

CHAPTER ONE

JUNE 1951

She hadn't been late for a single class and didn't intend to start now with a week left in the semester. In the early going, Shelby had skipped a few classes after staying out too late, a small-town girl dazzled by Philadelphia's beguiling night life. She learned early on, however, she couldn't party hard and make the grades her parents expected of her. She dashed across the quad and saw two other nursing students bringing up the rear. She recalled an old saying about spring turning a girl's fancies to love. In this case, distraction was the culprit, not romance—not since the breakup with Michael Hendry two years ago when he'd informed her with startling bluntness if she became a nurse, they would be finished.

“I have no time for a career woman. My wife is going to be a hundred percent about taking care of me, not some snot-nosed kid or a guy with hemorrhoids.”

She returned his class ring on the spot and ordered him off her front porch. In her three years as a nursing student, he'd barely crossed her mind. Nor did she care if she ever saw him again once she returned to Easton and

started working at the hospital. If Michael showed up needing a hemorrhoidectomy, she would treat him with cool professionalism, as if she'd never seen him before.

She laughed at the idea while rushing up the steps and into the classroom. Her lagging classmates followed closely behind, exchanging sheepish grins with her. With a minute to spare, Shelby's almost-flawless record at Temple-Episcopal Hospital School of Nursing was safe.



With fifteen minutes left in the class, a knock sounded on the door, and the professor stopped her lecture. "If you will excuse me, ladies, I think we have a visitor."

She welcomed a striking woman in an Army uniform whose presence filled the room. Shelby sat up straighter.

"Ladies, before we end for the day, I am delighted to introduce you to Colonel Gladys Stilby of the United States Army Nurse Corps. She's here to tell you about an opportunity that may be of interest as you graduate."

The woman stood at the exact center of the room as if she'd known instinctively where that would be. Shelby doubted the colonel wore perfume, but she exuded the scent of authority.

"I wish to thank Professor Greene for allowing me to address you ladies today. I realize most of you already have plans, but I'd like you to consider the possibility of a different course." She folded her hands in front of her trim waist. "The United States and twenty other nations are fighting to save Korea from communists in the north, who are aided and abetted by the Chinese and Russians. There's an urgent need for medical personnel, including nurses.

"Last year, the Army instituted an innovative concept of mobile treatment centers located ten-to-twenty miles

from the front. They are called MASH units, short for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. The purpose is to treat the wounded as quickly and efficiently as possible to enable the highest survival rate.”

She paused, meeting Shelby’s eyes.

“I will not kid you about the conditions—they’re more rugged than any summer camp you’ve ever attended. Nurses aren’t deliberately put in harm’s way, but they aren’t always out of danger either. Likewise, many of the casualties bear serious, heartbreaking wounds. Being a MASH nurse isn’t for someone who’d rather be sending sick children home to their parents.” She paced across the front of the room. “If, however, you are made of tougher stuff, and you want to serve your country, please consider being a MASH nurse. There are other opportunities in the Korean theater, and I will gladly discuss them with anyone who may be interested, but the greatest need is in those mobile hospitals.” She paused. “Are there any questions?”

Shelby’s neighbor raised her hand. “How long would we have to serve, Colonel Stilby?”

“Tours of duty are currently from twelve to fourteen months.”

“Would that include basic training?”

“Yes. MASH nurses receive special training for twenty weeks at the US Army Medical Field Service School at Fort Sam Houston. Then, they go to Korea.”

“Colonel Stilby?”

She pointed toward a student in the back. “Yes?”

“Where do the nurses live?”

“They reside in tents or Quonset huts on the MASH compounds.”

Another young woman spoke up. “How big are MASH hospitals?”

“They are of varying sizes, depending on available medical personnel.”

