

Chapter XXVI

Empty Arms

April 10, 1930 – April 23, 1930

Geannie turned to her mother, “When do you think Doctor Taylor will let me go home? Do you recollect how we conned Doctor Reynolds into lettin me out before he thought I was ready?”

“All you can do is ask.” Marie replied.

Changing the subject, Geannie commented to her mother, “My milk has come in and I really ache. I should have already feed the baby by now. Speakin of feedin, I reckon I am a little hungry. Can you go get me a banana or something?”

“Sure Dear. You need to keep your strength. Let me see what I can do about that.”

Marie got up and left the room. While she was gone, Geannie closed her eyes and rested. When Marie returned she had a banana in one hand and curious little device in the other.

“What on earth is that?” Geannie asked.

“Why, silly girl, It's the banana you asked for.” Marie answered as she handed it to her.

“No, that thing.” she said pointing to the little jar with a funnel looking thing.

“Oh this. This is a breast pump.” Marie explained. “I ran into Doctor Taylor and told him that you were getting quite uncomfortable because your milk had come in. He had me follow him to the nursery where he explained they have a milk bank. Sometimes a woman's milk doesn't come in or there are other complications. In those cases, they rely on the milk bank.”

After eating a bite of her banana, Geannie said, “Let me see that.”

Holding in her hand she remarked, “I think I see how it works.” She unbuttoned her gown, got herself situated and began squeezing the handle. After a couple of pumps, milk began filling the jar.

“Ahhhh!” Geannie sighed. “That feels good.” Then for the first time since the day before she laughed. “I feel like a cow!”

“Doctor Taylor said that you can give as much or as little as you like, it all depends on you and when you want to dry up. He also said that sometimes they employ wet nurses in cases where a baby won't take a bottle.”

It felt good to relieve herself, but even more so to engage in light hearted conversation with her mother. When Geannie was just about finished, Dr. Taylor interrupted them. “How did that work for you, Missus Brason?” He asked.

“That really did the trick. Thanks, I feel much better.” Geannie replied.

“Like I told your mother, you can give as much or as little as you want. Between here and the other hospitals in the area, it gets used.

Then he changed the subject, “How are you feeling, Missus Brason?”

Geannie made the mistake of admitting, "I'm really tired." Then she went on, "I'd really like to go home. I think I am up to it. After all, I do have funeral to plan."

"You know that it is hospital policy to keep mothers for at least four or five days after delivering, don't you?" The doctor reminded her.

"That's silly to lay around that long. After both of my other babies were born, I went home after no more than a couple of days. And one of them was Cesarean." Geannie countered.

"I know. Doctor Reynolds told me in a note included with your records that you probably would want to go home as soon as possible. My main concern for you is exhaustion. For that reason alone I want to keep you overnight once more. I don't see any reason why you can't get out of bed and move around a little. In fact I think you should go down to the cafeteria and have a good solid meal. That half a banana isn't going to get you very far. If you want to go home, you'll need your strength. That means good nutrition and rest. The same goes for you Missus Austin. I'll keep this other bed free for you. I'll instruct the nurses that you are to be undisturbed."

As he finished his lecture, Geannie finished filling the jar and handed the pump to Dr. Taylor. As she buttoned up her gown, she said. "Okay, its a deal. I'll go get something to eat and come back and get some sleep this afternoon and tonight and you let me go home tomorrow."

Dr. Taylor answered. "We'll see. I'll check on you during my evening rounds and we'll see." At that he left the room.

A moment later he returned with a wheel chair. "I found this setting in the corridor. The cafeteria is a little far for you to walk just yet."

Geannie got up out of bed and Marie wheeled her down to the cafeteria. After a good hearty meal she went back to her room and got back into bed. She closed her eyes and was soon fast asleep. Marie closed the blinds to darken the room. She laid down in the spare bed and she too was soon asleep.

Maire woke up toward late afternoon. Geannie was still sound asleep. Her breathing told her that it was a deep restful sleep. Marie sat next to a small reading lamp and read while Geannie slept. Toward evening, there was a quite rap on the door. It opened slowly as Dr. Taylor came into the room. Marie got up to meet him. They stepped out into the hallway where Marie told him that Geannie had been sleeping soundly for hours.

