



CHAPTER TWELVE

It takes two men to pry the girl off the man. They have to restrain her from attacking him again. Her pretty face is distorted with hatred. George walks over to where the men hold and puts his hand on her shoulder.

“Let go of it! If you keep on with so much hatred in you, it will destroy you. You are no more free than he was. The Lord has forgiven you; can’t you forgive him, too?”

She shakes her head fiercely. “You don’t know what he did to me!”

“No, I don’t. I’ve never met you before. Why don’t you tell me, everything.”

With a visible effort she takes a deep, shuddering breath and begins her story.

“My name is Mary Sue, Mary Sue Langley. I’ve lived in Beckley all my life, down on the south side of town. My mother and father were both Christians and they raised me as one, too. I grew up in the church. Mr. Boomers, who owns this house, was one of the members of our church before the police closed it down.

“When I was fifteen years old I was coming home one night with my parents from a revival meeting up in Oak Hill. We still had our car when most people didn’t. Anyway, we were coming down the four lane about nine o’clock at night, near Mt. Hope, when another car crossed the median and hit us dead on.

“My mother and father were both killed instantly, but the rescue squad pulled me out alive. The drunk in the other car, which was built like a tank, was barely scratched. I had a concussion and multiple cuts and bruises. I was in the hospital unconscious for three days. When I came to, they wouldn’t tell me about my parents; they said they were in another room and I’d see them later.

“When they finally told me they were dead, I cried for two days and refused to eat. They released me from the hospital finally and I had no idea where to go or what to do. When I got home, by hitchhiking, I found the house had already been taken by the bank. I got a public attorney to help me with the estate, but after the house was sold at auction and the creditors paid, there was precious little left. I bought an old shack in a bad part of town. I had no relatives to take me in and I was too proud to ask for help from the church.

“I got a job as a waitress in the evenings and went to school during the day. As soon as I reached sixteen I dropped out of school and went to work full time. All through that time no one from the church ever bothered to ask about me or see if I needed anything. I was very bitter about that, although I knew the Security Police were rounding up a lot of the church members and boarding up the church buildings.

“For a while I thought about joining the new Church of Universal Being that sprang up in so many places, but my training as a Christian was too strong. The things they taught were just so much mumbo jumbo to me.

“Finally, one night I thought the church cared about me after all. I was walking home after work and this man pulls up beside me in a car. I was used to being harassed by men so I just ignored him. When he spoke to me, though, I recognized his voice. It was Art here, who had been a member of our church and a friend of my father’s. He said, ‘Mary Sue! I haven’t seen you since your parents died. What are you doing walking out alone in this part of town this time of the night?’

“‘I live here, Mr. Night. I’m on my way home from work.’

“‘Well, hop in. I’ll drop you off anywhere you say.’

“I had no reason not to trust him. I’d known him all of my life. That first night he just took me home, dropped me off and left. In the weeks after that, I saw him several times. He started giving me money. I didn’t want to take it, but he insisted.

“One evening he said he wanted to see where I lived, how it looked inside. He said maybe he could help get me some decent furniture. As soon as we got inside, he closed the door behind him and locked it. His face got real ugly and mean.

“He said, ‘Now comes the pay off, Baby. The free ride is over.’

“I said, ‘What do you mean, Mr. Night? I don’t understand.’

“He grabbed me by the arm, real hard, and twisted it behind my back. He forced me into the bedroom, tore my clothes off, and raped me. He threatened to kill me if I screamed. Afterward he bragged about all of the other women he had raped; some of them are right here in this room. He raped me again before he finally left. I lived in fear for a while after that, but he never came near me again.

“Three months later I found out I was pregnant. I was more frightened than ever. I thought about having an abortion, but I couldn’t bring myself to do it. I had the baby at home, all alone. I called him Jimmy and he’s the only good thing that came out of all that mess. He’s three years old now. I’ve been dreaming of revenge on Art for every day of those three years and for all the time I was pregnant before that. When I heard that the old church group was meeting here at Roy’s house I decided to see if Art might be here. The rest you know.”

A confusion of emotions permeates the room during the telling of her lengthy tale. Some of the people show pity and outrage, others disgust. A couple of the women are deeply distressed and begin weeping. When Mary Sue finishes, they confess that Art seduced and raped them in the past as well. A strong current of anger rises against the man, who remains unconscious.

George tries to change the mood. After getting the group’s attention, he speaks once more.

“I know you are very angry toward this poor man here, but you must understand he was demon-directed. He was a slave, with no more control over what he did than any other slave. Have you forgotten who you are and whose you are? The Lord tells us that if we do not forgive others their trespasses, he will not forgive ours either. Do you want to face life with the knowledge that your sin will no longer be forgiven?

“The Lord has delivered this man. If he chooses to accept Jesus once more as the Lord of his life, you have gained a brother. Don’t turn him away if he truly repents. If he refuses to change, then cast him out from your midst. Whatever you do, though, don’t let him leave unforgiven. That’s for your sake, as well as his.”

He gets down on the floor near Art, who is still dead to the world. He takes the man’s hand and prays for him quietly. Art opens his eye and looks around, then up at George.