Shelby listened closely but didn't ask any questions. She knew whatever the answers might be, Easton Hospital was going to have to wait. She couldn't help but remember stories she'd heard from her youth about her illustrious ancestor Colonel Peter Kichline. He'd led a patriotic group of Northampton County farmers and tradesmen to New York where they engaged King George's finest and his fierce Hessian mercenaries. At the August 1776 Battle of Brooklyn, her five times great-grandfather had lost most of his men, been wounded, and was captured. He was a man tirelessly dedicated to God, his family, and his country. As far as she knew, Peter Kichline had never flinched in a time of need, no matter how messy or inconvenient. Subsequent generations of Kichlines had served in every other American war, and now she was being offered an opportunity to follow in their footsteps. A chill ran up her left calf.



Shelby sat on the window seat in the bedroom she shared with her younger sister Diane, who seemed unable to perch.

“When are you going to tell them?” She waved her arms. “Your graduation party is tomorrow, and everyone will be here thinking you'll be working at the hospital.”

Shelby watched the boy across the street bang trash cans from the curb to the garage. “I'm waiting for the right moment.”

Diane pointed to her wristwatch. “Yet the clock keeps ticking.”

“I'm well aware of the clock, Sis. I'm praying about the timing.”

“Well, I just hope God is paying attention.” She flopped onto her twin bed. “I can’t imagine what Mom and Dad are going to say.”

“They might just be supportive, you know.”

“Or they could blow a gasket.”

Shelby tossed a throw pillow at her sister. “Thank you very much, Eeyore.”



After dinner, the family gathered in the living room, John Kichline smoking his pipe and discussing his three sons’ summer plans. His wife sat next to him on the couch, smelling like the onions and celery she’d been chopping for macaroni salad. Shelby dodged her sister’s meaningful looks.

Her brother Neil tripped over their cocker spaniel and banged his leg on the sharp side of the coffee table, howling in pain.

Diane grabbed a geranium before it crashed to the floor. “Watch out, will you?”

Neil whimpered on the floor, rubbing his leg. “Man, that hurts! Shelby, will you look at my leg?” Chester hovered over the boy, panting.

Shelby examined the purpling wound. “You smacked it hard all right. You’ll get a bruise, but some ice will reduce the swelling.” She looked toward her youngest brother. “Paul, would you get a dish towel and wrap a handful of ice in it?”

“Sure, Sis.” He shook his head on the way to the kitchen. “What a klutz.”

“That isn’t a nice thing to say about your brother,” their dad said.

“It’s true, though,” Neil said without a trace of rancor. “I am a klutz.”

"You're a lovable one, though." Shelby hugged him and rumbled his hair.

"Speaking of tending to the wounded, when does your new job start?" her dad asked.

She sucked in her breath. *Here we go! I hadn't pictured the entire family being in the room. Of course, if Mom and Dad get upset, they'll likely hold back in front of everyone.*

She gave a nervous laugh. "The job begins in two weeks."

He frowned. "I thought it was next week."

"I did too, Dad. Actually, I have something to tell all of you." She was surprised by how loud her voice was in the suddenly quiet room. Paul returned with the ice pack, and after Shelby positioned it on Neil's leg, she rose. "I'm postponing my work at Easton Hospital in favor of a short-term opportunity." She liked the way those words came out. *I don't know how to make the next ones go down as easily.*

"Whatever do you mean, Shelby?" her mom asked.

"Right before graduation a woman spoke to my class about an urgent need for nurses in Korea."

Her mom's face blanched. "Korea?"

"Korea!" her brothers whooped.

"Yes. Korea, where the war is."

The oldest son, Keith, spoke up. "I heard it's a police action, not a war."

Shelby didn't know if his remark would help or hurt her cause.

"I decided to sign up for a tour of duty with the Army Nurse Corps." She added as cheerfully as she could, "Then I'll be home again working at the hospital, and getting veteran's benefits." She hoped the last part would appeal to her practical father.

"Shelby's going to be an army soldier!" Paul cried.

“I won’t be a soldier, silly. I’ll be a nurse, helping soldiers who get wounded.”

“Where will you be stationed?” her dad asked.

