

A
MOMENT TO LOVE

TRACIE
PETERSON

THE HOPE *of* CHEYENNE

3



A
MOMENT TO LOVE

Books by Tracie Peterson

THE HOPE OF CHEYENNE

A Constant Love
Designed with Love
A Moment to Love

THE TREASURES OF NOME*

Forever Hidden
Endless Mercy
Ever Constant

THE HEART OF CHEYENNE

A Love Discovered
A Choice Considered
A Truth Revealed

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Wherever You Go
What Comes My Way

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Finding Us
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Refining Fire
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*with Kimberley Woodhouse



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Prologue

APRIL 10, 1865

PHILADELPHIA, PA

After four years of conflict and bitterness between the North and the South, General Robert E. Lee had surrendered the day before to Ulysses S. Grant at a place called Appomattox Court House. For all his ten years, Spencer Duval could only remember the country at war, and he really had no idea of what surrender might mean for the country.

His father, Harrison Duval, had been gone much of the time during the conflict, working for the Pinkerton Agency, hunting down deserters, profiteers, and other criminal types who sought to benefit from the country's condition. Spencer and his mother, meanwhile, kept the home fires burning in Philadelphia while they prayed for Pa's safety as he performed his job. They prayed, too, for the war to stay far away from the city of "Brotherly Love." Nothing was more terrifying to Spencer's mother than the thought of a war being fought in their hometown. It was frightening enough to both when the Battles of Gettysburg and Hanover had taken place just two years earlier. But now, Spencer knew a

sense of victory and elation, as most of the celebratory crowd did. His father, however, said there was still a lot to do. That gave Spencer's mother very little to celebrate. She worried that his job with the Pinkertons was even more dangerous than fighting in the war.

"It's good that this war has finally come to an end," Spencer's father said as the people around them continued to celebrate. He'd only been home a few days, and even then, it was only because the man he was hunting had been seen in town. Spencer had been intrigued by his father's stories of Eugene Astor, a bounty jumper, who pretended to sign up to fight in the war only to take the bonuses offered and flee. Astor and his brothers had made a career over the last four years of robbing the government this way. Theirs was a treasonable act, and Astor's two younger brothers had already been killed, having refused to surrender when caught by the Pinkertons. Only Astor remained, and he had proven nearly impossible to locate, much less to capture.

Pa tightened his hold on Spencer's shoulder. Spencer looked up to see his father's jaw clench. It was a sure sign that he'd spotted something.

"Do you see him, Pa?"

Spencer had been instructed to not gawk around while looking for the man. Not that he knew what Eugene Astor looked like. Pa had explained to Spencer what they were doing and why. He figured a man in the crowd with a boy at his side wouldn't be seen as a threat—definitely not thought of as a Pinkerton.

The idea of being a part of his father's covert operation had excited Spencer to no end. He longed to grow up and follow in his father's footsteps. He wanted so much to be a Pinkerton and root out criminals. When his father was able to be home, Spencer had listened to his stories for hours while Pa worked to show Spencer tricks of the trade. Now

Spencer got to see him working up close. It was the proudest day of his life.

“No, I thought I did, but it wasn’t him.”

A man took the podium atop the outdoor stage and began. “Friends, we have come here today to give thanks to God for putting an end to this horrific and abominable war. Let us pray.”

Spencer noted most everyone bowed their head in reverence, but Pa took the opportunity to sweep the crowd. He didn’t miss a thing, and Spencer tried to be just as astute. Pa always told him to look for the thing that was out of the ordinary—the person or object that didn’t belong.

Every man in attendance had removed his hat, including Pa, with exception to one. That man now eased across the farthest gathering of people. He wasn’t at all remarkable in appearance, but the fact that he wasn’t praying with the others struck Spencer as odd. It struck his father as infinitely more. He took off, weaving his way through the audience. Spencer had his instructions for just such an occasion. He was to move closer to the stage and stay there until his father returned for him. But something in Spencer refused to be obedient. He followed his father instead.

