It appeared to be from a distance now that I watched her face, twisted and distorted come at me again. I could sense the hate, but how could I possibly understand it? Can a child understand when adults do not even understand why they hate?

Hearing a knock at the door, and fearing the visitor would hear my screams, Hiiee grabbed my neck with one hand and with the other covered my mouth and nose while mother stood at the door talking with a man. Time stood still at that moment! My chest felt like it was caving in and I could no longer breathe as mother continued talking with him. She didn't hate me, she just seemed to live in her own world.

"Please help me," my mind cried out as the room blackened and I became limp. Then suddenly, a strong unseen Hand took hold of the door, and quickly closed it, causing Hiiee to release her hold on my mouth. Air rapidly filled my lungs again. But, it would be weeks before I could move my jaw without much pain and even today, I am left with a reminder.

"Don't let them in," Grandma Hiiee shouted in a fearful voice as mother peeked out the door at two friendly looking ladies. "They're holy rollers. Once you let them in, you can never get rid of them. They just go on and on about their religion and hell." "Oh, horses a__ anyway," she added, and then the door shut as if to shut out God.

Truly that day, even as the famous painting portrays Jesus knocking at a wooden door in loving hope that

someone inside will open, the Savior stood knocking at our door. He wanted so much to come in and "set at liberty them that are bruised, and preach deliverance to the captives and to heal the broken in heart." But, His Spirit is gentle. He will not force His way into an unwilling heart.

"Come back," a soul cried in the distance, but it was too late, I could hear their feet on the gravel road as they slowly trod away and up to the main street never to return again.

"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matthew 23:37. These words Jesus so cried out, weeping with deep sorrow as He looked down upon Jerusalem from the mount of olives.

(1950, five years old)

I'll never forget the day Hiiee came home from my great grandma Mary's funeral. It seemed I had waited all winter for it to snow and that day big flakes fell on dirty sidewalks where children played, pounding each

other with snowballs. I stood at the window, with my face pressed firmly against the glass, watching with envy.

"Hiiee will be home soon," mother said, putting on more lipstick and smacking her lips in the mirror. She was restless, desperately reaching in vain to fill the unhappy void, and was anxious to go again where bright lights and men were.

Trembling when I heard the key turn in the lock, I stumbled backwards, tripping over the wood box and bumping my arm on the hot stove. I winced in pain but kept quiet as I saw Hiiee opening the door. Swearing and muttering under her breath she seemed to be the same old Hiiee.

But, then I saw big haunting eyes, red and swollen, staring back at me. Wearily she took a seat at the table, and slowly looked at mother.

"Do you think Grandma Mary went to heaven?" she then asked with teary eyes.

The longest silence followed. Finally, mother, with her voice quivering answered with a feeble, "Yes." Then, hesitating, as if a door to her heart opened for a brief

moment, and closed again, she added, "Yes of course!" and abruptly got up and walked away.

Soon, all was forgotten. But, I could not forget. It was the first time I'd heard the word "heaven" and it rang deep in my soul. This house was all I'd ever known before. How could I possibly even imagine a place filled with unspeakable beauty that I'd never ever seen? Yet a child can often see when adults do not.

Closing my eyes I could clearly see a lush green meadow filled with big yellow daffodils. The sun shone very bright but didn't hurt my eyes. Three full rainbows with their seven distinct colors shone over the landscape. For a brief moment I was neither hungry nor thirsty and felt overwhelmingly happy and peaceful, for I was someplace else, far away from this house of sorrow and sadness.

Then a gentle loving Voice said to me, "Some day I will take you to this place and you will never know sorrow again."

(1956, Eugene, Oregon eleven years old)

Sometimes, the tunnels God allows us to go through get very long and dark before we see any light at the end. It was my eleventh birthday and when the phone rang that morning, I just knew it was my daddy wanting to see me again.

"He wants to pick you up tonight," mother said indifferently, as she hung up the phone and continued to put rollers in her bleached yellow hair. Then stopping, she studied every detail in the mirror, checking to see if the curls were even. Later she left with her boyfriend, engrossed in her own plans.

Hiiee had already gone to work at the little cafe about a mile away and as usual I was alone again. Forcing myself to put on my best dress, though soiled but not as shabby as the others, I sat down on the couch and waited.

Except for the crackling of the wood stove, the house was quiet. The sun was starting to go down and as shadows darkened objects, the much too familiar sense of deep loneliness and depression hovered over me like a heavy cloud, as if trying to swallow me up.

Finally, the sound of wheels grinding on the gravel road broke the silence and I could hear daddy's car come to

a sudden halt in the driveway. Defeated, I yanked my coat from a nail in the wall, and slowly went out to meet him.

The thick smell of alcohol hit me in the face as I opened the car door. "How're you doing, kid?," he said with slurred speech.

Wiping his sweaty palms on his pants leg, he reached over and patted my hand. Cringing in disgust, I wanted to draw back but couldn't. "Oh come on," he whined, "I'm your daddy."

It was all too easy for me to withdraw into my own world and soon I was imagining that I was a beautiful princess riding a white horse in a land far away.

After driving for some time, drinking and talking wild, he stopped at a light and reached for me. "Stop it, daddy, I'm not your girlfriend," I said as I pushed him away.

But I wasn't surprised. It was the same old thing. Whenever he picked me up, and after drinking for a while, he would mistake me for his girlfriend. "No daddy," I said, inching closer to the door.

Suddenly he swerved to miss a parked car, and cursed me, adding, "I'm a German and will kill you." Then after jabbering something unintelligible that was supposed to sound as if he was speaking German, he said, "I'm an Indian," and babbled more words. Finally ending with his favorite saying, he loudly proclaimed, "The big bird will never stop flying." I shook with fear, even though somewhat hardened to this repeated experience.

Finally spilling his cup of beer mixed with whiskey on his pants leg, he stomped on the brake, and the car jerked to a stop. "Get out!" he yelled.

I peered helplessly into the unfamiliar neighborhood as he cursed at me and yelled again, "Out!" Finally having no choice, I jumped out, and without glancing at me again, he sped off.

Shivering in the night air, and pulling my thin coat around me, I tried to shrug off the hurt and shame. As I watched headlights approach and then fade into the night, I knew he wouldn't be back.

The smell of hot cooked food drew my attention to the house behind me. Turning my head I could see through a big picture window, a family preparing to eat supper. Laughter riveted through the glass as they sat down to a

long table spread with a full course meal. Wood blazed in a stone fireplace in the background, and for a long torturous moment I stared into the warmth of those flames. (Can you possibly make known such a scene to one who has never known it?) My mouth watered as I watched them eat, and a deep sense of loneliness came over me as I stood there, alone in the dark.

"I don't belong in a family like that," I thought, "no one wants me."

No one wanted me. I was just a piece of dirty trash, to be trampled on by others, and especially by men. Reluctantly I turned my eyes away and trudged the long walk home, faintly remembering that I had turned eleven that day.

The following year did not go by quickly nor without sadness. Can you understand an eleven year old on her way to school trying desperately to hide beneath her torn, smelly clothes? Or understand the pain as her peers push past her, grabbing, pulling, mocking? Children can be very cruel.

But that year, the faithful Shepherd who loves us all the same, came knocking at our house again. "Would you

like to come to church this Sunday?" the elderly neighbor lady asked mother as she stood at the door.

"No," mother replied, indifferent, as if her thoughts were someplace else. But then pointing to me as I stood in the corner with my hands clenched behind my back and staring at the dirty ceiling, lost in my own imaginary world again, she said, "But she can go."

As Mrs. Hemmerly began to walk toward me, a gentle unseen Hand touched me and I was drawn back into reality. But the real world often hurts, and her clean neat appearance made me all too aware of who I was. Glancing down at my own skirt, soiled and worn, I felt humiliated, and my face turned red as I tried to loosen my too tight sweater which clung to an over developed chest. Being all too aware that this hovel of a house was the only place where I fit in, I didn't want to go anywhere, ever!