She relaxed a bit, wondering if he might have accepted her decision without a fuss.

“I’m not sure. The colonel said we’ll be away from the fighting in mobile surgical hospitals. They’re a new thing, called MASH units. The army hopes that by treating the wounded closer to the action, they’ll have a higher chance at surviving.”

Chester snuffled at her feet, and she reached down to pet him.

“You didn’t ask us,” her mother whispered.

Shelby met her hurt gaze. “No, I didn’t.”

“You’ve always asked our advice about big decisions.”

“She’s a grown woman now, Margaret,” her dad said. “She knows her own mind.”

Shelby reached for her mother’s hand. “I didn’t have any doubt about this being God’s will for me, Mom. This has happened to me twice in my life. The first time was when I felt called to become a nurse. Sometimes, you just know when something’s right.”



The news of her enlistment into the Army Nurse Corps had gone well—only her Aunt June had required a whiff of smelling salts. Shelby’s dad had revealed her plans at the graduation party as proudly as if he were announcing her engagement. Although Margaret Kichline had smiled dutifully, Shelby appreciated her mom’s show of support. After the cake had been cut amidst a good deal of Brownie camera picture taking, her grandfather led her to a relatively quiet corner of the patio.

“I’d like a moment with my favorite granddaughter before she ships off to Korea.”

“I’m going to miss you, Poppa.”

He smiled. “And I shall miss you.” He leaned back. “You know, I spent some time in Korea years ago.”

“I’ve heard bits and pieces but not your whole story. When were you there?”

In the background, her brothers and cousins played a noisy game of kickball.

“I went right after I graduated from Princeton Seminary.”

“Were you a missionary before you were a minister?”

“Something like that. You see, I felt called to the ministry while I was in college. At Princeton, however, my faith came under fire in the debates about form criticism and evolution—modernism to be precise.”

When she knitted her eyebrows, he said, “Those are fancy words for doubt. I became arrogant, believing my parents and home church were backward.” He sniffed, closing his eyes. “I’d planned to take a church in the Lehigh Valley and marry my girl, but by the time I graduated, I’d lost her, and my sense of calling was in tatters.”

“I had no idea.” She leaned closer.

“Christianity was still in its infancy in Korea, and the Presbyterian mission board needed Bible translators. I was quite adept at Greek and Hebrew, and I went to Korea thinking getting away would be good for me. I thought I’d lead those backward people away from their superstitious beliefs.” He clapped his hands onto his thighs and chuffed. “In the end, they changed me—or I should say, God changed me.”

She leaned forward. “How, Poppa?”

The kick ball bounced between them, and she tossed it back to the kids.

“I was headquartered at the seminary in Pyongyang, in the northern part of the country. It was under the direction of a truly amazing man, Dr. Samuel A. Moffett, one of the first missionaries to Korea. A revival broke out, and so very many were saved. I encountered the living God in a way no high-falutin’ theology book could dispute. I came to love the Korean people.”

He reached out and held her right hand. “I’m so proud of you for going there, Shelby. You are also answering God’s call. I’ll pray for you every day.” He reached into his jacket and pulled out a small, wrapped gift. “I want you to have this.”

She undid the floral paper, her eyes filling with tears. “Your Bible?”

“The one I had with me in Korea.”

Shelby hugged him tight. “Thank you, Poppa.”

When she pulled back, he seemed to focus on something beyond her. “You will have hard days when you feel you can’t go on. Don’t succumb. The child of God is always safest while doing the will of God.”

CHAPTER TWO

HOPEWELL, NJ—NOVEMBER 1951

Parker Tate juggled a handful of mail and his black bag, using his elbow to flip on the light switch. He plopped his items on a long table and removed his shoes as several envelopes cascaded to the floor. He would make a project out of sorting through the heap after dinner. Maybe his second set of car keys were there—or his cuff links, which he hadn't been able to find in three weeks.