The man who’d been moving through the back of the crowd disappeared down the alley. Pa gave pursuit, and Spencer did as well. Somewhere among the people was Pa’s best friend, Aloysius Gable, another Pinkerton. Spencer glanced around, wondering if Al had already maneuvered around to corner Astor.

The prayer was finished, and the speaker introduced someone to great applause. Spencer didn’t care. He was struggling to keep up with his father. It dawned on him more than once that he needed to stop and return to the stage. His father had made it clear that he wasn’t to follow him. It was far too dangerous. Astor hadn’t been known to kill, but now that he

knew his brothers were dead, there was no telling what he might be compelled to do. He just might be of a mind to seek revenge. Pa and Al had even discussed the possibility that Astor would seek to shoot down some of the men speaking that day. One of the men had been among Harrison Duval's team searching for Astor's brothers. When they had been fired upon by Calvin Astor, it was this man who had claimed the death shot. He was also a war hero and slated to speak to the crowd since he was home recovering from a wound that had taken his left arm.

Pa disappeared momentarily, and Spencer strained to see where he'd gone. They were headed for the alley, so Spencer kept moving toward it, hoping that once he cleared the mass of people, he'd once again see his father.

He broke through a group of older women, who chided him for his rudeness. He tipped his cap and pressed on. There would be time to apologize later. Right now, he had to find Pa. He stepped into the alley, seeing nothing. The applause erupting behind him made it difficult to listen for telltale signs of activity, but Spencer finally heard what sounded like boot steps running. He sprang forward, hoping he might reach his father and Al just as they caught their man.

The sound of gunfire slowed his pace only momentarily. Spencer knew his father was armed. Al, too, carried a gun. But it was a single shot he heard. No exchange. Whoever had fired had either hit his mark or was prevented from firing again.

Something came barreling around the corner. Spencer pressed himself against the brick wall and watched as a couple of stray cats yowled and a large wooly dog came bounding down the alley. The stench of trash assaulted Spencer's nose as the cats ripped through some unmentionable slop and dashed across the toes of Spencer's boots. The dog followed, not giving Spencer a second glance.

There was shouting around the next corner, and Spencer

refocused on why he'd come in the first place. He crept down the alley, doing his best to be silent and invisible. The alley came to a T at the end, and Spencer knew he'd have to go right or left. The voices were coming from the right, and so he figured that was where he'd find his father. He hugged the wall with his cheek flat against the brick. In complete silence, he stretched his neck just far enough to peek around the corner.

"You're done for, Astor. Give up like a man and accept your consequences." Pa stood facing a man matching the description of Astor he had shared prior to their outing. The man was of medium build with brown hair combed straight back, and a scar edged the left side of his lower jaw. He was dressed like many of the politicians and businessmen who'd amassed around the stage. Three-piece brown suit with a frock coat that hit mid-thigh. White shirt, black tie, and scuffed black boots. He also held a revolver, not so unlike the one Spencer's father held.

"We are at a standoff, Pinkerton, but I will end that momentarily. If I'm not mistaken, you are one of the men who helped corner my brothers. Poor Calvin and Amos." He gave a tscking sound. "Cut down in their prime, and for what?"

"For lying to the government. For signing up to fight, taking the bonuses offered, and then deserting. Last count I had, you and your brothers pulled that scheme nearly two hundred times in as many towns."

Astor smiled. "And that was worthy of death? We did what we had to in order to keep our mother fed and housed. If we'd left to fight in that senseless war, she'd have been alone. What did we do that harmed anyone? What did they do that was worthy of death?"

Spencer watched his father. His gaze never left Astor. He stood completely still, gun leveled at the man's heart. Astor did likewise. Neither seemed to so much as blink.

“You broke the law and deceived the government. You weren’t the only bounty jumpers, but you were the busiest.”

“You can hardly fault a man for being good at what he does,” Astor said with a slight shrug. “But that still isn’t call to kill two young men who’d never harmed a single soul in their lives.”

