

Chapter 1

Not a Drop More

The sun was just streaming over the Maracai-boan Hills when Pearl Lindsay's mother entered the bedroom, carrying a glass of warm blood.

"Pearl," she called a bit sharply, "here's your morning cocktail."

Rolling over, Pearl reached for the glass. Its warmth always made her shudder, but she held her nose and swallowed the red liquid as fast as she could. She gagged as she set the glass on the table beside her bed.

"Pearl," her mother said, "I think we should leave here."

"Leave here? But, Mother, what about my—" Pearl bolted upright, eyeing her mother as if Alwilda Lindsay had suddenly lost her mind. "What do you mean, 'leave here'?"

"That's exactly what I mean, Child."

It irked Pearl to be called a child when she was all of twenty-one. But she overlooked the word and, pushing her long dark hair out of her eyes, waited for her mother to continue.

"Now look, Pearl, you know you aren't getting much better. After all this horrible blood you've been drinking every morning, your anemia has barely improved. I think if we should go back to Barbados—

"Barbados, Mother!" Pearl exploded. "Whatever could I find to do there?"

"Listen, Pearl. God isn't dead yet. Your health is more important than anything else. And it isn't getting any better here."

Pearl sank back on her pillow. Her mother picked up the empty glass and started toward the door. "Think it over, dear," she said as she left the room.

Pearl closed her eyes and lay quietly for several minutes, hardly able to think, her mind stunned. Leave Maracaibo! Leave her job as a bilingual secretary? Leave the boss who was so kind to her, and the other secretaries and helpers who accepted her as their equal? How could she bear to leave them? She thought of the good times she and the other girls had had, especially the dances in this very house where they would roll up the carpet, turn on the gramophone, and dance until they were all danced out. The lovely clothes she had been able to buy with her ample salary. The pretty five-dollar-a-pair nylons she enjoyed wearing. The powders, perfumes, and other things so dear to her heart.

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Leave all this security and happiness? Her eyes opened wide. Had she been dreaming? Surely Mother hadn't said they should leave all this!

She stared at the table beside her bed. She was glad her mother had taken the glass away. How she hated that medicine. She didn't want to swallow another drop-ever. She remembered how horrified she had been when the doctor ordered her to drink a glass of warm blood from a freshly-killed animal every morning. Her mother had determined to find a place that could supply this unusual medicine. She had found a supplier and had risen each morning at five to bring the medicine to Pearl.

Pearl knew that Mother was right. The medicine was not doing as much good as they had hoped, for she still tired very easily.

"Maybe we should leave," Pearl thought, startling herself with the idea.

Perhaps a change would do her good. But Barbados! She argued in her mind the pros and cons of Barbados. Still, it might be fun to see her old friends and the old home place. Her thoughts raced ahead, even though she did not especially like the idea of moving back.

Resignedly she slid her feet onto the rug beside her bed and stretched. Donning slippers and robe, she walked to the kitchen.

From the doorway she watched as her mother prepared breakfast. "How unselfish and kind she is," Pearl thought. "In her own brusque way she's always thinking of others. Good old Mother-she's so worried about my health."

"Well, Mother," she finally spoke, "when do we leave?"

"Just as soon as we can make proper arrangements," her mother said.

And with Alwilda Lindsay's efficiency, arrangements were soon made.

Two weeks later as the boat pulled out of the harbor, Pearl and her mother stood side by side on the deck, watching Maracaibo recede.

"It's been a happy eight years, hasn't it?" Pearl spoke softly.

"Yes, Child, it has. How we'll miss our friends, especially those of the church."

Pearl didn't resent the "Child" this time. She slipped an arm around her mother's waist and gave her a tight squeeze. "What's ahead for us now?" she asked.

"Only God knows. He's taken care of us all these years, and He's not going to fail us now. One thing I'm sure of. You'll get over this anemia. What else He has in mind is His business."

Chapter 2

No More Dancing?

The tropical sun sank into the Caribbean Sea, flinging back brilliant pinks and oranges against the clouds on the western horizon.

Pearl and her mother stood by the railing of the boat watching the changing sky.

“You know, Mother, I haven’t had any blood since the day we decided to leave Maracaibo,” Pearl said, “and I don’t feel much worse off.”

“I know. I’ve been watching you to make sure you didn’t get worse.”