He smiled to himself at the satisfaction of not having to answer a midnight summons. Since his brother John had completed his residency and joined the practice, Parker was shifting some of those duties. John was downstairs now with the last two patients, and Parker had promised to prepare the evening meal.

He lifted his eyes to the soft thunder of the little boy running in the third-floor apartment above him, no doubt with his mother in hot pursuit. Parker rather liked the toddler's joyful noise and having tenants helped pay the remaining mortgage on his combined business and residence. He took off his suit jacket and tie, choosing to ignore a cobweb swinging above one of his bedroom windows and laundry

cluttering the floor. He would deal with them later as well. He pulled on a sweater and walked to the kitchen unable to recall when he and John had last visited the grocery store. They'd been eating out a lot, mostly at a nearby diner or the hospital cafeteria, but surely there'd be enough on hand for a simple stir fry of vegetables, eggs, and rice. Frozen meat would take too long to thaw.

He opened the cupboard to a half-full box of Uncle Ben's rice, something he would never have when his parents visited. Parker closed his eyes and swallowed hard, not knowing when they'd ever get to see each other again. They and his younger sister had been in the US for John's med school graduation in May a year ago, returning to Seoul right before all hell broke loose. If they had only known at the time what was coming. During their visit, his mother had run this place like the efficient Korean housewife she was. There'd been no piles, dust bunnies, or American convenience food, only the aromas of her kimchi, bibimbap, and manduguk.

Seized with longing, he wondered how his parents and younger sister were faring. The mails were slow, but at least he heard from them almost monthly now. During the tortured weeks of the Battle of Seoul, all the news he received was from newspapers and the radio. The last time he'd had a letter was in early October, and his family was still taking in refugees from the north. Parker and John often sent care packages with their own correspondence, squirreling cash into various hiding places.

Parker rummaged through the cupboard, finding two cans of condensed soup, corn flakes, rice noodles, and soy sauce. East meets west. Retrieving the box of rice, he opened the refrigerator door where he'd stored mushrooms and bok choy not long ago. What was this? The Chinese

cabbage had congealed into a brown mush puddle and leaked onto three slimy carrots. The mushrooms had gone spotted and furry. Wrinkling his nose at the odor, he tossed them into the trash. Maybe he'd just fry a few eggs and open a can of soup. Inside the carton, however, Parker discovered two cracked eggs. The rest sent his stomach into recoil mode when he broke them open. Ah well, there was always kimchi to fall back on, but a quick sniff brought tears to his eyes. He'd never heard of kimchi going bad.

After bagging and taking the rotten food out to the garbage, he opened the windows to air out the apartment. Parker leaned against the kitchen counter, running his hand through his dark hair. Should he run to the store or get take-out—again? Nothing in his life had prepared him for the rigors of shopping, cleaning, and cooking—tasks his mother performed with precision, pride, and excellence. Maybe he should heed his receptionist's advice and hire a housekeeper.

He snatched his wallet and keys and headed past the hall table with its bloated contents. Maybe after he breathed in some fresh air and surveyed the grocer's fresh produce and meats, his own appetite would return.



After dinner, he sat in his lounge chair sorting through the mail, Sinatra crooning over the air waves.

John put the evening paper beside him on the couch. "I'm going to make some tea. Would you like a cup?"

"Yes, thank you."

A few moments later, he held out an airmail envelope with an unsteady hand. "I just found this."

Parker frowned. "I don't know how I missed seeing that."

“It was jammed under one of the table legs.” John sat across from him. “This is Dad’s handwriting.”

They gaped at each other. Their mother did all the correspondence for the family. Their father claimed that as a minister, he favored spoken words over written ones.

“Since it’s addressed to you, would you be okay sharing it with me?”

Parker detected a hint of woundedness in his brother’s expression. “Yes, of course.”

He reached out for the envelope then carefully slid open the top part with a letter opener. The crinkly airmail paper bore their father’s bold Korean handwriting. Most of the time Parker conducted his life in English, which he’d learned as a boy, but now he switched to his native language. His father addressed him by his birth name, Tae-ho Park. In medical school, he’d adopted a more American version, Parker Tate.