“They were the first to draw their guns and fire. They refused to surrender and meant to kill us.”

“Out of desperation to remain alive.”

“We wouldn’t have shot them if they’d surrendered.” Spencer noted the tone of his father’s voice. He wanted an end to this matter . . . a peaceful solution. His father hated taking a life and would much rather take Astor in alive. At least he hadn’t dropped to one knee. His father routinely knelt when certain he would have to fire his weapon. The fact that he hadn’t yet gave Spencer hope that maybe Astor would give up.

“No, you would have hanged them for treason.”

“This is at an end, Astor. You’re under arrest. Drop the gun.”

For just a moment, Spencer thought the man was going to comply—then everything seemed to happen at once. Pa went down on his knee as Astor’s eyes narrowed, and a single shot rang out.

Spencer watched his father’s head lurch. The revolver fell from his hands. Without thinking, Spencer screamed and ran to him. “Pa!” He grabbed hold of his father’s shoulders and pulled him back. The life had gone out of his eyes. He was dead.

“No, Pa. Don’t die. Pa!” Spencer cradled his father’s bloody head and rocked back and forth, mindless of Astor.

To his surprise, the man came and knelt beside them. “The score has been settled. This is a day to end all wars.”

Spencer stared at him from tear-blurred eyes and mem-

orized everything about Astor. His score might have been settled, but not Spencer's. One day he would find Eugene Astor and make him pay for what he'd done.

A shout and several voices sounded from somewhere behind Spencer. Astor got to his feet and fled down the alley. Spencer could still hear the man's voice. Still see his blue eyes search Spencer's face as if looking for an answer to a question he'd not posed.

The score hasn't been settled, Mr. Astor. This war isn't over.



JANUARY 23, 1875

CHEYENNE, WYOMING TERRITORY

“What did Mrs. Ostrander mean that you're my mama-sister?” Carrie Vogel asked her mother.

“Carrie, we've talked about this before.” Her mother kept ironing the shirt she was working on. “Remember we talked about how my mama died when I was young, and yours died when you were born. Her name was Sarah, and she was my stepmother. She married our father. When she died, I promised her I would take care of you.”

“I don't understand. How can you be my mama and my sister?” Carrie struggled to comprehend it all. She had never really paid much attention to what was being said about the origins of her birth. Marybeth Vogel was the only mother she had ever known. Edward Vogel was her father.

Her mother stopped the ironing and fixed Carrie with a loving gaze. “Come sit with me, and we'll go over everything one more time.” She put the iron on the stove and then headed for the door.

Carrie followed her mother to the living room and took a seat in the chair her father usually sat in. A warming fire

blazed in the hearth as Mama took to her rocking chair. Carrie glanced to the window to see snow was falling once again. It was beautiful, and she usually loved to watch it, but today she felt such a jumble of feelings. Ever since Mrs. Ostrander had said what she had, Carrie had the sensation that she was about to lose something important. Mama began to speak, and Carrie forced her attention away from the snow.

“Sarah Murphy was your mother—the woman who gave birth to you. She married our father, Klaus Kruger, in 1864. You were born in December of 1865. I was eighteen years old, and Sarah and I had become close friends. I loved her very much. I loved you too. I always wanted brothers and sisters.

“You were so tiny and sweet. A head of blond wavy hair just as you have now. And those blue eyes—eyes with a color unlike any other.”

Carrie had often had complete strangers talk about her eyes. They were powerful and a shade very unlike most. They seemed almost illuminated, her mama had once said. As if a light were shining within them to draw everyone’s attention to their intense blue color.

“From the moment I first saw you, I fell in love with you.” Mama smiled in her reassuring way. “I was so proud to be your big sister. But then your mama got sicker, and the doctor said he couldn’t save her. She knew she was going to die and made me promise to take care of you—to be your mama. I gave my word that I would, and she died. From that moment on, I became your mama. I’ve taken care of you as a mama would. I’ve loved you and raised you. Our father died when you were not quite two years old, but he, too, loved you very much. He often said that his girls reminded him of happier times. Then I married Edward Vogel—the man you know as your papa. He gave you his name, just as he did me. He loves you dearly, just as he loves your brothers and sister.”