Marie decided to go have something for dinner. She brought back something for Geannie if she were to wake up. She didn't stir the rest of the evening. Later Marie got back into her bed and went to sleep. That is how Dr. Taylor found them both as he made his rounds just after midnight.

Geannie was the first to wake up the next morning. She began to stir as it started to get light

outside. She looked at the clock and was thought that it was seven o'clock in the evening. As she got up to go to the bathroom, Maire woke up. "I thought you were going to sleep for ever, Baby Girl" Marie said.

"What do you mean. I was only asleep for four hours," Geannie said surprised.

"No, no," Marie corrected her. "Its seven in the morning. You slept for a solid sixteen hours. How do you feel?"

Geannie answered, "Rested and hungry. If its mornin, I'm goin to get dressed and go get somethin to eat so I'll be ready to go home when Doctor Taylor comes around." After coming out of the bathroom, Geannie changed into the clothes she had brought to go home in. It was nice to not put on a maternity dress, although it fit her more snugly than she thought it would. After all, she had just had a baby. A baby that wasn't going home with her.

As Geannie changed her clothes, Marie tried to smooth out the dress that she had been wearing for three days.

Again, Marie wheeled her daughter down to the cafeteria. Geannie was more than hungry, she was famished. Geannie's was feeling extremely uncomfortable so on their way back to the room, they stopped by the nursery to pick up another breast pump. She told the nurse that she would like some bottles to take home with her. The nurse was happy to give her a pump and a some extra bottles. She broke down when she saw the row of four bassinets with babies in them. Hers was not among them.

They went back to the room and the first thing Geannie did was to fill another bottle. She felt that it was her way to give of herself in a very personal way. Then she gathered her things and packed her bag. She was sitting in one of the armchairs when Dr. Taylor called on her. "Just where do you think you are going?" he asked cheerfully.

"I'm goin home. I kept my part of the bargain." Geannie answered.

"That's right." Marie added." She has had two good meals and she slept for sixteen hours straight."

"Okay, then. A deal is a deal. I would like you to come to see me at my office in one week from today." Then the tone of the doctors voice changed. "I'm so sorry that things turned out the way they did. I'm at a loss as what to say. Sometimes I get caught up in the everyday doings of being a doctor that I forget the emotional side of things. I am truly sorry for your loss and hope that you're able to cope with what you have to deal with. I'm sorry. That didn't sound very sympathetic did it."

"You have taken good care of me, Doctor Taylor. I truly appreciate all you've done for me. I know that you did all you could for my baby."

"It has been my pleasure. If there is anything else I can do for you, please let me know. I see you have a pump and a supply of bottles. Thank you for helping us out with this. It is truly appreciated." Dr. Taylor extended his hand and said, "I'll see you one week from day."

After he left the room, Marie went to the nurses station and asked to use the telephone. A few minutes later, Senator Austin pulled up in front of the hospital. After getting checked out, Marie wheeled Geannie out to the curb where he was waiting for them.

Geannie was surprised to see all of the flowers that filled the parlor as she entered the house. No one else was there as the Senator wanted to bring Geannie home to a quiet house before she was assailed by all who wanted to wish their condolences.

“Do you know what the first thing I want to do is?” she said.

“No, what?” her mother asked.

“I want to take a bāth.” Geannie answered.

“A bāth?”

“Someone once told me the difference between a bath and a bāth. A bāth is longer and hotter. Then I want to dress up in my nicest dress, that will fit me, and put on my makeup and some perfume. Then I want Sandy and Austin back.”

While Geannie took a luxurious bubble bāth, Marie also freshed up. She called her niece and told her that Geannie was home and asked her to bring the children home. A few minutes later Sarah brought Sandy and Austin over. Sandy was anxious to see her mommy.

Geannie found a lovely dress that she was able to fit into, put on her makeup, and put on her favorite perfume. Mrs. Ellison was right, it did make a woman feel better, no matter how bad things seemed to be. Geannie heard Sarah and kids come in and rushed downstairs to her babies. Geannie stooped down and gathered Sandy and Austin into her arms and broke into tears.

“Don't cry, Mommy.” Sandy said sweetly. “Uncle Walt says that God needed Charlie Em to be one of his angles.”