October 15, 1951

Dear Tae-ho,

I greet you in the name of our Savior, trusting this finds you and your brother in good health. Your mother and I are ever pleased you are working in a family practice together, now that John has completed his residency. You are pursuing an honorable profession bringing much good to the world. America is the land of opportunity, and nothing could be truer in these troubled times for Korea.

Life continues to challenge us, but your sister’s classes at the university have resumed. Conditions are more stable since the UN forces drove the communists out of Seoul last summer. We continue to minister to our church’s families. Many have sustained heavy losses of life and possessions, and we do what we can to relieve suffering and bring hope.

He glanced at his brother, who was leaning forward, then resumed reading aloud.

You are no doubt wondering why I am writing. It pains me to tell you that your mother has been confined to her bed for a few weeks. She has lost over ten pounds and has difficulty keeping food down.

Parker swallowed around a dry spot.

“That’s not good.” John rested his elbows on his knees.

She has seen a doctor, but he cannot determine what is the matter. Most of our physicians have gone to assist the army, leaving us with older ones who are not up on the latest advances or are themselves impaired in their abilities.

The lump in his throat swelled to rock size. If only he could treat his mother, surely he could do something to help her. When John’s eyes bored into his, Parker continued reading.

There is something more to share with you and John. Your grandfather has been assisting refugees fleeing from the north, and he learned of a minister who was nearly caught by the PKA. Grandfather stationed himself with an army unit in the area Pastor Bahk was last seen and planned to find and bring him to Seoul under our army’s protection. He was emboldened by the success he had last year in secreting your grandmother out of Pyongyang along with a dozen other families. We tried to talk him out of his errand, but he would have none of it. We do not know what has become of him. This has multiplied your mother’s, and grandmother’s, distress.

Parker’s breath hitched as he read the last paragraph.

Is there any way you can come to us, to assess your mother’s condition and help us locate your grandfather?

Rebecca Price Janney

As you have petitioned to become a US citizen, perhaps you will have greater access to people and places than I do. John can look after your practice in your absence. Please write or wire me as soon as you can. Gladly, I will pay your travel expenses.
Your devoted,
Abeoji

He dropped the letter onto his lap, his brother whistled. The toddler upstairs began running laps again.

“Do they have any idea what they’re asking?” John said.

“Does this bother you, his asking me to come?”

“Not at all. I’m rather honored he thinks me capable enough to run the practice.”

Parker hadn’t decided anything. He didn’t even know if returning to Korea was possible.

John seemed to have read his thoughts. “How would you even get to Korea? You know how hard it is just to get our letters and packages through.”

“These are formidable obstacles.”

John lifted his hands. “This stinks.”

Parker reached across the space and patted his brother’s shoulder. “We must remember, when we are weak, God is strong.”



Professor Cullen’s cluttered office wreaked of books, dust, and pipe tobacco. Parker’s jaw had been perpetually clenched after receiving his father’s letter two days earlier, but now his tension eased. He was seeking the advice of his dearest American friend, a man who’d taught at the Pyongyang seminary, who knew and loved Parker’s family.

Cullen puffed on his pipe, smoke rising to the ceiling before dissipating in a wispy mist. “I can’t imagine what

they're all going through—have been through. I'm grieved about your mother's illness. As for your grandfather, I'm not a bit surprised he would do such a thing."

Parker toyed with his hat, resting on his lap.

"What do you think you should do?"

"I am aware of my duty to my family and do not wish to disappoint them or God. On the one hand, I have no doubt I should go to them." He hung his head. "And then there is selfishness I must battle."

"What do you mean?" Cullen cocked his head.

He spoke as if confessing a sin, "Will John be able to run the practice efficiently? How long would I need to be away?" He paused and nearly whispered, "Will I endanger myself?"