“So nobody is my real mama and papa?”

“Oh, Carrie, come here.” Mama held her arms open, and Carrie climbed up on her lap. Mama’s arms wrapped around her. “Carrie, sometimes real mamas and papas are people who come along to do the job when others couldn’t. I’m no less your mother just because I was your sister first. We’re just doubly blessed with a bond that can never be broken. Your papa feels the same way. We are your real parents and always will be.”

Carrie placed her head on Mama’s shoulder. “It just feels sad. I wish I could have known my mama Sarah and papa Klaus.”

“I wish you could have too. I tell you what. I can tell you stories about them so that you’ll get to know them that way. I can tell you how much they loved you and how happy they were to know they had a beautiful baby girl. Your mama was so excited for you to be born. She and I made all sorts of little clothes for you. I saved some of the ones she made because I wanted you to have them one day. Would you like to see them now?”

Carrie jumped up. “Yes! Where are they?”

Mama laughed and headed for her bedroom. “They’re in my hope chest. Come along.”

They went into her parents’ bedroom, and at the foot of the bed was a large cedar chest. Mama opened it and began going through some of the contents. She set aside an assortment of things and finally pulled up a paper-wrapped bundle.

Untying the twine, Mama glanced at Carrie. “Your mama could make the most beautiful clothes. Her embroidery was absolute perfection. She made these little gowns for you while you grew inside of her. She made a lot of other things, too, but these were special.”

She pulled open the paper, and inside there were three tiny gowns in a soft white material. Mama held up one and pointed to the tiny rosebuds embroidered across the bodice.

“I didn’t bring a lot with us when we moved here from Indiana, but these were important to keep. I wanted to make sure you had something to remember your—” She paused and then smiled. “To remember Mama-Sarah. She was sure that you were going to be a girl. She said she just felt confident of that. Still, she wanted to be prudent, so she only made these three special gowns.”

Carrie touched the edge of the lace that graced the tiny collar. Mama-Sarah had made this specially for her.

“Why did she die?” Carrie traced the rosebuds, trying hard to understand a loss that she couldn’t explain.

“She was just too weak to pull through.”

“Did me getting born kill her?”

Mama shook her head and reached out to touch Carrie’s cheek. “She was never all that strong, but she was so excited about having a baby. There was only good about you.” Mama smiled and put the rosebud gown aside to show Carrie the next.

It was hard to concentrate on the gowns, however. Carrie’s heart broke at the thought of the woman who’d given her life. It was hard for her to understand why God had allowed her to die. Still, she loved her mama and papa, even if they weren’t the ones who had been there first.

“You can keep these with your special things, if you like,” Mama said, refolding the gowns when Carrie got up and moved to the edge of the bed.

“Is Mama-Sarah with Jesus?”

“Absolutely. Papa-Klaus too. You know the Bible says when we are absent from our earthly bodies, we are present with the Lord. Your mother and our father loved Jesus very much. They would be so proud that you decided to accept Jesus as your Savior. You’ll see them again one day, Carrie. They both loved God and served Him faithfully. Until then, I hope you’ll know how much your papa and I love you.”

Mama finished rewrapping the baby gowns, then came to where Carrie sat. She handed her the bundle, then put a finger under her chin to raise her face.

“No matter what else has happened in your life, you have been dearly loved by many people and always will be.”

Although Mama’s words were comforting, Carrie couldn’t help but feel that there was still something missing. Something that left a hole in her heart that couldn’t be filled.

1



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JANUARY 1890

Dr. Carrie Vogel read through the *American Journal of Insanity* for the latest articles and information on brain conditions and disorders. When she reached page six, she froze, unable to believe what she was seeing. She scanned the article not once but twice, flipping the page back and forth as if the words might change.

