

Chapter XIV

Forgiveness

July 19, 1926 – July 25, 1926

Curly sat Geannie down on the couch and held her until she regained her composure. Then she rehearsed every detail of what had happened. She told him of the support that Susan, Ramona, and Nancy had been to her. She concluded with her visit from Mrs. Ellison. Curly sat in silence, soaking in the incredible story that Geannie had just told him.

At the conclusion, Curly just shook his head. He looked at her and said, "I'm so proud of you."

"You're proud of me for taking off my clothes and throwing myself at another man?" She asked.

"I'm proud of you for your courage and your bravery. I'm proud of you for acting coolly and rationally thinking through each step. For being bold enough to act on promptings that on the surface may have seemed unreasonable."

"Are you proud of me for letting your dinner get cold?" She asked. "I had a hunch that you might be flying in today and I wanted to surprise you."

"Let's see what we can do about that." Curly offered. He helped her to her feet and they moved into the kitchen. Dinner was salvaged and they had a long conversation while they ate and cleaned up. It carried on late into the evening.

Not long before going to bed, there was a knock at the door. Curly answered it.

It was Shorty. "Curly, I hate to bother you this late at night. I heard about Geannie. How is she doing?"

"She is still rattled, but she will be alright."

"That's good to hear. The reason I came over is that I just got off telephone with the skipper. He was so pleased with the squadrons performance during the exercises that he's giving us all three days off."

"That is good news, Shorty. Thanks for stopping by. See you later."

"Yeah. I'll talk to you later. Bye. "

Curly closed the door and turned to Geannie. "That was the Shorty. The skipper has given the squadron three days off. So if today is Tuesday, that means I don't have to report back until Monday morning."

"I wonder what brought that on?" Geannie smiled, remembering what Mrs. Ellison had told her.

"Shorty said that its because Commander Ellison was pleased with our performance during the exercises." Then Curly added thoughtfully, "That will give me some time with you to help you through this."

As they climbed into bed, Geannie clung extra tight to her husband as they went to sleep.

The next morning, Curly got up early and was in the processes of making breakfast when Geannie

stumbled into the kitchen. Curly had some coffee ready and sat her down and poured her a cup. "You just sit there and enjoy your coffee. I'll take care of everything."

"Thank you, Flyboy. You're so good to me."

"In fact, I'll take care of everything today. Just tell me what you need."

"Can you teach my piano lessons for me?"

"Let me put it this way, all most everything."

"You, don't have to, Curly. I'm perfectly capable."

"I know." Curly replied. "I just want you to take some time to clear your head."

Curly kept his part of the bargain. After breakfast he cleared away and took care of Sandy and the chores that Geannie had for the day.

Geannie began by taking a bath. Mrs. Ellison was right. The hot water soaked and soothed her body as she laid down as low as she could in the bathtub, clothed only in the bubbles. It was so relaxing that at one point she even dozed off for a while, how long she wasn't sure. It didn't matter. By then the water had cooled off so she drained a little out and replaced it with some more hot water.

She decided that it was time to work on getting out. First she washed and rinsed her hair. Then she soaped up a washcloth and cleansed her body. Finally she lathered one of her legs and with it extended upward she took her razor and shaved her leg and then did the same with the other. Finally she shaved under her arms.

Even though the bubbles were long gone, she lingered a few minutes more before pulling the plug. She stood up and with a cup she poured water all over herself to rinse off. She just stood there for a moment to let the water drain off her body before reaching for a towel. Stepping out of the tub she dried off and wrapped up in the towel and wrapped her hair in another one.

She stepped out of the bathroom and looked in on Sandy and Curly. They were nowhere to be seen, then she noticed that her stroller was gone too. "He must have taken her to the playground." she reasoned.

With the apartment to herself, she finished getting herself ready. Hardly able to look at herself in the mirror, she brushed her teeth. Then she sat down to put on her makeup and fix her hair. She wasn't able to avoid the mirror as her black looked back at her. She did the best she could to conceal it, but to no avail. She was just going to have to live with it until it went away.

Standing in front of the full length mirror on the bedroom door, she took off the towel and just stood there for a moment, looking over her reflection in the mirror before getting dressed. Finally she selected one of her nicer house dresses and put it on. Again, Mrs. Ellison was right, she felt much better.