The thought brought a glimmer of comfort and eased her grief just a little as she held her children tightly. “I have an angle child.” The thought warmed her heart. “No, I have three angle children.” Geannie realized, “One of them is on loan to God.” But that didn't fill her empty arms.

Within a little while, word got out that Geannie was home. Family, friends, and neighbors began stopping by to express their grief and offer comfort. Being surrounded by loved ones helped to ease Geannie's emotions. She was surprised to hear how many had suffered a similar loss in years long passed. If they could get through it, Geannie felt hopeful that one day she would too. As the endless line of well wishers streamed in and out of the house, Geannie began to be overwhelmed. Marie insisted that she go upstairs and rest for a while.

Later in the afternoon, Walt came over. Sarah had remained after binging the children. Walt, Geannie and her father retired to the Senator's study to discuss the funeral arrangements. It had been set

for Monday at one o'clock. There were a lot of other details to arrange. Senator Austin had arranged for one of the grave-sites in the family plot to be used. Geannie asked if the the graves next to it could be reserved for her and Curly. With Curly's naval career, no one place would ever be home but Roanoke always would be.

Walt moved on to the next difficult item. "I have an appointment for you this afternoon at the mortuary to pick out a casket." Walt explained.

The thought made Geannie shudder.

"I will go with you if you'd like," he offered.

"That would be nice." Geannie answered. "I'd like to bring my mother along too."

"By all means." Walt agreed. "Now that brings me to another topic. A casket that small only needs four pall bearers. Who would you like them to be?"

Without hesitation Geannie suggested, "My brothers, Charlie, Winslow, and, Stirling. Since you will be officiating, lets go with Shenan. That keeps it all in the family."

"May I make some suggestions for the services on Monday?" Walt asked.

Geannie wished she was anywhere on earth except in her father's study talking to her brother-in-law about making funeral arrangements for her baby. "Where on earth is Curly right now?" She wondered to herself. "He's probably somewhere in the Caribbean. I wonder what he is doing?"

Geannie brought herself back to grim reality. "Okay, Walt. What do you suggest?"

"Well for starters, there should be a viewing prior to the service. Typically they are open casket so people can file past and pay their respects and console the family."

"I don't know how many times I have been in one of those lines." Geannie responded.

Walt continued, "It lets everyone have closure. A lot of healing takes place for everyone. Just before the service, the viewing concludes with a family prayer and the closing of the casket."

"I would like you to offer the family prayer, Daddy." Geannie interjected.

"As for the service itself. I suggest that it be brief in this case. Sometimes when someone has lived a long, full life they get rather lengthy."

Geannie agreed.

"Funerals have three purposes." Walt continued. "The first is expressing grief and comforting one another in our bereavement. The second is celebrating the life of the deceased. And last but not least, affirming faith in life with God after death.

"I will be officiating so I will lead the invocation. Typically the eulogy is delivered by a family member. Who would you suggest?"

"Your father." Geannie answered.

"Then in conclusion I will deliver a sermon. As for the music, we will need two or three numbers. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Not really," Geannie answered. "I'll trust you to come up with somethin."

"After the benediction, we will proceed to the cemetery where I will recite a prayer at the graveside and commit the body to the grave. From there we will return to the church where the Women's Auxiliary will host a luncheon. Do you have any questions, Geannie?"

"No that should about cover it," Geannie answered glad that part was over. She was satisfied with the way the service came together. The trip to the funeral home was even more unpleasant. She really didn't like the selection of caskets available. She decided on a small mahogany casket with a light blue lining.

The rest of that day and the weekend was spent with family and the the seemingly continuous stream of visitors. Geannie had never received such an outpouring of love and support. Conspicuously absent was the one person who could comfort her most. She felt bad for Curly missing out on all of it. It would all be over when he came home. He wouldn't have the show of support that she was receiving.

On Sunday, Geannie sent the kids off to services with Grandpa and Grandma. She wasn't ready for a public appearance yet. The funeral was going to be difficult enough, without going through it at church as well.

On Monday, the day of the funeral, Sarah came and got Sandy and Austin so Geannie could take care of any last minute business. Geannie, her parents, Curly's parents, and Walt met at the funeral home. Geannie wanted to be alone with Charles Emmett for a moment. It was difficult, but she gathered her courage, took a deep breath and entered the viewing room and approached the open mahogany casket. Tears came to her eyes and her lip quivered as she looked down on the body of her precious baby, all dressed in white. He looked as if he were in peaceful slumber. Almost as if she could reach down pick him up and he would awake and everything would be alright.