All her life, Carrie had been fascinated with medicine and healing. About the age of twelve, she started reading everything she could get her hands on about medicine, and she helped Mama tend wounds and deliver babies. She advanced through school quickly, and by the time she'd reached sixteen, she was ready for college, just as her younger brother Daniel was now. It had taken some doing to talk her parents into allowing her to leave home and attend a women's college. It was an even harder time getting the college to accept her at such a young age, but after testing her both on paper and orally, everyone acquiesced. Carrie was something of a prodigy, and the college was suddenly excited to welcome her.

Carrie had wondered if her birth mother might have lived had there been a better doctor. But as she studied more and received intense training, she found her interests led her away from women's birthing needs and instead sent her to the brain. Few understood her passion for neuroscience and brain trauma, but since first hearing about Phineas Gage, Carrie had known this would be her field of interest.

In 1848, Gage had been a twenty-five-year-old railroad foreman when a large tamping bar ripped through his head. It entered just below his left cheek, flew up behind his eye and out the top of his skull, destroying much of his left frontal lobe. Even more amazing, he lived to tell about it for a dozen years after that fateful day. The great "American Crowbar Case," as it was often referenced, was a topic doctors discussed at length had they any interest whatsoever in the brain.

Carrie had been a second-year student at the Women's Medical College in Chicago not so many years ago. The doctor speaking had been one of her favorite professors. He was an older man in his sixties with a passion for the brain and the medical conditions that involved it. Dr. Ambrose Willaby had been his name, and his reputation was known far and wide. He had worked with the very team of doctors who had treated Gage. When he taught about Gage, he was intricate in his information, explaining everything and drawing out the details.

"Mr. Gage was working with black powder, and the tamping bar sparked an explosion. Mr. Gage had his mouth open to speak when the bar, some one and a quarter inches in diameter and three feet-seven inches long ripped through the left side of his face at a point just forward of the mandible and outside the maxilla. It proceeded behind the left occipital orbit in an upward trajectory and into the left frontal lobe of the brain. It exited out of the cranium, flying approximately eighty feet away. When retrieved, the tamp bar showed both blood and brain matter."

Carrie remembered Phineas Gage had suffered only momentary unconsciousness and a brief seizure. He had quickly settled and begun talking to the men around him. On his way to the doctor, he even wrote notes in his foreman's ledger. His resilience had baffled and drawn interest from people far and wide.

Carrie knew it was difficult enough to be a woman physician. People seemed tolerant of a female doctor tending to women and their complaints, but one who wanted to work in brain research was an object of scorn or amusement.

Thankfully, Carrie had found Dr. Oswald Nelson felt differently. Oswald was a gentle soul whose work and studies of the brain had been going on for a lot longer than Carrie's. In fact, he was fifteen years her senior and had, like her, gone to college at a young age. Both were superb in their studies, making perfect marks, and both had a great passion for medicine. The most troublesome difference was that Carrie was a woman and Oswald, a man. His interest was applauded and hailed as brilliant, while Carrie was often condemned for her unnatural fascination with the sciences. She tolerated people's attitudes toward her interest but had never stopped longing for a day when her work as a doctor could be as equally respected as Oswald's.

Now, however, it didn't look like that was ever going to happen. She looked back at the article in the journal and felt a surge of bitter anger. Betrayal! Oswald had taken her work and published it as his own. Again.

How could he do such an abominable thing? They were engaged to be married. They worked side by side at his research clinic. He constantly sought her opinion and had convinced her that he respected her as an equal.

Carrie had worked for over a year with a thirteen-year-old girl who had received horrific brain damage after a carriage accident. Her skull had been crushed on one side, but the

impact had shifted the brain, causing damage on the other side as well. Once the patient stabilized and it became clear she would live, most of her doctors gave up believing she would ever be able to do anything. She had lost her ability to speak, didn't seem to recognize her family, and reverted in many ways to an infantile-like state. But Carrie worked with her, keeping meticulous notes and experimenting with various therapies to help the child reclaim her skills. Little by little, her recovery was remarkable.

