

## CHAPTER TEN

The time came, as it must, when several of our original students, our very favorite ones, finished their schooling with us. Kay finished first, with Liz and Bandy following two years later. Our first graduate, Polly Bloomington, finished junior college, and returned to us. She worked as a medical technician in a doctor's office in South Williamson. Kay decided not to attend college, but worked full time in the ministry her mother had started. She remained unmarried.

Liz and Bandy wrote a different story. Both of them went to the same college Marvin Reynolds attended, got married there, then went over into West Virginia to start a community church in Bentown. One of the people who missed her most was little Amanda Louise, who adored her. Whenever Liz came to visit, as she often did, no one looked forward to her arrival more than little Louise, as her parents called her. That relationship lasted for the rest of Liz's life.

Our own little Patrick grew by the proverbial leaps and bounds. One day, he lay in the crib sucking on a bottle. The next, it seemed, he was galloping around the house trying everyone's patience by seeing how much he could get into that we had forbidden him to do. His first words, of course, dripped with wisdom well beyond his tender years, even if we couldn't quite make out what they were. The first intelligible word he spoke was "dada" or "mama," depending on who you ask. The three of us had great times walking in the woods around the house, or splashing water on each other at the brook, or fishing at my favorite spot. Emily and I had long since readjusted our relationship, and I loved her more with each passing year. I didn't think that was possible until it happened. All she has to do, even still, is look at me in that special way, and my knees turn to jelly.

The Satanists' school didn't make it, not as a school any way. After three years, they converted into a devil-worshipping church and retreat. Malovich brought in his buddies from far and wide every year for a rousing time of lectures and animal sacrifices. We heard rumors that they practiced human sacrifices as well, and we knew that they mutilated many of their worshippers, because we saw the evidence on the streets and in the stores.

One of the students who did successfully complete a course of study at the school was Brett Halcomb, a burly youth from Bentown, of all places. He entered into all the rites and rituals enthusiastically, and bragged publicly about how thoroughly evil he became. No one argued with him about that. After the school closed, he still came by the place regularly. Eventually, he went into business for himself, in Bentown. He became the center of a strong Satanic cult in his home town, in spite of having a wife who called herself Christian. He made Liz's and Bandy's life miserable for many years..

My first love died when I was thirty-five. Auntie Mae lived a long, good life, and she lived long enough to hear my son call her "Mama." She had spent eighty-six years in this world, most of them in the Lord's service. She bore no children in her flesh, but I never knew any other mother but her. What I have accomplished in this life I owe to the Lord's work, and Mae Crandall served as His chief instrument from the day I met her up until the time she died. People from all over Pike County and from several states came to her funeral. She died without pain, at peace with the world and with her Lord. We buried her with that same feeling of peace she possessed, and with a taste of the quiet joy that she always bore with grace and dignity. Forever after, the big old house she called home always held a sense of her continuing presence.

Many times since Mae Mae's death I have thanked God He took her before the worst of the bad times came upon us. She missed a lot of the pain and suffering the Lord allowed us to endure in the years following her departure. My own private hell was not my years in college, in a drug-induced stupor; I forgot those years and left the pain behind me. What the Devil sent my way several years after Mae Mae died left wounds and

scars that trouble me to this day.

Lamar frequently went to Marvin's church to preach at revival services.. To return the favor, Marvin sometimes came to our church to conduct services. One of the young men who came forward, was Max Trundle, Jack Baker's first cousin. He came to visit us once with Jack, and ended up staying.

Max moved to Pikeville, and taught Sunday school in Marvin's church. Some of his students came to the Lord in Max's class; he was only nineteen at the time, and it thrilled him to think that he, too, could lead someone to the Lord. When Amanda Louise grew into a beautiful young woman of sixteen years, she attracted Max's attention. He courted her for several years before Lamar and Pam finally consented to let them marry. Something happened to Max afterward, and he drifted away from the Lord. It broke Pam's heart, but Louise steadfastly refused to leave him, insisting that the Lord would draw him back one day. Max drifted into politics, and ran successfully for political office. He served as a magistrate on the fiscal court for years.