Everything was not alright. Loss and longing squeezed her heart to where it felt like it was about to burst. She bent down and kissed the sleeping angel on his forehead.

"I wish your father could have seen you." she said out loud. All of a sudden she felt as if someone was standing beside her. Love and warmth came from whatever entity was there. Geannie knew that it was Charles Emmett. His presence was so real that Geannie spoke out loud, "I love you Charles Emmett, save a place for me, won't you."

After a few moments alone, the grandparents and Walt joined her. The presence remained with them. It was a scene of tears and embraces as thy looked upon the tiny remains.

Walt spoke up, "It is not always for man to understand the ways of God. Why do some tarry so long

in suffering and others are taken from the very beginning? It's not for us to question His intents but to learn from the circumstances of life. What we learn depends on our attitudes. We can learn compassion or become indifferent. We can seek joy or bitterness. We can become elevated closer to God, or we can turn away. Open your hearts and learn what God has for you because this precious soul graced our lives for such a brief moment.”

It was time to go to the chapel for the service. The six of them filed out of the room leaving the attendant to transport the casket. Geannie rode with her parents in their car and Walt drove Emmett and Ellen to the church. No one else was there, but flowers adorned the chapel. The casket was set up in one of the larger rooms and the flowers from the mortuary were brought in. Five chairs were set up next to the casket. The first was for Geannie, followed by Marie and the Senator, and then Ellen and Emmett.

The first to arrive was Sarah with Sandy, Austin, and her own children. Geannie took Sandy and Austin to see their baby brother. Sandy reached in and tenderly patted his face. Sandy was particularly impressed by the feeling that existed in the room. Austin was his usual rambunctious self. Sarah took them and her own children out into the foyer.

Soon others arrived, among them her brothers and their families and Curly's brother, Shenan and his family. Aunts, uncles, and cousins mixed in with family and friends as they filed past. Each pausing to comfort Geannie. For some, it was Geannie offering the comfort. She had a hug or a handshake for each person.

There were a few surprises within the procession. Dr. Taylor and his wife came to pay their respects. The biggest surprise to greet her was Freddy and Susan who came down from Washington. They were surprised to learn that Curly was away on maneuvers and was completely unaware that the baby had even been born, let alone had died.

After everyone had paid their respects, everyone except family and the closest friends were encouraged to assemble in sanctuary. Geannie, Sandy, and Austin stood next to casket as others gathered around. Senator Austin, the great orator that he was, offered a beautiful prayer. He must have spent hours preparing. Then the dreaded moment of closure. With tears and sobs, her mother held her tightly as the casket was closed.

Geannie and the children followed as the casket was taken to the chapel. Followed by at least fifty or sixty family members. As they neared the chapel, Emmett left the group and went to his office where he donned his pastoral robes and joined Walt on the rostrum.

Geannie didn't really notice the hundred or so already gathered in the chapel. Once seated, the services proceeded as outlined. Walt delivered a sermon on the same theme as the comments he made at the mortuary. He spoke of the hope of the glorious resurrection through Jesus Christ and living with God in

His heaven through the eternities. He offered words of comfort to Geannie and the rest of the family.

At the conclusion of the forty five minute service, the four uncles were called forward and bore the casket, followed by Geannie and the rest of the family outside. It was a cool blustery day that added to the gloom of the occasion.

The funeral procession made its way to the cemetery; from Greene Memorial the procession turned left off of 2nd Street onto Franklin Road and past the Austin Mansion a half a mile to the Roanoke City Cemetery, which had once been part of the original Austin Plantation. Out of respect, the oncoming traffic pulled over to the side of the road.

Geannie had a sinking feeling as she approached the the open grave that awaited her baby. With the small casket suspended above its final resting place, Walt recited a prayer asking protection on the spot of ground until the day of resurrection. He offered it as a hallowed place where loved ones could come in remembrance of Charles Emmett Brason. He concluded the prayer by asking for blessings of comfort and peace to be poured out on those in loss and that their emptiness be filled.

That concluded the services. Now that was over, there was still so much ahead to go through. The crowd dispersed, others remained and mingled. As Geannie was visiting with a cousin that she hadn't seen for many years, she felt an arm placed around her waist.