Carrie had shared the details with Oswald. She was convinced that because of the girl's youth, the brain had been able to redirect impulses and heal itself. Her speculation on how this was managed had been of great interest to other doctors, and Oswald had taken credit for all of her work.

Letting out a primal grunt of disgust, Carrie threw the journal across her office, slamming it against the open door. Her rage didn't stop there. She'd had it. She was done with Oswald and his lies. He'd taken credit for her research on at least four other occasions. Enough was enough.

She reached for a stack of books and papers, uncertain what to do. For the moment, she figured to go home to her little apartment, which unfortunately happened to be in the same building as Oswald's. No doubt as soon as he learned she was gone, he'd seek her out, and she had no desire to ever see him again. Not even to denounce his actions.

She glanced at the top of her desk and swept most of the contents into the right top drawer and locked it. With her anger still mounting, Carrie knew she needed to leave before she took it out on the other workers.

But it was too late. The noise had already attracted attention, and someone had obviously gone to the lab to tell Oswald because he now stood in her doorway.

"Whatever is wrong, my love?"

Carrie stopped and pointed at him. “You! You are what’s wrong. How dare you?”

He gave her a confused expression and drew his hand to his chest. “What have I done to upset you like this?” He moved to close the door and noted the journal on the floor. Without a word, he picked it up.

“You stole my work. You took credit for my research and my insight. You took my discoveries from the months I’ve spent with patients and claimed it for your own.”

He closed the door and turned to face her. His soft expression was gone, and instead, it was replaced by the determined look Carrie knew all too well.

“My dear, we’ve spoken of this before. You are a woman and new to this field. I am a longtime veteran, and the industry knows my name well. No one is going to listen to you as a researcher. I’m really doing you a favor.”

“Well, your favor has changed my mind about everything.” She reached for a carpet bag that she often used to transport books back and forth from her home to the office. There wasn’t a great deal of research done on the type of things she hoped to learn, but through the years she’d managed to accumulate some helpful material, and she wasn’t about to leave it for Oswald Nelson to use or dispose of.

“You’re obviously upset, and I understand. Why don’t we go enjoy a sumptuous dinner and talk about this in a calmer environment.”

Carrie stopped again and looked at him. “I am a good doctor. I was the top of my class.”

“A class for women.”

“It’s a highly regarded college. You’ve said so yourself on many occasions.”

He smirked. It was the one thing he knew better than to do, and Carrie found the last bit of respect she had for him dwindle away.

“Carrie, you’re upset, and in time you’ll see that this was all for the best.”

“What I see is a man who has clearly come to the end of his ability to find his own discoveries. Therefore, I quit. Not only this job, I quit you. There is no love where there is no trust.”

“Now, stop being a child and think about this. We make an incredible team. Your research and my fame will take us far. People will give credence to what you believe, and the discoveries you make will be placed in the archives of education for the future. You cannot accomplish that on your own. No one is going to listen to you, and if you leave me, I’ll make sure they don’t.”

“Do your worst, Oswald.” His threats had the strange result of calming her. She shook her head. “I’m not in the least bit concerned. My reputation precedes me, and my research and discoveries will speak for themselves. You aren’t the only doctor searching for answers. There are a great many other people working toward a better understanding of the brain. And, if you’ll recall, I’ve been invited by several of those brilliant doctors to come and work with them.”

“But with a letter from me, you will no longer be wanted. I can make it so that you can never practice medicine, much less be taken seriously in research.”

“So great is your love, Oswald.” Despite his threats, she suddenly felt sorry for him. She had been providing him with a phase of research that had taken them in a completely different direction. A direction that had taken other scientific teams by surprise. She hadn’t argued when he’d gone to lecture and speak one-on-one with numerous doctors and researchers. He had assured her that he would give her equal credit. Over the past year, however, it was becoming more and more obvious that this wasn’t the case, and in the article, he hadn’t mentioned her at all. He’d taken full credit for all the information.