“What happened? Where am I? Something made me come here, but I don’t remember much after that.”

“You’ve been delivered from bondage. The Lord drove two demons out of you.”

“Demons? Is that what made me do all those awful things? I knew what I was doing wasn’t right, for years, but I couldn’t stop it. I tried to pray and nothing ever came out. I asked others to pray for me, but it never did any good.”

“When did it all start?”

“About five years ago, I guess. Seems like a lifetime. I started out playing with a ouija board, with some friends, as a game. It got to where it wasn’t a game anymore. From there, I started following horoscopes and visiting mediums. All of these horrible thoughts began popping into my head and I started acting on them. I couldn’t stop. I went to a séance and met Tukomis, my ‘spirit guide’ they said. I never would admit to myself that any of it was connected with demons; I just called them ‘spirits.’

“I see three of the women here I abused. I know they must all hate me.”

“We’ll see about that in a few minutes. First of all, I have to ask you a few questions.

“Do you confess that your involvement with ouija boards, horoscopes and mediums was wrong, a sin in God’s sight?”

“Oh, yes, I know it was wrong, all of it.”

“Will you repent of all the things you have done and ask God for His forgiveness?”

“Of course, if He’ll have me after all the things I’ve done.”

“He will. He’s accepted worse than you back into the fold. Pray with me now.”

George leads him a prayer of confession and repentance. Some in the room bow their heads; others do not. When the prayer finishes the atmosphere in the room is warmer, but some still bear resentment against Art.

George asks each of the three women who suffered because of Art’s demon-driven spite to pray with him. He speaks with each in a corner of the room. Though they still have the hurt, and have only repressed the anger they feel, each agrees to publicly forgive Art and take his hand as a brother in Christ.

Two hours have passed since George first entered the house. He is at last ready to teach from the Word. He asks those with Bibles to turn to the Book of Revelation. His teaching concerns the prophecies of the End Times, which he discusses in some detail.

“These things are already coming to pass. We all know about the earthquake, the fire and hail, the famines, the plagues and the persecution of Christians. In Rome right now lives a man who calls himself the Pontifex Maxima and who openly says he intends to extend his rule all over the world. He has already replaced the Pope and considers himself to be the world’s spiritual leader. This man, dear brethren, is the Antichrist of the Scriptures. Our trials have begun already, but there is much, much more to come. You will be hunted down like animals. You will be tortured and made to die hideous deaths.

“Those weak in the faith must spend much time in studying the Word and in prayer. The strong must be on guard and help the weak among you. All who remain faithful will win an eternal reward; those who turn their backs on Christ will spend eternity in Hell. The choice is yours. Let us pray.”

After the prayer time they sing and rejoice. The hour is so late when they finish and the people leave that George accepts Roy’s offer to stay in his house.

Late in the night a car drives up to Roy’s house, and an officer of the Security Police steps out. He has no menace in him, only a sense of urgency. He pounds on Roy’s door for several minutes before the old man finally answers. The officer steps inside the house but leaves only moments later. Shortly after that Roy knocks on George’s door. George gets up from the bed, crosses the room and opens the door.

“George, I’ve just talked to one of our Christian brothers with the Security Police. Someone has told them about you. The Sheriff has his men out looking, and they’ll be doing a house-by-house search in known Christian neighborhoods. You have to leave town. You can get out of town from here by going down the hill behind the house and climbing the ridge on the other side. If there’s anything I have that you need, you’ve got it.”

George dresses quickly and goes downstairs. He accepts a blanket and coat since his things are in Stan’s house. After a quick prayer and a hug from his host, he sets out yet again. He has finished the Lord’s work here.

We have no problems in the trip out of town. As always, the Lord has been true to His promise. Revival has come to the little coal field city and George is safely away.

Over the following days George retraces his steps, visiting again the churches he helped establish or renew. Some of them flourish, others just hold their own and still others are dead or dying. It has always been thus. Everywhere George hears stories of persecution, both from neighbors and family and from official sources. Everywhere also he sees churches which were once Christian proclaiming themselves to be part of the “Church of Universal Being.” Here and there he sees statues to the self-styled Pontifex, but these are still just statues so far, with no remarkable powers like those that will come later.

One morning, after a hard night’s travel, George tops a ridge to find himself looking down on a disturbing sight. Below lie the charred remains of the town where Jack and Mary and so many others lived and died, where little Julie was born and Gran

Leighton stood fast in the Lord. It has been so dry that the burned buildings sit starkly bare, with no new grass or weeds to cover the scars.

We are not alone. Somehow, after all the time we spent in Beckley, Green has found us. It was on this very hill, almost on this very spot, that he killed Julie. He makes no attempt now to hide his presence from us. George hears the rumbling, crashing sound of his nemesis coming through the trees and silently seeks the Lord in prayer.

Go down among the ruins. The time has come for deliverance. It is there I have chosen to destroy the demon.

George gives thanks to God, then heads down the hill. He walks into the scorched and burned area that was once the town, with Green following hard behind. In the center of what was once the main street, he turns to face the beast. The time of reckoning has come at last.