Her conversation with her cousin finished, she turned to see who was attached to the arm. It was her dear friend Susan. They were staying at hotel in Roanoke and had to leave the next morning. Geannie invited them to stay for the luncheon and join with the family at her parents home afterwards. They graciously accepted, looking forward to visiting further. Others sought out Geannie, including Bill and Maggie Casper. Geannie told them of meeting Hattie and George in Ouray, Colorado the previous summer.

Many went there own way after the graveside service. The family and friends that remained reassembled at the church for a luncheon prepared by the Women's Auxiliary. It was a lovely meal, like so many that Geannie had helped prepare and serve. She realized that she hadn't had anything to eat since a scanty breakfast that morning. Her mother had to encourage her to eat.

While people where still lingering, Walt asked Geannie to come to his office. He handed her an envelope that contained a large sum of money that had been generously contributed to help cover the burial of expenses. The most generous benefactor was obviously her own father. It was enough money to cover burial expenses and purchase a headstone.

The diminished assemblage migrated from the church around the corner to the Austin Mansion. Geannie excused herself and went upstairs to her bedroom to change her clothes and to freshen up. She hadn't expressed since getting ready during the morning and she was getting pretty uncomfortable. After changing she came downstairs and placed the container in the refrigerator and rejoined their company.

Having loved ones around helped keep her mind off her loss. She was very conscience of Curly's absence.

Over the next few days, the flowers wilted and everyone went back to their lives, the real sense of her loss began to set in. It was still at least a week until Curly would be there. What strength she managed to hold onto gave way and she felt as if everything had crashed down around her.

One bright spot was a letter that she received from Ramona a few days later, accompanied by a beautiful sympathy card.

April 12, 1930

Dear Geannie,

I was saddened to receive your letter this morning. I just had to write back to tell you how very sorry I am about your baby. I know how badly you wanted him. I wish there was a way I could come and be with you, but the distance makes it impossible.

You were so much help and comfort for me when Tom died, I wish I were there to be there for you as you was for me. I don't know what I would have done if not for you and Curly.

In your note, you mentioned that Curly wasn't there yet. He's going to be devastated when he gets your letter. I feel bad for him, he missed everything.

I'm glad that you at least got to go home and were surrounded by your family. In your last letter, you mentioned that you were working for your father in his campaign, how did the election turn out?

I sure miss you. Making friends here isn't easy. Sure there are the people I work with, but they really aren't friends. Don't get me wrong, there nice people and all. There just isn't a connection with them.

I have been seeing a man, but there isn't really any connection with him either. I know you won't like this, but its pretty much just a physical relationship. I guess I'm not meant to have a meaningful long term relationship with a man. I'm afraid to let anyone get too close. Just look at what happened to the last two men in my life. It looks like I'll just have to settle for short term and meaningless. I envy what you have with Curly. I'd

give anything to have a man like him in my life.

There is, however, a man that I have fallen hopelessly in love with, but it will have to remain my secret and no one can never know how I feel about him because he is happily married to lovely lady and they have delightful little family. I might be casual in my relationships with men lately, but I have enough character as not to go messing around with a married man. I just wish that I could forget about him, but I can't.

Enough about me. I know you have a lot on your mind right now. Its too bad that you can't come and spend a little time with me here in Paradise. You would' love it here.

Since I've been here, I haven't been back to the mainland at all. Sometime I'm going to have to go see my mother in Tacoma. When I do, maybe I can drop down to San Diego and see you too, that is if you're still there.

I don't know what more to say other than how sorry I am for your loss. I really feel bad for you. Just remember everything you told me after Tom was killed, It helped me a lot and I know it will you too. When Curly does get there, give him my love and be sure to give Sandy and Austin a hug from their Aunt Ramona.

*Write to me again and tell me how you're doing. Until then,
Love Ramona*

Running away to Paradise sounded so inviting. Only if it were possible. She wished she could go to the beach back in Coronado and run away as she had before and sit down in the sand and let the surf and sun wash over her. There was one place where she could go to get away, the lake. On Friday morning she left the children with her mother and borrowed her fathers spare car and left early in the morning to get away.