But God ordained it, and with worn unsightly clothes, hair chopped off uneven and a big cold sore protruding from the corner of my mouth, I sat in a little church the following Sunday. I don't know what others in that church thought of me but for the second time, His Presence came near to me. I did not know Him, but He

knew me, and everything about me, yet He loved me still. And I was powerfully drawn to that wonderful love.

The Holy Spirit was secretly at work, and for the next few weeks I waited each Sunday in anticipation for Mrs. Hemmerly. The drive to church seemed so short as she, with her face raptured in joy, told of the many wonderful things Jesus had done. Yet, each Sunday left me with a feeling of emptiness and despair. One day, she said sadly, "I can't take you home anymore, but you can go with them," pointing to some people in the church I didn't know at all.

I felt like an outsider as I rode in the back seat of a new station wagon with a strange family. The topic of their discussion was always where they would eat their Sunday dinner while my stomach growled with hunger. Then almost invariably their little girl, with her pretty dress and soft curls would proudly display some coins hid beneath her frilly pockets and declare, "I'm gonna buy me an ice cream sunday with a cherry on top!" It hurt to look at her new dress and I would quickly look away.

The ride was long and torturous and I always pretended to be looking out the window at something else while trying to hide the awful hurt inside me. Finally they

would say their hollow goodbyes, and leave me staring as they drove off.

A depression hovered over that cold, empty house on sundays more than any other day and followed me into every room. Mother was gone as usual and Grandma Hiiee was at the cafe. Gloom filled the kitchen as I studied the dirty dishes, piled in the sink, and the half empty cans left forgotten on the counters.

Looking for something to eat, I opened the refrigerator door, but bits of stale leftovers sickened me. Loneliness and insecurity mocked me as I sat down on a drab soiled couch and stared out the window at the gravel road that lead to our house.

But, one Sunday was different. Everyone was going to the altar. And though I understood very little I could feel someones gentle hand as He took hold of mine and led me to the front of the church where others were praying. As I was kneeling there, His light beamed down on me, and flooded me with joy unspeakable.

Oh glorious day it was! Darkness and gloom fled away, as He came into my soul and I was overwhelmed with happiness. Then He saturated me with His great love, and a beautiful cloud surrounded me and angels with long

shiny gowns were all around me, looking at me lovingly. The attention I received from them felt so good, being long depraved, and deep within, my spirit begged hard to stay there forever!

Suddenly, a man nudged me and I opened my eyes and looked around. Everyone had already left the altar. Half in a daze, with the glory of God still upon me, I slowly got up and was led back to my seat.

No day was more dark and dismal than that afternoon when they dropped me off. As I trudged toward that empty house there was a steady, dripping rain that soaked my worn out shoes, making my feet wet and uncomfortable. Nothing had changed. I had no reason to be happy while stepping over the garbage strewn across our muddy yard. But, for a reason I couldn't explain, I was bubbling over with happiness and joy unspeakable.

"Wake up," I screamed, shaking my baby brother. He wouldn't wake up so I ran to my older brother. "Wake up. We're dying, we're all dying."

"Get away," he said, "I'm not interested."

I had never heard the word leprosy before, nor did I know the spiritual meaning, but our bodies seemed to be half eaten away and covered with terrible sores.

Frantically I ran to mother and pulled at her sleeve, trying to find her hand. But it wasn't there. I screamed again, "Wake up, mother wake up!"

"Go back to bed," she muttered, still asleep, "I don't care."

Panicking, I ran throughout the house crying, and screaming "Help me, we're all dying."

Then a Voice said, "If you can find the door, you can get out and be saved."

Banging on the walls, I tried desperately to find the door. But, there seemed to be no door. Once again, I ran to mother and pleaded with her to wake up. A Voice said again, "Find the door."

Sobbing and desperate, I flung myself at the walls again until finally a narrow door appeared. Quickly, I squeezed through and the door closed again, shutting my family in a house full of death.

I awoke. It was just a dream, or was it?

Sometimes it gets darker and darker before the light shines again. Mrs. Hemmerly died and after three weeks nobody from the church came to pick me up anymore. Surrounded by everything but God, I soon forgot my wonderful experience.

My twelfth birthday had passed and three safety pins held my worn out bra together. Watching mother go out to eat with her boy friends and watching her come back with something nice made me aware that I too could get something nice if I knew what to do.

One day not long after that I looked up into the slobbery face of a middle aged man. Harsh lines showed through my heavily painted face and being well developed, he had no idea I was only twelve.

I tried hard to push him away as he came at me, pressing his wet lips that smelled of alcohol and sweat, against my face. Angry that I was trying to hinder him and breathing hard, he overpowered me.

Filled with shame, and with what innocence I had left now gone, I reached for the bottle of vodka on the table and drank until it deadened all sense of feeling. When I

awoke, he was gone and I was alone in the house. Fumbling in my purse for my comb and fighting back tears, I stumbled to a mirror.

"You are a wretched b____," I said to the face in the mirror that stared back at me, haunting me with a pain that only hard liquor could numb. And with the effects of the alcohol wearing off, I couldn't bear it, and somehow I had to get another drink.

"I'll do anything for a drink," I thought as I glanced around searching desperately for another bottle. But seeing there wasn't any, I left that house, but not the memory, and walking toward the main street, I held my head down in shame.

It was getting late but I knew I couldn't go home. The welfare office had already contacted mother twice concerning me. "If you don't make her go to school," they said, "We'll place her in a home that will."

Frustrated, for fear of losing her ADC check, she slammed the phone down. Glancing at me with a threatening look she said, "Do you think I care?"

Often she would be gone somewhere with a boyfriend when I came home anyway. And the house

would be locked up, forcing me to find shelter elsewhere. And so, as the sun began to set and businessmen, with hands tucked in their overcoats, hurried past me for home, I began to play out in my mind where I might spend the night.

(1960 Eugene, Oregon two years later)

Two years of street life, pleasing men just for a bottle and a place to sleep, will age and harden any young girl. And as I sat in a cheap tavern, my face told of a much older girl and I wasn't questioned about my age even though I was only fifteen. Soon it would be dark outside and I was anxious for a place to spend the night and, as always, another bottle to tide me over 'til morning.

Eyeing an older man I quickly moved over closer to him. Older men became an easy target as long as I was willing to satisfy their desires. He offered me a drink and I hastily spoke up, "Whiskey please." But while I tipped the glass to my mouth, he left without me.

It was close to midnight and the bartender dimmed the lights and began settling up the numerous tabs for the day. "One last drink," I thought downing the last drop and reluctantly I went out into the dark street. With my hair messed and my clothes smelly, I stumbled over to a well dressed man in a suit. "Get away, you slut," he muttered.

I felt dirty. It hurt because deep inside I didn't want to be this way, but I was well accustomed to rejection, and as men used me, I would learn to use them too. With bitter hatred, I swore as I spit at him, cursing, "Maybe you will all die."

Staggering over to the edge of an alley I crawled into a corner by a trash can and curled up. The alcohol did its job well and feeling no pain I fell asleep.

(1961, Stockton, California sixteen years old)

Clutching a half empty pint of vodka, I stumbled on the sidewalk, while people glanced at me as they hurriedly went on. Faces, cold and indifferent, lost in their own world, they never really saw me.

And I was lost in my own world too! Hugging my bottle like a child would his teddy bear I couldn't face the real world with a sober mind, it was too harsh and cruel. Grown people seemed the same as children who mocked me as a child with their cruel words and laughter. "Does anyone care?," the unwanted souls of the street cry out. "No one," I silently echoed back.

Another year had passed, and my head pounded as I stood on a street corner. By now I was well acquainted with a hangover headache. It was late morning in Stockton, California, but the sun shone too harshly as a neatly dressed lady smiled and said, "Would you like to come in?"