“Don’t give me that look of pity, Carrie. I can and will do just fine without you.”

“Yes, perhaps you’ll find another adoring student to take under your wing. Someone who is innovative and thinks in ways that go outside the normal parameters set by science. But you’ll never really understand how my mind works.” She turned to load several books in her bag. “I’d rather be a librarian and never read another medical journal than live with your deceit.”

As if he finally understood her sincerity, Oswald took another direction. He moved closer and held out his hands.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to go off like that. It’s just that . . . well, it reminded me of my father. He is always so insulting, as you know.”

Oswald’s father was also a doctor, but his field of expertise was the heart. Carrie had seen the man cut Oswald down to size on more than one occasion.

“Perhaps I can see now that he had good reason for his lack of tolerance where you are concerned.”

“You can’t mean that. You know how I’ve suffered because of him. And you know that my love for you is undying. I didn’t mean to upset you so. I will send a letter immediately to the journal and tell them that you were the one who discovered our findings. We can take equal credit, and though we might not receive the attention and esteem that could have come otherwise, I’m sure we can work beyond this upset.”

Carrie could hardly believe that he was still insisting she stay. “No, Oswald. I’m done with you. Finished. I have no feelings left for you whatsoever except bitterness and remorse for having ever allowed you in my life.”

He came around the desk and took hold of her arm. “Please let your anger go. You’ll see in the long run that this will all work out. You’ll one day make a name for yourself.”

“Yes. Yes, I will. But the name I make will be as Vogel, not

Nelson. I'm not sorry to end this, Oswald. I thought I might be, but I'm not. Now release me. I want to finish collecting my things and go."

"Those things belong to our clinic."

"No, they don't. I have a great many personal texts I've brought in from home, and they're coming with me. If you don't like it, bring in the police. I have receipts to show for everything." She gave him a sad smile. "Keeping files and papers on purchases as well as my research findings was something you taught me. I practice it faithfully."

She turned and pulled a stack of books from the shelf behind her desk. "If you have any honor left, you'll forward the money owed me." She finished with the books and picked up a pen. Writing out her father and mother's address, she wondered for a moment if she could really return home. She'd been gone for so long. She had tried to remain on everyone's good side, and her parents had come to see her just last year. They'd no doubt welcome her with open arms, but could she stay there without her work? Her life would have little meaning without it.

"Here, this is the address of my parents in Cheyenne. Forward a bank draft there." She pushed the paper toward his side of the desk, then closed the carpet bag. For a moment, she wished it could be different. She didn't care about the engagement, but they had been doing such great research here in Chicago. She would miss her patients and the people she had worked with.

"I know this isn't what you want to do. I can read you like a book."

His comment brought her out of her thoughts. "No, you can't. I'm written in a language you can't even begin to comprehend." With that, she took up the carpet bag. It was much too heavy, but she wasn't about to show that to Oswald.

Instead, she moved across the office, back straight and gaze fixed on the door.

“You’ll come back. You can’t leave like this. You will miss it too much.”

Carrie kept walking, knowing that if she stopped, she might change her mind. She would miss the work. More than she wanted to admit.



“What a horrible thing to do to someone,” Rebecca Broadstreet declared as she shared a cup of tea with Carrie.

Rebecca lived with her elderly aunt and mother in the apartment next to Carrie’s. She had heard Carrie come home, and since it was the middle of the day, she felt it her duty to investigate. Carrie had no reason to keep the truth from Rebecca and so shared every detail, including the broken engagement.

“He’s wicked to have stolen your work.”

Carrie nursed her tea and nodded. “I should have expected it. He’s done it so many times before. Still, I thought we’d talked it through, and he was going to stop and start giving me full credit for that which was mine.”

“I suppose as a man he doesn’t feel the need to acknowledge your work. It’s probably easy to steal your thoughts and print them as his own. After all, who is going to believe a lady could be smarter than a man?”