It was a warm sunny day, opposed to the day of the funeral. As she drove out of town and into the countryside, she came to a place where a trail ran along the Roanake River. She pulled off the road and got out of the car and began walking the pathway. It was level and smooth. It wasn't the beach but it would do. Anticipating running, she had worn her sneakers. She began to run. She ran for all she was worth. She hadn't gone far before she realized she was too out of shape after having a baby. It made her angry,

because she didn't have the baby to show for it.

Out of breath, she walked back to the car. She decided that she was going to get up early three days a week and run. By the time she got back to the car she had caught her breath and continued her drive up to the cabin.

She rummaged through the pantry and found something to eat and then sat in the porch swing for a while. It was late morning when she started out for the lake. When she got there, she sat on the old rock skipping log for a while just staring out over the lake. The midday sun felt hot. Running hadn't worked out so well, maybe a swim would be an outlet for the stress she was under.

Since she hadn't brought her bathing suit, she looked around to make sure she was all alone. She put her hair into a bun, slipped off all of her clothes and waded into the lake. The cold water actually felt good as she plunged in. She began swimming for the rock, being careful to conserve her energy. When she reached the rock, she clung to it for moment.

Taking a deep breath, she dove under and began swimming downward. As the cold water closed around her, she could feel the despair that had closed around her. She did not like the feeling and aborted the dive. Once she popped to the surface, she rolled over onto her back and just floated, looking up at the blue sky.

Still feeling the need to exert some energy, she began swimming back and forth from the shore to the rock. After three or four laps, she was ready to get out. After wading ashore, she sat down on the skipping log to drip dry. She let her hair down so it and her skin could dry in the warm sun and light breeze. As she sat motionless, two does emerged from the brush and came right up to the water's edge very near to her. She froze and didn't move a muscle so she wouldn't frighten them off. Geannie felt a complete oneness with nature in a way that she never had before.

After a moment or two, the deer moved on, leaving Geannie to herself. She had dried off, but she continued to set there basking in the sun. The sun's rays felt good on her body. It was as if she was clothed only in God's love. Wearing only the silver cross necklace and her wedding ring, she was completely naked before Him in both body and soul. The necklace had come to symbolize her faith in God. Indeed it was a spiritual experience for her. She felt as if God was telling her that she would be in His hands during the difficult journey that she had ahead of her. Then it dawned on her what day it was. It was Good Friday! The day that Jesus died for the sins and sorrows of the world. She understood in a way that she never had before that it was for her too. He could wipe away her tears and heal her sorrows!

Then she felt the presence that she had encountered while alone with Charles Emmett's body. It was so real that she felt she needed to hide her nakedness from unseen eyes. It lingered for only a moment and was gone.

Geannie now felt so free and unencumbered by care and sorrow, that she didn't want to put her clothes back on as if it was symbolic of putting back on the sorrow she had shed for little while. But she knew that she had too.

As she walked slowly back to the cabin, she listened to the songs of the birds with an intent that she never had before. She heard the "WHIP-poor-WEEA" of the Whip-poor-wills, the "zhee-zhee-zhee-zizizizi zzzeeeet" of the Cerulean Warblers, the "hew-li" of the Baltimore Oriole, and the songs of scores of other types of birds. They sang as if they were chorus under the direction of the Master Maestro. She felt as if they were and they were singing just for her.

Feeling invigorated, Geannie was anxious to get home to her two precious children that she did have. She had been so focused on the one that she did not have that she realized that she had neglected them for the last several days. When she got home, there was plenty of afternoon left. It was put to good use playing with Sandy and Austin.

On Saturday, Geannie, Sarah, and Marie undertook the project of coloring Easter eggs for the annual Austin Easter egg hunt. This was the first time she had been home for Easter since she and Curly moved to Pensacola. It was an all afternoon project and when they were done, they had dozens of brightly colored eggs.

Early the next morning, Geannie helped Marie hide the eggs around their big yard. Sarah and Walt were the first to come with their kids. Then Charlie, Winslow, and Stirling and their families arrived. Grandpa Austin got all twenty one grandchildren lined up in ranks according to age. The preschool aged children were in front and got a head start. The next wave he sent out were those ages six through ten. When the bigger kids were turned loose, they were able to get their share of what remained.

After straightening up cloths and combing hair, they were ready to go to Easter Services. Austin had to go with grass stains on the knees of his britches that he got when he was mowed over by one of the bigger kids.