"Me? With my filthy clothes and unkempt hair?" I replied.

Straining my eyes, I peered into the door of a tiny storefront church. Though half in a daze, I truly thirsted for something, and went inside. But, then a man in a nice new suit met me and sneered, "Put out that cigarette," his voice, strict and uncaring. "And, get rid of that bottle," he said coldly.

"A bruised reed shall He (Jesus) not break," Matthew 12:20. How carefully and with what loving forethought Jesus would speak to the woman taken in

adultery, and to the Samaritan woman at the well who'd had five husbands, and many others who were bruised and bent. His choice words of comfort and hope would lift them up again. But man would handle the delicate and wounded strand too harshly and break it in two.

I felt like a piece of dirt, and because for a short moment I dared to open my heart a little, the rejection hurt deep. In my mind, I could hear the children mocking me again, and I quickly turned away. Stepping back out onto the sidewalk I gulped down a big swallow of whiskey, taking time to feel it burn as it went down, but it couldn't burn out the pain, nothing could.

Long shadows were forming on the side walk and street lights were turning on when I dropped the empty bottle on the sidewalk. I didn't care where I slept, the alley, the sidewalk, or wherever, but I couldn't make it through the night without another bottle.

Fluffing up my hair and leaning up against the side of a building, I watched for a man. Any man, as long as he had enough money to buy me a bottle. Numb to feelings except what alcohol did for me, I felt no shame nor pleasure as I made the usual gestures to men who passed by me.

I would do anything for a bottle, and twenty minutes later, with a middle aged man, I went into a musty motel room. Immediately, the man dropped his pants and went in the bathroom. Seeing my opportunity I grabbed them and went for his wallet, and pulling out a twenty dollar bill, I quickly headed for the door.

As I turned the knob, he grabbed me from behind and began hitting and cursing me until I fell to the floor. Then he did what he wanted as I lay there helpless. Finally, he got dressed and left.

Shaking and bruised I managed to pull myself onto the bed. As I lay there, the world got bigger and bigger, and I became smaller and smaller until it seemed I was just a tiny dot, lost and forgotten in the universe. I tried to hide within myself by curling up into a ball, like a sow bug when it has been disturbed, but it wouldn't work. Finally I fell into a fitful sleep.

When I awoke, it was still dark out and I reached up and turned on the light, but the darkness wouldn't go away. I needed a light much greater than a light bulb could give, yet I knew not where to find it. But, that Everlasting Light knew where I was and He loved me still.

When Jesus walked by, the people which sat in darkness saw a great light. Matthew 4:16.

But "much water had passed under the bridge", since that glorious Sunday when as an innocent and tender hearted eleven year old, Jesus flooded my soul with His great love.

(January 1964, Reno, Nev. eighteen years old)

A steel door slammed shut locking me in a padded cell again. All too aware that I would face the morning cold sober, I pounded on the door until my hands bled, but no one heard me. No one that is, but God. For even though the light that shone in my soul years before at that altar had long since gone out, He was even here in this cold dark cell.

When they led me the next day before a board of men and women, my mind would not function. "What is your name?" a voice asked.

Cold sober and shaking badly, voices blurred together and became like spiders climbing the walls, coming at me. Their legs grew more faces and they were all

hideously laughing at me. "Stop it!" I shouted, covering my ears, "Stop it!" But, they would not. Screaming, and begging them to stop, I fell into a heap on the floor.

Two days later sitting in the back seat of a state car with my hands cuffed behind me, I couldn't fully comprehend that I was on my way to the State Mental Hospital in Sparks, Nevada. The hospital was only twenty miles from where the Police had often picked me up as I staggered drunkenly on the streets of Reno. Yet it was an eternity for an eighteen year old who had reached the bottom and beyond. A horrible fear that this was the end of the line forever came over me. Yet Jesus had His wonderful hand upon me and nothing is beyond hope with Him.

It was the sixteenth of January, and Christmas decorations still hung in the streets. Outside the car window, fresh snow fell, partially covering dirty slush on the sidewalk. Passing by a store, a stuffed Santa Claus still sat in the window, as if mocking children whom he did not visit. It was a lingering reminder of a very happy time for some and a cruel and deeply sad time for others.

But Christmas had passed, and the dark month of January left many even more depressed. And spring could not come without finding some in a cold grave, their spirits

too crushed to live as the long loneliness of winter, adding to their many disappointments of the holidays, took its toll on their weak spirits.

(Oh God, come near and let your saving grace be known to them. Father of the fatherless, husband to the widows, put your loving arms around them and heal their hurts and stay their tears)

Corrie Ten Boome, after surviving a terrible concentration camp, said, "There is no prison so strong that God is not stronger and no hate so deep that God is not deeper still."

The driver of the car looked back at me with pity as we neared the opening to several long, rundown, faded white buildings that looked like death itself. But, what could she possibly know of my pain? After her day's work was over, she would go home to a nice home and family surrounded by warmth and laughter. We were in two different worlds. And no one could be in my world but me.

No amount of words can tell of the overpowering feeling of finality and hopelessness as a heavy steel door clanged shut, leaving me alone in a small, dark cell. I sobbed hysterically, and cried over and over, "I'm not crazy, I'm not crazy."

Finally, after a long time, I could cry no more and submitting to the surrounding darkness as it reached out and engulfed me, I slumped to the floor in a lifeless stupor. I was drowning beneath deep waters and who would help me? Reality faded into the background as my mind drew inward and formed its own shell of protection from the horrors of reality.

A Walk In Heaven



Angela Buck

“A Walk in Heaven”

CHAPTER ONE

A JOURNEY TO HEAVEN

After this, I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit. (Rev. 4:1-2)

I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the ‘God of all comfort’ was with me,
To lead me thru the tedious pathway to Heaven,
and train me for the life that awaits me there.

A beam of light came down toward me, moving me upward into the heavens. Suddenly the most wonderful feeling of being loved swept all through me, surrounding me in its powerful arms. All my disappointments, hurts, sorrows and trials seemed to fade away instantly like

sunshine after a storm. A white veil parted revealing images whose faces beamed with extreme happiness. I could hardly look at them for their brightness; there was no stress, worry, anxiety, pain or discomfort about them whatsoever. How I wished right then that this wondrous scene might never pass from me.

Suddenly a Voice said, “Soon the joy of this moment will be yours forever.”

On earth, happiness, shadowed with burdens, disappointments and apprehensions of unseen tomorrows are no more lasting than a rainbow fading before our eyes while we hurriedly gaze upon it. Its beauty was only meant for a moment in time, but beyond the imperfections of this life, lies the glories of Heaven.

Passing white clouds, we came to the pure river of life, as clear as crystal. (Revelation 22:1) An angel stood there with a bright robe in his arms. He reminded me of the angel I saw twenty years before while on a bus coming back from a revival in Arkansas.

Right then I could vividly recall the harsh trial I went through, and how I fell under its cruel whip. Hot tears of humiliation fell on my cheeks, and like a whipped puppy, I fled back to Kansas City in defeat. But the God of the discouraged and downcast, reached down His big hand to me.

The Greyhound Bus I was on stopped in the middle of nowhere and a strange man got on. Suddenly an unseen hand pulled my head upward and I was looking into a face that shined brighter than the noonday sun and a window

opened into my soul letting in all the light of heaven, lifting my spirit into a glorious Presence. His Voice was soothing, like the voice of many waters, and He said to me, “Everything will be alright.” And, dear reader, when God says everything will be alright, we can be sure, everything will be alright.

But, what was this robe the angel held in his arms? It was so bright I couldn’t look directly upon it? “It is your robe.” the angel said with kindness in his voice.

“Mine?” I questioned, “But, I cannot wear it. It’s too glorious.” Sensing that the robe’s worth had not so much to do with earthly value but with how faithful I’d been while in my trials on earth, I felt unworthy to wear such a robe.