Evil often takes on a face of innocence. One of the students who came to our school, one of hundreds over the years, was Bob McCrattick. Nothing struck me as remarkable about the boy of ten; he seemed shy and withdrawn, but many came to us like that. After a few months, the atmosphere of love and concern at the school usually brought most kids out of their shell. Bob proved to be an exception, but he wasn't the first one. His parents professed to be Christians, but their lives bore little evidence of faith in Christ. After six months, they withdrew young Bob from school, and we thought no more about it, except to keep the youngster on our prayer list.

Bob left us at the end of February. At the beginning of April, after a lovely spring day had passed, Max Trundle drove up our road, and parked in front of the house. The County Judge Executive had named Max to fill an unexpired term of yet another sheriff who died in office. My mind flashed back to all those years before when Sheriff Scranton stopped in front of our gate, but Max's visit did not end with prayer as Scranton's had. Max no longer prayed, and I sensed at once he hadn't come on a social call.

"Evening, Max. It's good to see you over our way; it's been a while. Come on in and sit a spell."

"Can't stay, Hank. We have to get back." I caught the plural reference.

"Hank Crandall, I'm placing you under arrest. You've got five minutes to get some things together and come with me."

"Arrested? You've got to be kidding, Max. On what charge?"

"One of your students says you forced him to have sex with you. His parents swore out a warrant."

"One of *my* students? I don't believe it. Who?"

Emily had come outside now. "Hank? What's wrong? What's he saying?"

With growing incredulity, I saw Max, once a good friend and brother, actually draw his gun, and point it at me. "You'll find out all about it, soon enough. Either get something together, or come as you are."

I saw Emily's face grow deathly pale as I turned to go into the house. How could something like this happen, especially here, where the Lord had promised us safe haven? My mind refused to work properly as I walked up to our bedroom to throw a few clothes into an overnight bag. Emily followed me up the stairs, sobbing. I put my arms around her as I started out of the room, and assured her, lamely, that things would be all right. The Lord had never failed us before.

When I walked back out to meet Max, he actually hand cuffed me, like a dangerous criminal, and shoved me into the back seat of his car. He spoke not a word to me, and in response to my questions, just told me to keep my mouth shut. We drove in silence all the way to Pikeville, a trip of close to an hour. On arrival, Max took me a police magistrate, who formally charged me with raping a minor child, one Bob McCrattick. My astonishment at the whole thing grew. I did not have the child in my class, and did not spend a single minute alone with him during the months he attended our school. Apparently, someone in high places had determined to destroy our ministry by going after me. It mattered little to these men whether or not a charge had any validity; if they hadn't used poor little Bob, it would have been someone else.

The jail cell they took me to reeked of urine, rotting food and feces. Three other men occupied the six by eight foot cell; which was only five feet high. There wasn't a clean spot on the filthy floor, and we could neither stand up completely nor stretch out comfortably, without kicking someone else. In the light of the deputy's flashlight, I saw the three emaciated forms; all three men looked like death warmed over, their skeletal forms barely stirring when the deputy shoved me inside. "We hope you like the luxurious accommodations," he said as he closed the door. He laughed at his own humor as he walked away.

The cell had no light, nor did the hall way outside, and the place had no windows. Total darkness settled over the place after the deputy closed the outer door. Only one of my cell mates had enough energy left to talk; I discovered that they, too, were Christians, arrested on the same kind of trumped-up charges, and left here to die. The guard brought a crust of moldy bread and a foul-tasting liquid he called soup once a day, along with a cup of water. Nothing more; the prisoners here literally starved to death, over a period of weeks or months. That was the easy part.

It strained my credulity to think that this sort of thing went on so close to our home, and no one had heard about it. Had God deserted me, just as He had these poor wretches? Even as the thought came to my mind, I knew it wasn't true. In the days ahead, though, the same question came back to my mind over and over, not always so easily dismissed.

One of the men died some time later; I heard his death rattle. The one who had spoken briefly to me passed out from weakness and exhaustion, having spent most of what little strength he had left. I dozed fitfully after a long while, my prayers finally as silent as the cell. I had seen other cells down the hall, but I had no idea if they held people or not. An eternity of darkness and rats and filth passed before the outer door finally opened again. I told the guard one of the others had died, but he just snarled, and took back one of the rations of slop he had shoved into our cell. I gave my ration of food to my new-found friend, who didn't seem bothered by the odor of the gross liquid in the bowls. My stomach turned at the very idea of putting it into my mouth; before my ordeal finished, I consumed every drop greedily. The other man with us remained barely alive; he was too weak to eat, so I dribbled some water and a little of the gruel down his throat. He wouldn't last much longer.