The Austin Family occupied three rows of pews in the chapel as they sat together. It worked out that Sarah and Geannie occupied the third row. Immediately behind them, the next row was occupied by the Brasons. So they were apart of both families.

For his sermon that day, Walt used the remarks he gave at Charles Emmett's funeral. Geannie didn't remember it as the same and came away with so much more than she had the first time. That sermon coupled with her Good Friday experience at the lake filled her with hope. The real trick would be to not let fear crowd it out.

Geannie emerged from Easter doing doing fairly well. True to her promise, she got up extra early

on Monday morning and after her devotional went running. She walked the three blocks to Elmwood Park where she had plenty of open space. Part of the park included the Roanoke Public Library. One of the parks more interesting features was a Japanese Magnolia tree near the intersection of Jefferson Street and Elm Avenue that was brought from Japan to Roanoke in 1854 by Commodore Matthew Perry.

That first time, she paced herself as not to over exert herself. She felt that she could increase her pace and endurance with time. She deiced that running in a dress wasn't very piratical. Her mother had always taught her that ladies don't wear pants and Geannie agreed with the notion. However, this was one of those activities that justified different apparel. The only time she wore pants was out of necessity, like playing baseball.

Her new bathing suit allowed much more freedom of movement and provided some support. She reasoned that if it worked for swimming, it would work for running. Later in the day she went downtown to see if she could find some pants to go with it. She didn't find anything that she would want to run in, until she came across a pair of flannel pajamas. The bottoms would be perfect! She found a pair in red that matched her bathing suit. All she needed to complete the set was a matching sweater. That wasn't to hard to find.

As the day went on, Geannie began to falter. She felt despair and discouragement overtake her once more. She tried to fight it to no avail. She began experiencing emotions that once were under control. She also began having doubts about things she had been sure of.

For starters, she found herself envious of Sarah. She lived so close to Geannie's mother and came over practically every day, a luxury Geannie only experienced once every year or so. After all, Sarah was only a niece.

She was angry at the Navy for taking Curly away from her at such a difficult time. She felt jealous of his love for flying. She wondered if he loved it more than he did her and the children. She blamed herself somehow for Charles Emmett's heart defect. Had her own body betrayed her as the baby grew and developed?

Her doubts continued to mount as the downward spiral continued. She wondered how her life might have turned out if she had given Bill Casper and the other boys a chance to win her affections. Did she marry Curly simply because it was expected?

She began questioning beliefs she had held fast to all of her life. Were the things she had been taught the way they really are? Is there more to the purpose of life? Where did we really come from? Why exactly are we here? Is there more to the afterlife than heaven and hell? Would she have claim on her husband and children in the world to come? If not, what's the purpose of a family?

Her emotions were all mixed up. It was truly like the roller coaster ride her mother warned her

about. She went through high points where everything seemed clear and hopeful. Then she went through low points where everything was confusing and uncertain.

Thursday morning was a particularly low point. Geannie received a telephone call saying the headstone was finished and ready for installation. They wanted her to meet them at the cemetery to make sure it was acceptable before it was installed. Senator Austin had business at the bank that needed his urgent attention, so Marie went with Geannie and the kids to the cemetery. To Austin, the cemetery looked like a park with all kinds of things to climb on. Sandy did her best to keep Austin from running off while Geannie and Marie were busy.

The headstone was just as she had ordered it. It was a small upright marble stone that simply read, "Charles Emmett Brason, 9 Apr 1930 – 10 Apr 1930, One of God's special angles."

Once the stone was erected, Geannie broke down and cried as she was flooded with overwhelming emotions. She could no longer bear it and had to go back to the car, Sandy held her hand. Marie rounded up Austin and they went home.

As they came up onto the porch, they could hear the telephone ringing, but by the time they got through the door, it had stopped. Geannie went upstairs to her room where she flung herself onto the bed. Eventually she fell asleep for a short while.

Toward mid afternoon she was home alone. Her father was still at the bank and Marie had taken the kids to the park. She was sitting out on the porch swing mired in sorrow when a taxi cab pulled up in front. Could it be? She wasn't expecting him until the next day. Her heart leaped. She got up, but only went as far as the steps, where she clung to the pillar.

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