“You cannot wear it now,” the angel said, “Your trials are purifying you and when they have completed their work in you, you shall wear it. Look,” he said, “It has your name on it.”

The angel held up one corner of the robe and I could see letters etched in pure gold. But the letters didn’t make any sense, and I said, “That’s not my name.”

The angel smiled reassuringly, “It is your new name, you cannot understand it’s meaning now. Wait until God is finished with you, then you will be able to understand the meaning of your new name, and you will wear it with great joy. (Revelation 2:17) And as you go from place to place in this eternal glory, others will greet you and say, “What is meaning of your new name,” and you will know how to answer because you have been made

wise through your sufferings and trials.”

I reached out my hand and felt the robe with my fingers and wanted so much to wear it, but thinking back on all the trials I had gone through, and all that I might yet face, I drew back in fear, and wondered if I could ever wear it.

“Do you know why your robe is so bright?” he asked

Glancing at the angel and then at the robe, I shook my head no.

“One day, you shall know why,” the angel said with a wide grin, and turning his face toward the clouds, he added, “Come, there is much for you to see.

The beam became brighter and raised me higher until we were surrounded in rich jewels, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires! And the gold, it was so smooth and shiny. I could only stare in utter amazement at the beauty. Seeing how I was making over it, the angel said, “This gold is of no value to God at all.”

“But, it would probably be worth millions on earth,” I argued.

“This gold is of no worth to God at all,” he repeated.

“You’re right,” I thought. “God could speak solid gold planets into existence if He wanted to.”

Looking at me with piercing eyes, the angel said, “You are worth far more than all this gold and all these jewels.”

“Me?” I shouted.

“Yes, you and all who love Him and have stayed true to Him through fierce trials. For the trial of your faith is much more precious to God than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.” (1Peter 1:7)

Suddenly, while trying to take in the meaning of what the angel just said, clouds parted and we seemed to be looking down into a little church in the sixteenth century.

At that instant a wicked sheriff stormed into the church demanding the pastor to give him the church’s treasury. “But this is a poor church,” the pastor insisted, “We have no money, no gold, no treasure, nothing at all of value.”

“I don’t believe you.” the sheriff demanded, “Show me the churches treasury or else.”

With a sigh of resignation the pastor said, “All right come tomorrow, and I will show you the churches richest treasure.”

The next morning when the sheriff appeared, the pastor opened the door into the sanctuary and said, “Here are the church’s treasures.”

The sheriff couldn’t believe his eyes. Standing there in that little room was a small band of battered men and women, young and old. Some with scars from the whip, some in thread bare clothes, weak in body, bent with years of toil and earthly sorrows, but who truly loved God with all their hearts.

Staring at them with greedy eyes, the Sheriff shook his head in disbelief, then turning abruptly he walked out, muttering something under his breath.

“To an earthly minded man, what he saw was of no value at all,” the angel said, “But to the God who holds His beloved children in the palm of His hands, those ragged nobodies were of more value to Him than all the gold and wealth in the whole universe.”

Right then, hearing those words, “You are of more value than all the wealth in the universe,” my mind traced back to years before when Jesus had come into my heart and how I still held my head down, feeling that everyone was better than me. A former street woman and alcoholic whom nobody wanted, it seemed I was less than nothing. Then one day while vacuuming my carpet, Jesus said to me, “If you were the daughter of the President, wouldn’t you think you were somebody?”

“Well, yes of course I would if I were the daughter of the President.” I quickly answered.

“Would you still hold your head down thinking everyone was better than you?” He said.

“Of course not. I’d know who I was,” I replied.

Then, he said something I’ll never forget. “You are the daughter of someone greater than the President. You are the daughter of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You are royalty. You are a chosen vessel and don’t you ever forget it!

We journeyed further, and came to a place of many crowns. I marveled at the many diamonds and rich jewels on them. Just then my eyes were quickly drawn to a particular crown. I couldn’t believe it! The diamonds on

this crown were so gorgeous, their sparkle seemed to throw beams of light that went all over Heaven.

“It’s yours,” the angel said with gladness.

“Is it really mine?” I asked.

“Remember those years in Kansas City when fiery trials raged against you so hard?” he said.

Strange, I could remember the parts where He helped me, the parts where He came to me, putting His strong arms around me, comforting me and whispering, “I am with you. Fear not.” But, I couldn’t seem to remember the pain of it, even though I tried hard to remember. It was like seeing myself in a fiery furnace, and clearly remembering Jesus coming to me in the hot flame, holding my hand, yet not being able to remember the intense heat of the flames.

Suddenly a Voice spoke, clear but calming, like a peaceful waterfall, “The former things shall not be remembered. And God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.” (Isaiah 65:17 & Rev.7:17)

“It was one of your hardest trials,” the angel whispered.

“Yes,” I admitted with my eyes still intently on that crown, feeling there was something more to it than what I could understand right now.

We came to a green meadow with flowers everywhere in vivid colors of red, yellow and blue, softly swaying in some invisible breeze. A young woman about sixteen was there and a host of angels were gathered around her. They seemed to be fascinated by her. She appeared to

have been frail on earth, but when she began telling her story, her whole being lit up with love.

“About thirty of us were gathered in a house in the woods for a church service,” she explained. “A group of soldiers came busting through the door and walked right up to the front of the room. One of them, seeing a picture of Jesus on the wall, yanked it off and said to us, “Okay you that want to live, come up here and spit on your Jesus and we will let you live.”

No one dared even move. It was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop. Everyone just stared silently at the picture, wondering what was going to happen next. Finally a deacon in the church slowly came up and spit on the picture and then he just stood there looking shamefully toward the floor. Soon another believer did the same. Then a Sunday school teacher went up and spit on the picture. She looked so sad afterwards. Some were shaking their heads, some weeping, some praying.

I couldn't believe what was happening, I looked at the soldiers and I was so scared. I had accepted Jesus only last summer when a pastor who'd been in prison for twenty five years for his faith, was speaking at a friends house. Remembering so well how I felt that night when His great love came into my heart, I just knew I had to do something.

Slowly, I stood up and went to the front. Everyone was staring at me, and I was shaking from fear. But I picked up the picture of Jesus, and wiping the spit off with my shirt, I kissed His face. At that moment, I felt so close to Him, His love for me was so real. Looking up at the

soldier standing over me, I had this overwhelming feeling to say or do something to make him see that Jesus loved him too, but all I could say was, “You can shoot me now, I’m ready to go.”

For a long moment he just stood there with tears in his eyes. Then glancing around at the people, he said, “You can go now. Get out of here.” As we were leaving, he stopped those who had spit on the picture, and said, “Not you. If you would deny your God that easily, you’re not worthy to live.” While hurrying through the woods, we heard three gunshots.” She paused, and her expression saddened, and she added, “I shuddered at the fate of those three”.

The angel, then adding to her story said, “Life in the Soviet Union in those days with its poverty and brutal winters was extremely harsh. One morning trudging the nearly two miles to work, her boots heavy with snow, and her tired legs shivering in protest, she sighed in resignation at the long road ahead. After taking a few more steps, a merciful Voice came to her from out of the grey dawn, “Are you ready now?”

“Yes,” her heart whispered, “I’m ready,” And her frail body, crumbling to the icy ground, gave way to the eternal spirit. Snow flakes steadily fell, partially covering her pitiful remains, but it no longer mattered, she was already safe in the arms of Jesus.”

Watching her now, in this eternal place of peace and joy she seemed a delight to the angels who had gathered here, for they never seemed to tire of her story.

The angel took my hand and we moved on through a meadow filled with what seemed like mounds of glass snow flakes glistening, under an eternal light almost like the northern lights of Alaska in December, yet there was an eternal warmth here. The next instant we were in a vast space full of stars brighter than the sun, yet I could easily look upon them.

“Can you put one little star into motion?” the angel said.

“No, of course not,” I answered.