Geannie took an extra amount of time for her morning devotional. She wrote a great deal in her

diary about the experience and what she learned from it. Then she opened her Bible and read several random passages that she had underlined. The last one she turned to was the Lord's Prayer. As she read it, something clicked. She read it again. One verse jumped off the page at her. She couldn't get it out of her mind and she pondered its implications.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." It settled on her mind as she prayed. Even during her piano lessons it weighed on her. She couldn't get the words "as we forgive those who trespass against us." out of her thoughts.

By then Curly had returned with Sandy and had put her down for a nap. She asked him, "Did you mean what you said about taking care of things?"

"Absolutely." Curly assured her.

"Good. You have the bridge Lieutenant."

"Where are you going, sweetheart?" he asked.

"I am going to the beach. I don't know when I'll be back." She gave him a kiss. Then she picked up Sandy and gave her a kiss. "You be a good girl for Daddy, okay." She set her precious daughter back down and left the house.

Geannie drove to the beach. At first she just sat in her car, looking out to sea, thinking. After a while she took off her shoes and got out and walked down near the water. As she walked along the shore the words, "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." echoed in her ears. She was in a real dilemma. "How could I forgive this man for what he has put me through?" she asked herself. "With what he had in mind, things could have been much, much worse." she reasoned. As she walked along the beach she began to feel angry. The more she stewed, the angrier she got. She began to run as if she wanted to run away from the whole thing. She ran as fast as she could, her hair and dress blowing behind her.

After a running a good mile or so she stopped out of breath and sat down in sand with the water lapping at her feet. As she sat there, propped up by her arms, she gazed at the oncoming tide. Before long, warm water washed around her waist. It was if she felt the love of God washing over her. She took great comfort in that feeling, despite her clothes being soaking wet.

All of sudden a wave splashed over her head which broke her concentration. Gasping and coughing she decided it was time to move higher up the beach. Soaking wet, her clothes clinging to her body, Geannie began making her way back up the beach. The warm summer sun and the gentle sea breeze dried her clothes and her hair.

Her mind was still in turmoil as she strolled up the beach. "How can I forgive this man? Is it required of me? Will forgiving him make any difference? I want to hate him for what he did! For what he was going to

do. I don't like how I feel. I have never felt this way before about anyone. Can I forgive myself for the way I reacted? Why does everybody say I'm a hero? I don't feel like one."

Her troubled mind raced on. "I just want to move on and leave all this all behind me. I want to have another baby. But I can't give myself to Curly like that until I can resolve all of this. Whats a girl to do?"

This struggle went on in her mind, heart, and soul all the way back to her car. By then her clothes were nearly dry. She brushed off the sand that clung to her dress and sat on the hood of her car, blankly gazing out to sea. She offered a silent prayer.

Geannie got in her car and drove into town, not knowing where she was going. She instinctively turned onto the street that went past the St Paul's United Methodist Church. She parked her car in front and went in and sat down in the sanctuary near the alter to meditate. The peacefulness of the chapel tempered her turmoil and she began to think a little more clearly.

After several minutes she sensed that she was no longer alone. Pastor Warwick emerged from his office and came and sat down on the pew in front of her. Looking over the pew he greeted her, "Hello, Mrs. Brason. Tell me, how are you doing, really?"

"I'm fine," she tried to smile. "No. I'm not fine," she admitted. Then added, "And I don't like how I feel."

"You know, everyone says your a hero." the pastor said trying to comfort her.

"Hmg!" Geannie grunted. "Some hero I am. Have you heard the whole story?"

"Yes, I have."

"So what do you think of me flaunting myself like that?"

"From what I hear," the Pastor replied, "you did what the situation dictated. There is no shame in that. I certainly don't condemn you for it. As near as I can tell, no one else does either. Don't worry about that, Geannine. And don't let that keep you away from services. You are always welcomed and needed here."

"Even with my black eye?"

"Especially with your black eye. That's a beaut. I had one almost that good once." he said.

"Really?" Geannie asked.

"Yep. It was during the war. Only I didn't get in such a noble cause."

"How did you get it?" Geannie asked.

"Me and a buddy were fighting over a girl."

"Did you get the girl?" Geannie asked.

"Nope, just a black eye."

Geannie giggled.

“Now, that’s our Geannie.” the pastor smiled.

Changing the subject, Paster Warwick continued, “What’s really troubling you? I can see the turmoil in your eyes. I think it goes deeper.”

“Yes it does.” Geannie admitted. “This morning during my morning devotional I read the Lord’s Prayer. One verse really jumped out at me and I can’t get it off of mind.”

“Go on.” the pastor encouraged.

“Its the one that says, ‘And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ Do I need to forgive him? Can I forgive him? How do I forgive him?”