One or more of the guards came by regularly to take the prisoners out for "recreation." That consisted of any sort of sadistic game the guards could contrive. They burned their charges with cigarettes, broke their fingers, scraped their skin off with dull razors, or whatever else caught their fancy. None of us had a hearing, or a trial, and the warden allowed no visitors. My friend had no idea how long he had been there, much less the others, since no one could tell day from night in this hell hole.

Our guard returned one day to retrieve the tin plates and cups, and he didn't come alone. The guard with him was huge, a massive bulge of fat with a tiny head on top. This one opened the cell, and dragged me out with a vise-like grip. He slapped hand cuffs on me again, and punched and kicked me out the door and up the stairs. "Recreation hour for the new prisoner," called the other guard from behind us, laughing that same ugly laugh.

They took me to an enclosed area behind the Hall of Justice, which housed the county jail. This had, indeed, once been an exercise yard for the prisoners, but I saw no one about but the three of us. Bright sunlight all but blinded my eyes; it was about noon, but of what day? Our comedian made some kind of joke about

teaching the teacher a lesson. Their sport consisted mostly of kicking me around like a foot ball for this first session; I could feel at least one of my ribs crack, and I lost a couple of teeth when one of them kicked me in the mouth. I prayed for them and for myself all through the pain and the howling taunts of my tormentors, until finally I passed out. They revived me with a bucket of water in the face, and started again. The next time I lost consciousness I didn't regain it until I awoke in the darkness of the cell, the taste and smell of my own blood greeting me before I even opened my eyes. Immediately after this came the screaming awareness of pain. I hurt in every single part of my body, a heavy, crushing pain unlike anything I had ever known before.

There followed a succession of days, I lost count of how many, which followed the same routine: a period of darkness, with death all around, followed by periods of blazing light punctuated with white hot pain. The guards wired my genitals with electric wires; drove lighted matches under my finger nails, and drove nails through my hands. I could hear someone screaming in the distance through all of this, vaguely aware that it was me. I survived only by removing myself from my physical body and the things it experienced. I lived in a kind of shell, serenely talking to the Lord, and asking if He would please help that poor wretch out there. From time to time the pain would break through my every defense, and I'm sure I must have cursed even God Himself at those times.

It ended one day, quite suddenly and unexpectedly. At least, I thought it had ended. This time when they hauled me out of my cell, they took me to a more normal one, with a bed and windows. A doctor came to see me, I vaguely recall, and bound up some of my wounds. Someone other than the guards I knew came and fed me liquids for several days until I regained some of my strength; I didn't see Max, to my knowledge, through any of this. I could finally tolerate solid food again, and what they fed me tasted like manna from heaven after what I had eaten for so long. I began to wonder what sinister motive lay behind this sudden kindness, unwilling to believe that my deliverance was nigh.

A few days later, I found out. Max came into my cell one morning after I had eaten. "How you doing, Hank, old buddy. We treating you good?" I said not a word, just staring at him through narrowed eyes. "Cat got your tongue? No matter. We have something special in mind for you. It seems Mr. Malovich has taken an interest in your case, though I can't imagine why. He wants to use you in an experiment, a 'Re-Education Program,' he calls it. Oh, by the way, seems they found you guilty on all counts, since that's the way we recorded your plea with the Judge. He doesn't take kindly to boy lovers, so he sentenced you to twenty years of hard labor. Mr. Malovich has you under a special agreement with the court."

I spoke finally. "What about my wife? Can't you at least let her know where I am?"

Max laughed, in his dry way. "We told her you were killed in a prison uprising. She's probably spreading her legs for another stud by now." I swung at him, but he just laughed and knocked me to the floor. He turned on his heel and left, and I didn't see him again for a long while after that. Malovich himself came by that evening, along with two of the goons who served as his protection. They bundled me out to a waiting van, and threw me in the back. I was the sole passenger.

We drove for a long while, stopping several times. One of the bodyguards opened the back door of the van once, and shoved some food at me. From my brief glance at the outside world, I had no idea where I was, except that I saw a four lane highway nearby. That probably meant we had headed north, towards Malovich's base in Ohio. When the door finally opened again, I saw we had come to a stop inside some sort of compound, with armed men walking about. Malovich came to the door and extended his hand. "Welcome to the Malovich Occult Re-Education Center." I refused the proffered hand, and one of the bodyguards slapped me for my insolence. "Now, now, Donnie, be nice to our guest. He'll learn what's going on soon enough."