“Can you shape one single forest leaf, or paint one butterfly wing?” he continued. I shook my head, curious at his questions.

“Can you bid the sun to go down in the evening, or the moon to shine through the dark night?” the angel kept persisting.

“No, of course not,” I quickly answered.

Suddenly a dark space opened up and I could see thousands of suns, all with planets moving around them precisely in their orbits. As I looked in astonishment, the angel asked, “Do you see all this? Can you doubt the One who has done it all?”

I turned my eyes to the angel, his face was gleaming with assurance and he said, “All this is not even a drop of water in an ocean.”

And after six days, Jesus taketh with Him, Peter, James and John and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by

themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto Him Elias and Moses and they were talking with Jesus. (Matthew 9:2-4)

There appeared unto us an old saint who was slight built, almost as if a wind could blow him away, yet his long patience through the years etched deep into his soul, giving him the appearance of a large rock peaking above the ocean, dashed upon a thousand times by powerful waves, and still standing unmoved. Looking at me with piercing eyes, he said, “Your labors for God are never, ever in vain.”

I wondered at that moment if he knew how much those words meant to me.

“Let me tell you what happened to me at the end of my journey.” he explained. “One night while laying on my bed, knowing my time to die was near, I could hear in the distance music like a choir singing. As I grew weaker their voices became louder and clearer, but I had no fear. I felt calm and peaceful, as if I was going home to rest after laboring all day in a hot field. Then I saw them,” he said, his face lighting up.

“Saw who?” I asked, all excited.

“Angels with white robes on,” he answered, his face absolutely gleaming by now. “They were coming to take me home. You see, if you wait long enough, what you

desire from God will always come to pass.”

Right then I could see the angel smiling in agreement.

“Years ago, I was coming home to rest after thirty five years as a missionary in Africa,” he continued. “President Roosevelt, who had been on a hunting trip, was coming home too, and on the same ship. When we neared New York harbor, a huge crowd of people gathered to welcome the President. There was a big band with drums and trumpets and a long banner that said, ‘Welcome home Mr. President’.

Anxiously I looked around in the crowd for someone to welcome me, but there was no one. Soon the President left the ship and got into a fancy limousine. By the time the crowd left, and I got off the ship, the sun had already gone behind the buildings, and shadows darkened the empty streets.

Walking down an abandoned sidewalk a voice said to me, “See, this is what you get for all your years of labor for God. He doesn’t care for you, you’re all alone, no one cares what you’ve done for Him” I never felt so low as I did right then.

Suddenly a Voice spoke, “My son, the President is coming home, it’s only right that he should get a celebration. But you’re not home yet, just wait until you see what the angels have planned for you when you get home.”

Then the old missionary’s face lit up with a big smile, and he said, “You should have seen the delightful expressions on those angels faces when they were coming

for me. They seemed to be just waiting for this moment. I wasn't afraid at all, I just closed my eyes and heard the words, "Welcome home child of the King, you were faithful to the end, enter now into your long awaited home." Opening my eyes I could see in the distance two very large gold gates. Angels were standing there dancing and singing joyfully."

How happy the old man seemed while he talked with us, yet he was no longer old, no one is old here.

The angel took my hand, and we journeyed further. Clouds parted, and I could see many mansions off in the distance. Drawing closer I had an overwhelming desire to see my mansion. "Could it be possible to see just a tiny glimpse of the one that's for me?" I begged.

The angel seemed to ignore my pleadings, and moved on in silence. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him," he finally said. Feeling a twinge of selfishness, I said nothing more. Yet somehow, I could feel God understood me, and loved me very much, in spite of me.

We then came to a wide river in which the waters were very swift, and it seemed while crossing I was being emptied of something, causing me to feel unworthy and undeserving of what God had prepared for me. Then suddenly, on the other side of the river, stood a huge mansion made of pure gold as bright as if it were the sun itself.

Trembling, I drew near, and could see a door made of pure gold. Just then, the door partially opened, letting out a glow that penetrated through my whole being, comforting, and reassuring me. I wasn't sure which was greater, the joy I felt or the beauty I saw. It all seemed to fill me physically, mentally and spiritually at the same time. Like the warmth of a family close together by a blazing fire on a cold winter night or a cool July morning surrounded by the smell of flowers, or coming home to the sweet aroma of food, and laughter, after a long day in the field.

We drew closer and joy poured into my soul like torrents of water from a thousand rivers. Oh how earth's grandeurs dwindle into nothingness in the light of even one drop of heaven's glory. Just then I dared to look inside, and it seemed almost as vast as the oceans, yet filled with warmth and fullness, as if one could never be unhappy again. The jewels, the gold, the rich beauty related more to the inner senses, the mind, heart and soul, rather than the outward senses of the body.

I started to step inside, but a strong, yet gentle hand held me back. Strange, as I stood on that threshold of immense glory, joy flooding my whole being, I experienced the same unworthiness I felt earlier while crossing the river, and right then I wanted so much to please the One who made it possible for me to be here.

Suddenly like a veil taken off my heart, I could see that much of my earthly labors for Him were mixed with bits of selfishness, envy and other self like things, and

feeling hopeless I vowed to do better. Just then a comforting Voice said, “I understand your struggles, and the sincere intents of your heart and I know that you love Me.”

Suddenly, glancing up, I saw a figure of a man standing inside the door almost within arm’s reach. His robe was blinding bright like snow when the sun shines on it. His face was radiant with love, unknown on earth. His eyes penetrated my heart and seemed to know everything about me, yet He did not judge me as men would judge me. His expression was full of understanding and kindness. His hands, big and secure, as if to lift the weight of the whole world off the shoulders of some wounded and bent soul, were stretched toward me.

And the wounds, still so vivid in His hands, seemed to wash away every sorrow, and deep inside me I heard the words, “A bruised and bent soul I will not break, for I desire to heal the broken hearted.” Right then, I could just picture Peter in a storm, walking on the sea to Jesus, when suddenly, he saw the violent waves, and as fear gripped his heart, he began to sink. But Jesus reached out His big hand, and said to him, “Oh thou of little faith, why did you doubt me?”

Just then His hand was so close to me. “If only I could touch Him.” Then, I felt the tips of His fingers touching my hand, and suddenly, like electricity, strength and joy surged all through me. I could say time stood still, but in Heaven there is no time. Then suddenly, it was all gone. I tried hard to hold on to what I saw, not fully

grasping that someday, this would all be mine forever.

Crossing a crystal clear stream, we came to a meadow filled with lush green grass. An angel was there carrying a handful of pearls. They looked so silky and rich, I was sure they were the costly kind, of which divers attach heavy weights to their feet, plunging deep into the ocean in search of.

Sometimes, rare and beautiful items, brought into the market are listed at almost excessive prices. Ignorant people wonder why they are priced so high. The reason is that they cost so much to acquire. The pearl that flashes so eloquently on the brides neck is so costly because it was snatched from the deep by a pearl fisher as he was lifted into the boat half dead with blood gushing from his nostrils.

The angel took the pearls from the other angel's hand and held them out to me, "These are yours," he said, "You've earned them."

"Oh no, not me." I argued, shaking my head. "I failed God many times. Maybe more than most, and every time I've tried to do something for God, you can be sure I would be attacked, and almost always, at least partially defeated. I've known others who didn't try nearly as hard, and yet were never so defeated as me. So, these pearls just can't be mine." I insisted.

"Do you know what pearls are?" the angel said to me with a smile.

"I think so." I answered, turning my eyes away, feeling certain I didn't deserve them.

The angel grinned, as if really enjoying what he was going to say next, “A pearl is formed when a tiny foreign object, such as a grain of sand, invades the oyster’s shell,” he explained. “Immediately the oyster begins to fight against the invader by secreting a solution to surround it. During this time the oyster is fighting for it’s life, but in the process, a rich and costly pearl is formed. If there had been no enemy invasion, no struggle, no battle to fight, no wound, there would be no pearl.”