“It’s never even been about being smarter. I love what I do. I want to keep researching the brain so that we can fix the problems that come from disease and injury. There are all sorts of issues that affect the brain, and if we can do research and study them out, we can find cures. We can better understand how the brain works. Right now, it’s still such a mystery.”

“Goodness, but you are so far above me in those kinds of things.” Rebecca put her cup down and shook her head. “I can’t imagine finding such things important, but I’m so glad that you do. Since my mama has gotten old, she doesn’t reason at all like she did when she was younger. Sometimes she doesn’t even know where she’s at or who I am. If you were to figure out what caused her to forget, well, I know there are a great many people in the world who would be grateful for a cure.”

Carrie gave her friend a smile. “There’s just so much to learn, and I know God has put me here to work in this field. I guess I just don’t know what He has in mind for me to do next.”

“Give Him time, deary. He’ll show you. He’s faithful to us that way. Trust in Him. That’s what gets me through each day. Sometimes, when my mama doesn’t know me, I wonder how I can possibly go on. How can a mother forget her child? I ask myself. But then I remind myself, she might have forgotten, but I haven’t. She was the best of mothers and deserves the best of care.”

“You’re a good woman, Rebecca. Your mother and her sister are blessed to have you.”

Rebecca blushed and lowered her head. “I hope you’ll find a way to help them someday.”

Carrie reached out and patted her hand. “I hope so too.”

For several long moments neither woman spoke, then at the sound of a whistle blowing from somewhere in the city, Rebecca’s head popped up, and she jumped to her feet. “Oh goodness. It’s five o’clock. I must get supper on. Thanks for the tea.” She moved to the door and opened it. She paused, however, and looked back.

“You’re better off without him. I’ll miss you, but going home is a good idea. I just feel it here,” she said, putting her hand over her heart. Then she left, closing the door behind her.

Carrie hoped she was right. It wasn't that there were any real problems between her and her folks. They all got along well enough. Carrie and her siblings were quite close. She couldn't really explain why she'd moved away . . . stayed away. She supposed, in part, her reasonings had to do with the scars of the past. She loved her parents, but for all the love they'd given, Carrie still had an empty place in her heart. How could she ever admit to that? They'd been good to her. They had loved her as much as anyone could love another person. Carrie had always felt safe and protected by her father and mother. So how could she be so ungracious as to mourn the loss of something she'd never had in the first place?

At times she hated herself for feeling that way. Yet, there was always that emptiness. Always that sense of something missing that should have been there. She found herself unable to stop wondering about her birth father and mother. What might her life have been had they lived?

She heaved a sigh. "You've got to let it go. You are never going to know the answers to those questions. No one can possibly tell you what might have been."

She chided herself with the same words she always used when these feelings came about. Mama would have told her to pray about it and ask God for His guidance, but God had been the one to orchestrate it all. He was the one with power over life and death. He could have left her parents to raise her, but He hadn't. He'd taken them. He'd taken them both away from a baby, and that was something Carrie simply could not understand.

The very idea seemed cruel and unfeeling. And frankly, for all her prayers, there never seemed any comfort being offered. Of course, she would never denounce God. She believed completely in the salvation offered her through Jesus and did her best to honor the commandments He'd given.

“But I fail miserably at loving God with all my heart and soul and mind, and loving others as myself.” The whispered confession seemed to echo off the walls.

She glanced at the clock and began to gather up the tea things. She had theater rehearsal tonight at six. Long ago, when faced with needing to do something to take her mind off research and patient cases, Carrie had signed up for the local theater group of amateurs. They were a fun bunch and performed for free to entertain poor children in a wide variety of plays and musicals that seemed to bring unlimited happiness.

Carrie knew she'd have to let them know she was leaving. She had no desire to stick around Chicago for any longer than she needed to. She would explain to her landlord in the morning and pack up her belongings. By this time next week, she'd be back in Cheyenne.

If only that thought would bring comfort.