“Those are good question indeed. To understand forgiveness, we need to understand what forgiveness is not.” The pastor continued, “To forgive doesn’t mean that you have to tolerate or excuse the wrong done to you. It doesn’t mean that you forget the wrong, nor should you. It certainly does not mean that you forfeit your right to justice.

“It is about acknowledging that none of us are perfect. Without forgiving those who wrong us, we cannot be forgiven by God. We would all perish because each of us would be victims of someones wrongdoings. Forgiveness allows us to heal and for life continue. Forgiveness is more for you than for the other person. Whether or not he repents has nothing to do with it. He may not even accept your forgiveness. But that doesn’t matter, you will be free.

“Let me put it another way. “You don’t necessarily forget the wrong. What you must forget is the pain, anger, and anguish that you feel. Does that make any sense?”

“Yes, it does.” Geannie sighed. “That answers my first two questions, but how do I go about forgiving him.”

I’m going to leave that up to you to figure out. For it to be real and effective it has to come from your heart, not going through a set of motions that I give you.” The pastor concluded.

“I’ll try.” Geannie said bravely, “But it isn’t going to be easy. Thank you so much, Pastor Warwick. You have been a big help.”

As Geannie got up to leave, Pastor Warwick said, “God bless you, Geannie.”

“Thanks, I need it.” She paused before leaving, “And I will be bring my black eye to services on Sunday.”

When Geannie got home late in the afternoon, Curly didn’t ask her where she had been. He simply asked, “How are you doing?”

“Much better. Thank you for letting me have this time. I think I am beginning to sort things out.” Geannie said. Then she put a record on her Electrola.

The next morning for her devotional, Geannie went to the concordance in the back of her Bible and looked for passages referring to forgiveness. She was lead back to the Lord's prayer. This time she kept reading. The very next verses read, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

She read about forgiving seven times seventy times and other passages. Then she found the one that answered her remaining question. It was in the sermon on the mount, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Geannie pondered that thought for several moments and as she offered her morning prayer. It became clear, "I must go and be reconciled to him!" The thought brought fear into her heart. Forgiving him in the privacy of her own life was one thing. But going to him and telling him in person was quite another.

As she thought about it, she heard these words whispered into her mind, "You had the courage to act upon my words in the face of danger. It will take courage but you can certainly do this. Go and I will remove your burden."

Geannie's heart raced. "I can do it. I must do it!" she reasoned within herself. Without hesitating, because she knew that if she hesitated she would not do it, she stood up and went out into the front room where Curly was playing with Sandy.

"Curly?" she asked. "Would you be willing to extend your offer from yesterday and give me a little more time. I have somewhere to go."

"Sure, sweetheart. Whatever you need." Then he made the mistake of asking, "Where are you going?"

Geannie looked at him and said, "Down to the jail to talk to William Chaney."

Stunned at her answer Curly bluntly asked, "What on earth could you have to say to him?"

"That I forgive him." Geannie answered.

Amazed at his dear wife, he simply sat back in the couch. Speechless, he watched as Geannie grabbed her handbag and headed for the door.

"I shouldn't be too long. Wish me luck."

"Your going to need more that luck, dear. But good luck. Take all the time you need."

As Geannie drove downtown, her heart pounded in her chest. Her whole body quivered. "What am I doing?" she asked herself.

She tried to gain her composure as she stepped up to the desk at the police station.

"May I help you?" the office asked.

"Yes, I would like to see William Chaney, please?" she asked trying to keep her voice steady.

"What is your name, ma'am?" the office asked.

"Mrs. Gean Brason." She answered.

On hearing her name, the police chief who was sitting at his desk further back, looked up in disbelief. He stood up and approached the desk. "I'll take it from here, Sergeant." he said.

"I'm Chief Nielsen." he introduced himself. "Come with me." he invited and lead her to his desk at the rear of the room and asked, "Won't you please sit down?"

"Thank you." she politely accepted.

"So, you are the heroine of Coronado?" he began.

"I wish people would stop calling me that." she plead.

"I'm so sorry, Mrs Brason. Please forgive me. I must say what you did was really something. Without you we might not have caught this guy."

Geannie simply answered, "One must do what one must do. That's all I was doing."

"And you did a fine job, at that. What you did really took courage." the police chief said attempting to commend her.

Getting to the point, Geannie asked, "Would it be possible for me to see Mr. Chaney?"

The chief answered hesitantly, "That could be arranged." Then he asked, "May I ask, why?"