Then, looking directly at me, he said, “These pearls represent your struggles, your valleys and your seemingly defeats.”

“But, I didn’t always do the right thing when I was in a trial,” I still insisted. “Sometimes, I would-----”

Right then he stopped me and said, “Do you remember when Peter walked on water to Jesus?”

“Oh no, not that same old story of failure, how Peter begun to sink when he got his eyes off Jesus,” I thought.

Grinning at my obvious expression, the angel continued, “Peter was the only one in the boat who walked on water. As a matter of fact, only two people in the entire bible ever walked on water and Peter was one of them.” The angel then laughed real big and added, “So what if Peter got his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. He was the only disciple who had the guts to get out of the boat and walk on water. How could the others sink? They never even got out of the boat.”

Then placing his right hand on my shoulder, he

said, “When you step out of your boat for God, you’re going to have battles, and even utter defeats, or so it will seem. But just when you think you’re sinking for sure, His strong Arm will pick you up out of the dark waters. He’s not going to let you sink no more then he let Peter sink.” Then with a reassuring smile, the angel added, “And don’t forget, Peter was in the midst of a great miracle when he walked on water too, so don’t let a little failure stop you.”

Then the angel carefully placed the pearls into my hands and said, “God is not recording your failures in His book of remembrance, He’s only writing down your victories, your battles won and most of all, the reason for those battles. He’s a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He knows those times when you’re struggling the hardest and that’s when your love for Him is very precious to Him.”

Oh child of God and pilgrim on earth, wipe
away your tears for the hottest fires turn out
the rarest and most beautiful jewels. And
are, in Heaven, more the costlier and fairer.

After that I held tightly onto the pearls, almost fearing they might be taken from me, as I still wasn’t fully convinced I deserved them. The angel then, looking at me rather sternly, asked, “Did God mention failures in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter?”

“I don’t think so,” I answered, hoping the angel wouldn’t notice how I often condemned myself unfairly.

But the angel apparently ignoring my thoughts asked, “Why wasn’t failures mentioned in Hebrews 11? Abraham was so fearful of a famine that he fled into Egypt. Wasn’t that failure? He even had his wife Sarah tell Pharaoh, she was his sister. Yet it’s said of Abraham, “By faith he sojourned in the land of Promise.”

And, Sarah gave Abraham her handmaid to have a child for her because she doubted God’s promise, yet verse eleven says, “Through faith, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful that promised.”

Moses failed too. God told him to speak to the rock but Moses was angry and struck the rock instead. Yet again the faith chapter says, “By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” And “By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

David and Samson are listed there too, and they failed God. And we know Jacob was a scoundrel in his younger years, even his name means deceiver, (Genesis 25) and he’s in the faith chapter too. So why would God remember your failures?” the angel said. “Whenever the enemy brings up your failures, just remember what Jesus did for you on that cross.”

The grass grew thinner while we continued our journey, and uneven rocks began to appear. Suddenly it seemed Jesus Himself was leading me up a steep hill. Vicious wolves were everywhere, snarling and showing their teeth as if to tear me into pieces. Hearing their awful growls, I could barely keep my eyes off them for fear they'd attack me.

But when I looked at them, I began to fall. Yet each time I started to fall Jesus would tighten His hold on my hand and say, "Do not look at them or listen to them. Turn your eyes on me, and they won't harm you." Even though the hill got steeper, Jesus kept reassuring me. "They can not harm you as long as you hold onto my Hand, and keep your eyes on me."

Soon, we appeared to be on top of a high mountain, and the angel came and stood by me. "You do not know the many times God watched over you," he said. "Like the time you were in a church in Topeka, Kansas." Yes, I remembered, although I didn't want to remember such a dark time in my life.

"It was just a few days before Christmas," I began to tell the angel, "We were out of money and my husband and five children and I were all sleeping on the church floor. I kept telling myself that surely God would do something before Christmas."

I remember looking at my children curled up on mats, wondering if they'd be getting anything for Christmas. I reminded God a thousand times how he said

he wouldn't put on us more than we could bear, but still there was no answer. Christmas day came, and we had nothing. Sonia our oldest daughter, who always had such high expectations, broke down and cried. To watch my children suffer so, was just too much for me, I cried hard but silently, there was nothing I could do.

And then, as if the devil timed it just right, I received a phone call. My Father had just died and the memory cut like a knife. I could still see him. Tall and lanky, with the sleeves on his long arms rolled to his elbows, running his fingers through his thick bluish black hair that hung over his forehead in a wave. But his years of alcoholism and long time threats of suicide were finally realized. Standing there holding the phone, I felt numb. Finally I couldn't bear it any longer.

Grabbing my coat I went outside. Snow steadily fell, and cold wind blew through my body, but I had to be alone. Holiday decorations were everywhere, sharply reminding me of our Christmas, cutting deep into the wounds. But the angel was right. I didn't know God was watching over me and it seemed satan knew exactly how to attack me. Noticing a liquor store sign across the street, a voice said to me, "Why not? Do it. Nobody cares."

I felt so weak and helpless right then and like a magnet drawing me, I quickly crossed the street and went in. Shelves of liquor surrounded me, like those wolves when I was climbing that mountain. Suddenly I had an overwhelming desire to buy a bottle and drink the whole thing down to the last drop."

“Do you remember what you thought next,” the angel interrupted me.

“I remember thinking, “Could I really throw away what I had in God, could I, after all the things God had done for me?”

“You were unaware of the powerful force that raged against you,” the angel reminded me. “And you didn’t know how close you came to being destroyed. But God knew and He sent a host of angels along with Michael the arch angel to help you. You couldn’t see them but they were there.”

“Yes, I remember,” I said. “It was one of those times I felt the farthest from God. But strangely, right then His Spirit came mightily upon me, and instantly I was able to shake myself free, and run out of there. When I walked back to the church, I heard a Voice say to me, “Do not trust in your own strength, trust in My strength, for I will never fail you.”

“Come.” the angel said. Everything got brighter and suddenly we descended downward toward a calm still place. A woman was standing there by a well. She had the look of one who had deep insight into the sufferings of others. I seemed to recognize her as the Samaritan woman who had met Jesus at Jacob’s well. (John 4)

She proudly held her head high, and seemed full of joy as she began telling us, “I was given to my first husband at fourteen, he beat me regularly, and after he died, I was left with two babies. No one wanted a woman with two children, and there was no work for women, so I

married again.”

Just then I could picture a young widow, who though suffering greatly in the spring of her life, was still vibrant and hopeful, “What happened?” I asked anxiously.

“I married three more times,” she continued. “I tried, I really did. But each husband was as cruel as the one before. Finally, I left, and ended up on the streets. By now I had five children, they were so hungry, I couldn’t bear to look at them, and no one would help us. I could hear people talking about me, every time I passed by, they whispered, and turned away. I wanted to strike out at them, but what was the use, it was easier not to say anything. Finally I knew what I had to do.”

I just stared at her. Here was a woman in whose face I saw unspeakable joy and peace, yet she had been through so much.

“I know what you are thinking,” she said. “You are wondering how a woman could let her babies die. You are wondering how I could have lived with myself afterwards. I can tell you the whole time I was doing it, and every day afterward, I cried bitterly. Yet somehow, even though I was a harlot and my life seemed hopeless, I always believed, that someday, even for me, there was a place where there would be no more sorrows. I held my babies tight to my bosom, and when their cries stopped, I carried them to the garbage dump.”

Listening to her, I wondered how she could be so happy now.

“Often as a child,” she said, “I dreamed my life

would be full of happy things. Maybe a beautiful wedding, A home, happy children. Even after four husbands, I still hoped, so I married again. I cooked and cleaned and tried harder than ever to be a good wife, but it was the same all over again. Finally there was nothing left in me to hope for, so I just took up with a man.