"Don't beat yourself up, Parker. You're counting the cost, as our Lord urges us to do. We must always come to terms with ourselves."

He offered the professor a thin smile.

"There are other concerns, of course." He leaned back, biting on the pipe stem. "Even if you decide to go, you may not be able to. All transport is being devoted to carrying troops."

"I am aware of this."

"Your parents are reasonable people. You may, in fact, not have much choice in this matter."

His countenance fell as he stared out the window at the panoply of autumnal colors kindling the Princeton seminary campus. A gray squirrel scampered through the fallen bounty.

"Let's spend some time in prayer about this. We must remember what is impossible for us is child's play for the God we serve."



Parker sipped a cup of Korean tea after seeing five patients in a row. He hadn't been able to get past the pit-deep sorrow he'd fallen into the day after seeing the professor. The best the State Department could offer was the possibility of travel in a few months. He would write and tell his parents, asking them to describe as minutely as possible his mother's symptoms. Perhaps he could diagnose her ailment from a distance and send medicine. He had nothing else to offer besides his prayers. He didn't doubt their potency, but he wished he could do something hands-on. As for his grandfather ...

The phone buzzed, and he pushed the intercom button. "Yes, Mrs. Albano?"

"There's a call for you from Dr. Cullen. Shall I put him through?"

He clinked the cup in its saucer. "Yes, of course." A moment later he heard his friend and mentor's voice.

"Parker, do you have a moment?"

"Yes, Dr. Cullen, I am having a break just now."

"Are you able to meet me at four this afternoon? I may have some answers for you."

He consulted his watch—one-forty-five. He had a full afternoon, but if he ended his break early and John took charge, he could be in Princeton by four. "I will see you then."



He entered the professor's office in Stuart Hall two minutes late.

“Ah, there he is! Come in, Parker, come in! I want you to meet someone.”

He took note of a balding man in an Army uniform in his thirties or early forties who carried a slight softness around his middle.

“Dr. Parker Tate, I’d like you to meet Captain Andrew Frank.”

Parker shook hands with the man. “I am pleased to meet you.”

“I’m glad you were able to come on such short notice. As I was sharing your dilemma with Captain Frank, he thought he might have a solution. Please, have a seat.” He gestured toward the chairs across from his desk. “I do hope you don’t mind that I told him about you, Parker, but my bumping into him last night seemed providential.”

“I am happy you did so.” Parker’s stomach fluttered as he waited to be brought on board.

“Captain Frank is a chaplain in the Army reserves as well as the seminary’s director of student housing. He’s getting ready to ship off to Korea.”

Parker’s eyebrows raised.

“Dr. Cullen told me about your family, and I am truly sorry for your distress.”

He bowed slightly. “Thank you.”

“I spoke to my commanding officer about your situation, and he suggested you serve as an Army doctor in Korea ... they’re in short supply.”

Parker’s ears rang. *Army doctor?* He willed himself to focus.

“... seemed possible.”

He held up a finger. “If you will please excuse me, Captain, I missed the first part of what you were saying.”

“Yes, of course. As I was saying, the Army has an offer for you. If you enlist as a doctor, you will get to Korea and serve at the Army’s discretion. You’d most likely be stationed at the Seoul military hospital but possibly in a MASH unit, that’s Mobile Army Surgical Hospital.”

His heart swelled, then just as quickly, deflated. “I am most grateful for this opportunity. I wonder how long I would have to serve before getting back to my practice?”

Frank leaned closer, eye-to-eye with Parker. “You may not be aware of something called the Doctors Draft Act. I understand that you’ve applied for citizenship, and the Army needs doctors.”

He swallowed. “What does this draft act mean?”

“It means all doctors under the age of fifty-one have to register for military service.”

He got the point. Parker listened to the rest of the captain’s proposal with a galloping heart. When Frank concluded, Dr. Cullen brought his hands down on his desktop with a grin. “I think the Lord has made a way when there seemed to be no way.”