"If you must know, I need to tell him that I forgive him so I can get my on with my own life." Geannie answered.

Chief Nielsen was surprised at her answer. He said, "You are truly one amazing woman, Mrs. Brason."

The chief called an officer over to his desk and instructed him to have Chaney brought to the visitors room. The chief stood up, indicating for Geannie to do likewise. "If you'll follow me," he said, "I'll take you back." As they walked through the corridor the knot in Geannie's stomach tightened. Chief Nielsen opened a door and said, "Have a seat. He'll be here in a moment."

Geannie entered the tiny room that was divided by bars. On either side was a single chair. As Geannie sat down to wait, a strange calmness settled over her.

A moment later the door on the other side of the bars opened, and in stepped William Chaney. "Who are you?" He growled.

"I am Gean Brason." she said confidently as she stood up.

"Oh yeah," he sneered, "I didn't recognize you with your clothes on."

The comment cut deep. Geannie hardly recognized him. He was dressed in a clean black and white striped prison uniform. He was clean of both grime and whiskers. His eyes were as dull as she remembered. His hand still trembled. She saw the four fresh wounds on his cheek that ran down under his

jaw. Geannie stood frozen.

“Well. What do you want?” he demanded.

Geannie took a deep breath, then said, “I have come to tell you that I forgive you and that I hold no ill feelings toward you. I’m here to set myself free.” No sooner than the words escaped her mouth she immediately felt the weight lifted. Then she added, “Did I cause those scratches? Please forgive me if I injured you but you gave me no choice but to fight”

Chaney was disarmed by what she said. Geannie had a way of disarming him. Now he stood speechless. He sat down in the chair. The defiance disappeared from his face.

Geannie continued. “Actually my hatred for you has turned to pity. I truly feel sorry for you, you poor, poor man.”

“Nobody has ever said anything like that to me,” Chaney said candidly. “And yes, these are from you.” he said touching his face. Then he admitted, “I supposed I deserve them. Did I give you that shiner?”

She ignored his question. “Don’t get me wrong, Mr. Chaney,” Geannie continued. “That doesn’t mean I don’t think that you should pay for what you did to me and what you were going to do to me”

“Lady, you don’t know how much I have to pay for. What I was going to do to you wasn’t anything I hadn’t already done to other dames.” he said softly. Looking up from the floor he added, “None of them fought back like you did.”

“Tell me, Mr. Chaney. What brought you to this?” Geannie wasn’t sure why she asked. It was just in her compassionate nature.

“Hgh!” Chaney grunted. “My mother. How I hated that woman. Do you know what it is like to be raised by a prostitute?”

“I can’t say that I do.” Geannie admitted.

“When she ran off and left me to fend for myself on the streets, I turned my hatred for her on all women.” Then he added, “Do you want to know why I selected you?”

“I’m not sure I want to know.” Geannie said.

Ignoring her response he continued. “Because I saw that you were the complete opposite of my view of women. I couldn’t let you contradict that. I felt I had to prove that you were as rotten as what I made all women out to be.”

“Do really believe that?”

“I wanted to.” he answered.

Gennie stood up to leave but paused. “Before I leave, I must tell you that God loves you.” Geannie said, wondering where that came from.

“God? Is there really a God? Can he love me?”

“Yes, and yes,” Geannie answered. “I hope you find him.” Gennie walked to the door and knocked. It opened and she exited the room without looking back at the pitiful shell of a man sitting silently in the chair on the other side of the bars. He never attempted to say that he was sorry but that didn't matter.

As Geannie drove home she felt free. Free of the anger and hatred, Free of guilt and shame. Free to move on with her life. When she got home, Curly could tell immediately the transformation that occurred. “How did it go?” he asked.

“I feel free, Curly. I feel free! Its amazing how I feel. I didn't think I could do it.”

“I did.” Curly said. “You never cease to amaze me at what you can do. I know you don't like all of this hero talk, but you are my hero in so many ways.”

“Really?” Geannie asked. She gave him a hug like he hadn't had since she said goodbye to him in San Francisco. She continued, “Now I can get on with what I really want. I want you to give me another baby, Lieutenant.”

The following Sunday, Geannie, Curly, and Sandy did attend church services. For Geannie it was a big step. Thanks to the witch hazel, her black eye had began to heal and didn't look as bad as it had. Everyone who greeted her did so with respect and made her feel at ease and welcomed. She did not feel as if anyone was judging her. Her self confidence returned and she was able to move forward without looking back. Yes, she did have her moments during the weeks and months to come.

* * * * *