I know now that everything that happened to me, from my arrest by Max through the abuse at the jail, to the sudden kindness, made up part of a carefully conceived plot. They made me their guinea pig, a test case. I am astonished even now at their willingness to go to such great effort and expense for someone who served, after

all, only as the headmaster of a small Christian school. At the time, I knew only that I did not like Malovich, and that I mistrusted everything he said and did. I had not lost my faith in the Lord, by any means, and I determined that nothing this man did would change that.

The kindness routine continued. A young woman met us, and took me inside of one of the dormitories, as I assumed the long, low buildings to be. She took me to a neatly furnished room with a comfortable bed, a fresh change of clothes, and the incredible luxury of a private bath. She left me with a smile, telling me to just tell the guard outside if she could help in me in any way. Soft music played from somewhere inside the walls, and I soon fell asleep on the bed, too tired to do more in the bathroom than urinate. When I woke up later, I found someone had placed a tray of food and a pot of coffee by my bed, and pajamas for sleeping. I took a shower and shaved for the first time in weeks; the clock radio in the room had a date setting which showed May 15; almost six weeks had passed!!

Later that night, when I slept, I felt the bed move. In the dim light coming through the window, I saw a naked female form slide under the sheets. The soft, warm body pressed against me, and the woman's hands began doing things to me that brought my own body back to life again. I could see clearly that Malovich intended this as a device to ensnare me in lust and guilt. I pushed the hands firmly away, and reached over with my free hand to turn on the bed side lamp.

The astonished face of my female attendant stared back at me. "Go back to your master, " I said, " and tell him this particular trap failed. Satan is a liar, and you are a wretched slave of filth. Now, get out."

Her face went almost wild with fear. "Please, no. Please don't make me leave. They'll beat me if I don't do as they say. Donnie almost killed me the last time I failed."

So, I wasn't the first one. "Please, just let me stay, and I'll make noises like we're having sex. Just let me stay here, and I'll put my clothes back on."

I agreed to let her stay, and she got up and put her clothes back on. From time to time, she made noises like she would have in making love, and I tried a few myself. For the most part, though, we just talked. Her name was Lanesa Brier, and she came from a near-by town dominated by the Satanists. She had been raised in a Satanic cult, like most of the people in this place. She allowed me to pray for her before she left a couple of hours later.

The next day, Donnie came by, about 9:00, and took me to a room which I judged to be some kind of laboratory. There, a man dressed in a white lab coat came by and administered a shot to me, and left. About half an hour later, I started feeling airy and strange, as if I were floating somewhere. A warm blanket gradually settled over me, and I lost most of my capacity to decide what I should do or how I would do it. Worse still, I didn't even care. A small voice from somewhere in the inner recesses of my mind warned me to be careful, but I thought that was just foolishness.

The man in the white frock returned after a while. He started waving something shiny in front of my eyes, and I realized vaguely he meant to hypnotize me. When I woke up again, part of my mind was missing. I forgot my name, where I was at the moment, and most other things that gave me my identity. The nice doctor, who called me his good friend – who was I to argue? – asked me how I felt.

"Great, Doc, but, just one thing – what's my name?"

"You've been sick for a while, with amnesia. We're going to help you regain your memories. Your name is Mark Mantill, and you're a priest in the Church of Satan."

"Well, Ill take your word about the name, Doc, but I know that other part's not right. I'm a Christian, you know. Somebody fed you some wrong info."

He swore under his breath, but his face showed no emotion. "You could be right, Mark, but I don't know. Your wife is outside. You want to see her?"

I was puzzled, not remembering anything about a wife here, but knowing I had one somewhere, a long time ago. "Wife? I've got a wife?"

He went to the door, and walked outside for a moment. He returned with an attractive brunette whose face did look vaguely familiar. She came over to me, threw her arms around me, and kissed me. "Mark, darling! Are you feeling better? I've been so worried about you!"

I told her I felt fine, but didn't remember much. She took me back to my hospital room. The big man there was an orderly, she said, named Donnie. I remembered something about him, too, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

That night my wife and I made love there in my hospital room. As much as I enjoyed it, it didn't seem right somehow. Why did my wife cry?