I always went to the well about the sixth hour when no other women would be there, so I wouldn't hear their horrible whispers. Yet even in the silence, their voices condemned me, "Here comes the harlot who killed her children."

But one day, I saw a man standing there by the well. Quickly I drew back, fearful of reproach. Then seeing His face, His eyes did not judge me. It was as if He could see through my pretense. His kind expressions seemed to say, "I know your past, and the deep longings in your soul." Could it be, there was one person in the whole world who would not judge me?

Then in the gentlest voice I'd ever heard, He said, "If you only knew who it was talking to you, you would have asked me and I would have given you living water." I didn't know what he meant. How could he give water when he had nothing to draw it with? Yet, I longed for this water that I would never thirst again for. Standing so close to Him, I felt really loved for the first time. I never felt such love before even as a child. For who in all the world would love someone like me. Yet something in Him drew me to Him.

Feelings, long dead, came alive again, and the

unbearable heaviness, so long carried was lifting away. Fresh hope, like the morning dew, came into me, and it was as if I were once again an innocent child. The Creator of all the universe loved me, cared about me, and I was no longer a condemned woman. He was for me, and who could condemn me now. He offered me living water, and I took it, and it changed me forever. I would hold my head down no more, until the day I drew my last breath.”

I could at least, in a small way, relate to her sufferings, and as we journeyed on, her story clung to me. We came to a place that appeared like springtime. Flowers were just budding, and seemed full of life, and hope, yet in a few short days, they would fade away. Would we wish them to never be because they have only a short time to show their loveliness. No, because each life is long enough for God’s purpose for it. It is true, even for the infant that lives but an hour, then smiles it’s benediction, and flies away. And of the young man or woman who dies with their hands yet full of unfinished tasks. God has a wise purpose in it all.

“What is it you want to ask?” the angel said, already seeming to know.

“Do you know where my little grandson is?” I said, in almost a whisper, my voice quivering.

His smile had a calmness that took away my fear. “Come.” he said. We came to a green meadow, and I could picture children happily picking the colorful flowers with their little fingers, and laughing gleefully while making bouquets.

At the edge of the meadow, water poured steadily

into a river as if to wash away past tears forever. Nearby little angels playfully danced. Watching them laugh and move about, I noticed that each one was distinctly different, as if God knew them individually by name. Directly above, an eternal light beamed down on them from the throne of God, a continual reminder that God always beholds their sweet faces. (Matthew 18)

Some say time heals all wounds, yet time only makes some memories grow stronger. Somehow, I knew I couldn't pick my grandson out from among these little angels just now, but seeing how happy they all were, and knowing he was among them, gave me comfort. And, the hope of seeing him again one day made me even more determined to faithfully finish my earthly journey, so I could return here and give him a big hug.

Soon we sat down under a tall tree. On the ground I could see a worm struggling inside a partially broken cocoon. The worm seemed uncomfortable, and anxious to get free. Finally, it broke loose and suddenly big beautiful wings fluttering back and forth, carried it right up to the top of the tree. Right then, I could almost see that butterfly looking down on us with a gleeful smile as if to say, "I'm so happy up here, I don't want to come back down."

"Come," the angel said, "There's much yet for you to see."

The House Of Kyle



Kim Halcomb

The House Of Kyle

Chapter One

An Angel Of A Man

Sheryl Anderson would sit for hours just staring at it. Sometimes until she was cross eyed and sometimes until her face would color.

"Why is your face so pink?" Kyle would ask.

"Pink?" she'd glare at him between clenched teeth. "It ain't pink, Kyle. If anything it's red!"

She didn't want it to be pink and if Kyle wasn't there, she would have cried. She didn't even know why she hated it so much. After all, what did it ever do to her? Except be there day in and day out when she didn't want it. Tall, underdressed windows jeering down at her every time she left the bus stop. Mocking her in the twilight, waiting for Hattie to come home.

Hattie! Maybe that's why she hated it. "Ain't ever gonna be nuthin', Sherry Anderson. Ain't ever gonna be

nuthin' except you.” Hattie’s fist would come down hard on the table. Sheryl hated that table cluttered with old smelly newspapers and empty beer bottles.

“But, I am gonna be something. I am! I’m gonna leave this small, river town. Gonna buy me a nice house somewhere. Gonna...”

“Gonna, gonna, gonna.” Hattie’s words would slur and Sherry would cringe. “That’s all I hear. Well, sometimes gonna ain’t good enough. Sometimes, you just have to live with what you got. I do.”

But, Sherry wouldn’t. She just wouldn’t. Besides, what did Hattie have to live for anyway? Nothing! Nothing but a sad, dilapidated, pink house. An ugly pink house on an ugly hill that probably wouldn’t be there if it wasn’t for Sherry.

“She only puts up with us for the money, you know.” she whispered to Kyle one day after Hattie fell over in a drunken stupor.

“Money?” Kyle’s big brown eyes stared up at her brainless. “What money?”

“You know. The money from the government.”

“No.” Kyle shook his head.

“Oh, never mind, Kyle.” It was exasperating. Kyle never could see anything looking him straight in the face. But, it was the money. Sherry knew it and it didn’t take a very smart girl to figure it out either.

People used to tell her she looked like Hattie. Hah! Go figure! If they ever knew! But, eventually they would, because Sherry would tell them. She couldn’t enter into a conversation without it coming up and when it did, she made a very big point of it.

“So, you’re Sherry Anderson,” they’d say. “Hattie’s daughter. You live in that small pink house on the hill.”

“No.” she’d lie. “Ain’t ever lived in that house.” and “Hattie who?” She’d try to smile to fool them.

“Oh, come on.” they’d laugh. “We know you live there.”

“Okay! But, how’d you like to live in it? And, don’t ever call Hattie my ma either! She’s not my ma! Ain’t fit to be anyone’s ma! Just leave me out of it. All of

it!” She’d have to catch herself though because “all of it” meant Kyle and Kyle wasn’t so bad.

“It’s so sad, Shey.” Kyle said once. He’d been talking to the neighborhood’s stray cats. They’d come picking through the trash cans. Why? Well, Sherry didn’t know, because what was in them? Nothing. Nothing. She watched Kyle nuzzle one lovingly before putting it gently aside. Then with a frown said, “No one wants ‘em, do they?”

“No.” she agreed. “No one wants ‘em.” and then Sherry felt like crying. Should she tell him she wasn’t talking about the cats? Would it make her feel better? No!

The day she wore that ugly, pink sweater in the third grade was the day she really began hating the house. She didn’t even recognize the resemblance until everyone pointed it out to her. “Look! A pink twinkie sweater for a pink twinkie house!”

A twinkie? Her sweater wasn’t a twinkie! In fact, if you turned the gold buttons just so to the light, it sort of sparkled like a sunset. Yeah. A pink, flowering sunset just waiting to burst. Not a twinkie! She showed them.

“Don’t see it.” one said real bold like, poking another with his elbow.

“Nope. Don’t see it.” the other shook his head.

“Are you sure?” Sherry’s eyes stung with tears. “Because, if I turn it this way where more sun can pound down on it, maybe...” she turned, but the sun didn’t catch it. Neither did they.

A girl in pigtails looked at her curiously. She was one of those girls that didn’t have any friends either. One of those always trying to make Sherry her friend.

“Are you sure you just don’t want it to look like a sunset?” she said real gently. Her freckled face turned away anxiously

That’s when Sherry lost it. Don’t anyone ever pacify Sherry! No! Sherry knew what it looked like. She was the one that lived in it. That small, pink box of a place where the back porch didn’t even have windows. It used to. But, not anymore. And, a twinkie? How can a pink box look like a twinkie? A twinkie wasn’t pink. It was gold. She did the only thing she could do. Go crazy! She knew it the minute one of the teachers came running out of the school building to hold down her arms and legs from

kicking them all in the face. After that, she was the crazy Sherry that lived in that small pink house on the hill.

When she calmed down, she reasoned it. Although she still couldn't reason the teasing. It wasn't her fault she lived there. If it was her choice, she wouldn't live there at all. If it was her choice she wouldn't even live in Wycliffe. That seedy, little spot by the river where everyone knew everyone else and where you couldn't even walk down the street without someone recognizing you. Where you couldn't say one little mite of a thing without it blowing up in your face.

She used to love the town and the river and the boats. "Where do you live?" they'd ask when she'd cross the river into Barlow.

"Wycliffe." She'd reply all proud like. Because, living in Wycliffe meant you lived right on the river. That tiny sea full of opportunity with it's big river boat, the first in the county. The dozen or so fishing resorts. The small dining houses just a few feet from the currents. And, the large boats and barges rolling their wealth back and forth from sunset to sundown. But, after the Twinkie thing, she began hating it too.

But, she wasn't so hard nose that she didn't reason it. After all, the pigtailed girl said the house looked like a twinkie. Maybe it did. A twinkie did have a lot of white creamy puff in the middle.

Her pink sweater had puff in the middle.

A twinkie was all billowy.

Her pink sweater was billowy.

A twinkie did sort of sparkle like a sunset.

The gold buttons on her sweater sparkled.

But, where did that leave the house? It wasn't billowy. It didn't sparkle. It wasn't soft and good and sweet tasting and lovely to behold. No! It was just plain and ugly and pink with no good on the inside or out. So, how could she reason the house? She couldn't!

But, the day she really began hating it was the day Kyle came. Yeah! Because that was the day she really felt someone would share her pain. But, he didn't.

They were sitting on a fallen tree limb at dusk, right before the sun set. Hattie, hadn't come home yet and just the thought of being locked out again with the darkness and

the house once again jeering at her, made the hate inside her thicker. But, she began thinking, maybe, just maybe when the clouds separated, that small, pink house on the hill wouldn't look so ugly. Maybe it would look like a twinkie or maybe a sunset or anything but what it really was.

It seemed hours just waiting and staring at it that she finally asked him. "Do you think it's a Twinkie house?" His eyes got real big and wide in almost wonder.

"A Twinkie house?"

"Yeah, you know. Like those snacks. Those Twinkies."

"Yeah."

"Yeah?" Sherry looked at him bewildered. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." He nodded.

"You really think so?" She studied the house trying to envision a Twinkie but saw nothing. Nothing but that ugly pink thing that in twilight looked even more ugly. "How?"

"How?"

“Yeah, how?”

“Dunno.” he shrugged.

A cold wind blew in wrapping around their shoulders, their faces watching solemnly as the darkness settled thick above the icy jigsaw of the Mississippi.

This was how they spent most of their nights, huddled together beneath the big oak or when the wind was too harsh, the sagging roof of the porch. Maybe that’s why she hated it. Because there was no comfort in the house or the yard or even the river, gruesomely dark and empty.

After that, she dropped it. She didn’t really see any sense arguing in the cold with a five year old. But she’d catch herself often trying to make that ugly pink house into a twinkie. Maybe if she imagined the shutters and trim white. Maybe that would do it.

No. Because it’d still be the same pink house with boards falling and windows cracked. Maybe if she spruced up the yard, bought some seed and sprinkled it around like she’d seen Mrs. Riley the neighbor do. Maybe that’d do it.

No. Because there’d still be those ugly yellow invaders that no matter how many times she cut them

down, they just grew back. But, maybe it wasn't even the house. Maybe it was the hill. Yeah. 'cause it took forever to walk it.

Whatever it was that made it look like a Twinkie, Kyle knew. But, maybe he didn't really know at all. Maybe he was still too young to really see it. Sherry had been young once where that pink house on the hill never really bothered her. Where her feelings were still too fresh and new to let them grab her. But, that was a long time ago. Too long ago to remember.

When Sherry found out about the other money, she was stunned. So, stunned, she had to rest the twinkie thought, because it didn't seem right, the twinkie thought taking up space in her mind where something more pleasant should be.

Kyle had pulled his knees up to his chin thoughtfully and as they both once again stared at the house, they talked about it. "Well, what do you plan to do with it?" he asked.

"What?"

"The money."

“Oh.” Sherry hadn’t really thought about it.

“Will you move?”

Move? Yes! Sherry would move. “Yes!” her face had lit with anticipation. The thought of leaving everything behind exhilarating. “Yes. I can move. I can buy me a nice house. I can...”

It only took a moment for Kyle to interrupt her. “What did he look like?”

“Who?”

“The man with the money.”

“Oh.” Sherry thought about it. “He was tall.” she nodded. She remembered him being tall. “He had light colored hair with a mustache curving up all friendly.” Or, at least she thought he had.

“He had sparkling blue eyes. An expensive blue suede suite that smelt of rich cologne. His face shone like the sun. He was an... angel. Yes! Oh, yes, an angel!” Just the remembrance caused little goose bumps to spin down her spine.

“An angel?” Kyle had stared at her in awe, small lips puckering incredulously. “Did he say anything else? I mean, besides giving you money?”

Sherry really didn't know and shaking her head, she said so. “No. At least I don't think so. See, well, I didn't hear much.” she admitted.

“Oh.” He understood. “Hattie?”

Yes. Hattie! How Sherry loathed Hattie that day. More than ever. Did Hattie really think she had locked the door? Because, she hadn't! And, when Sherry peeked through the small opening to the living room, Hattie was serving tea. Hattie never served tea! The man was looking around nervously and then after a moment of awkward silence, his voice so low Sherry could barely hear him, he asked, “Is she home?”

“Home?” Hattie had laughed, walking to the windows, shutting the curtains. “Probably is.” she nodded. “Out playing with one of her friends, I imagine.”

Liar! Sherry had thought. What friends? Hattie knew Sherry didn't have any friends! Hattie was the reason Sherry didn't have any friends. Sherry's eyebrows had pinched together agitatedly as she watched the man look

away disappointed, his fingers running over the worn back of the couch before settling beneath the folds of his blue suede suit. His eyes, the bluest and kindest eyes she had ever seen looking at Hattie suspiciously. “I just figured I might meet her, is all.” he said.

Hattie nodded. “Well she’ll more likely be coming in any minute.” and then Sherry had clenched her fists together at her side. She wanted to get her just then. Do something mean and ugly, for Hattie was lying again. Lying. She had locked the door. How could Sherry even get in when the door was locked?

It was then, it really dawned on her. Hattie locked the door because... No! She wouldn’t. She wouldn’t dare! Something awful had lurched in Sherry’s stomach that moment. Such a cruel, awful feeling, that when Hattie had finally spoken again, Sherry thought she would faint.

“So, when will she get it?”

“Get it?”

“The money.”

Pacing up and down the small living room, the man hesitated and Sherry couldn’t help but think how beautiful

he was. He was so beautiful that for a moment, Sherry almost forgot why she had been standing there until he spoke again and then she wished he hadn't. Wished more she hadn't tried to eavesdrop. Why give herself over to the biggest disappointment of her life?

"It's all ready for her." he had finally said, looking around once more at the drab furnishings.

"So, when she turns eighteen, she can have it."

Now, shaking, she leaned her head in her hands, the memory almost too great to bear. No. She didn't hear much.

A strong wind blew in, creaking the house and as Kyle scampered nearer, a ghostly fog swallowed the river. It'd be a long time before she'd get that money. A long time. But, when she did, she would leave. She would be somebody. And, then she knew what she'd have to do. Perhaps it was the way Kyle clung to her with a purpose or perhaps it was the way the house once more jeered at her. But, somehow, somehow she'd have to move out before her eighteenth birthday. That'd be the only way to get the money.

“But, what about me, Shey?” Kyle asked only when he was old enough to really understand. He understood he’d be left alone with Hattie.

“I’ll come back for you.” she vowed, but she didn’t.