“This ocean trip is already doing me good. Too bad it isn’t more than a couple of weeks.” Pearl paused, inhaled deeply and smiled. “But I’m going to enjoy all there is of it.”

The two of them stood silent, listening to the swish of the moving water above the throbbing of the engines.

Swiftly the tropical night settled its dark mantle over the sea. Still Pearl and her mother lingered as the stars appeared, one by one at first, and then by twos and threes. Soon the whole sky was filled with myriads of small lights.

“How do you think we’ll find things on Barbados?” Pearl asked.

“Pretty much the same, I suppose. The young people will be quite grown up. That will probably be the biggest change.”

“I guess I’ve changed quite a bit myself.” Pearl laughed at the idea. “But then I was only thirteen when we left. Wonder how many of my old friends will still be around?”

“I’m sure you’ll find some of them.”

Finally the throbbing engines hushed, and the journey was over. Pearl and the other passengers had watched as Barbados came into view and moved closer and closer until, at last, the boat docked at one of the wharves. The clanging, pounding, banging, and shouting that are a part of every docking greeted the passengers as they disembarked.

Mrs. Lindsay and Pearl didn’t have much trouble getting their things through the mixture of red tape and inefficiency. Soon they were on their way to the old home place.

Pearl found the first few weeks on Barbados rather exciting, but she soon realized that she had nothing in common with her old friends.

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The interests they had shared in their early teens were quite different from those they had now, and she and her friends soon drifted apart. Life grew dull.

“I wish we were back in Maracaibo,” she complained one day to her mother. “Something to do there!”

“Take a look at this.” Mrs. Lindsay handed Pearl a brochure. “This might be something different. Came to the house a few days ago, but I didn’t get around to look at it until today.”

Pearl scanned the contents. “Looks like a religious meeting. Going?”

“Oh, I don’t know. Think we should?”

“Might give us something to do.”

That evening as Mrs. Lindsay and Pearl approached the large wooden building where the meeting was to be held, they noted the crowd that was gathering. They were greeted at the door by a pleasant young lady. Settling themselves in seats about halfway to the front, they waited.

“I suppose it’ll be the same old stuff,” Pearl whispered to her mother.

“We’ll have to wait and see. But the brochure sounded like something quite different.”

From the moment the young song leader began directing the service until the benediction Pearl sat entranced. She had never heard anything like it.

“That was different,” she remarked as soon as they started home. “Something about the whole service said that those people really know the Lord.”

Pearl paused, waiting for her mother to reply, but as nothing was forthcoming, she rushed on. “I’d like to go back and hear what more he has to say.”

“I guess there’s nothing to stop you.”

“You’ll come with me?” Pearl asked.

“Oh, I suppose, if you must go. Guess it won’t hurt me to hear him again.”

Night after night, week after week, Pearl and her mother listened to the “new preaching.” Although they had both been devout Protestants for many years, they became more and more fascinated with the truths they heard at the meetings. The minister took his message directly from the Bible, and it was different from what they’d always believed.

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One evening after they found their usual places, Pearl asked what the topic was.

“I don’t recall exactly, but something about a change,” Mrs. Lindsay answered.

During the next hour Pearl and Mrs. Lindsay heard a very strange doctrine. As they walked home, they discussed the message.

“How come man could change God’s day of rest?” Pearl wanted to know.

“I don’t know how man could tamper with God’s law, but it sounded like the preacher gave sufficient proof.”

“You mean, Mother, that you really think Sunday isn’t the Sabbath?”

“I don’t know. I’ll have to do some studying about it.”

The next day Pearl and Alwilda Lindsay searched their Bibles to see for themselves if the minister knew what he was saying. They found an old concordance and looked up every text that had the word “Sabbath” in it. Then they looked for texts containing “Sunday” but failed to find that word.

“I know,” Pearl said. “Let’s look under ‘first day.’ The minister said Sunday was called ‘first day’ in Bible times.” Under “first day” they found eight texts, all in the New Testament. But none of the texts said a thing about God’s making a change.

“That preacher knew what he was talking about all right,” Mrs. Lindsay said.

“Then how can it be, Mother, that everyone, the whole world, has gone wrong?”

“Nothing but the workings of the devil. I can see that plain as day.”

“You’re really convinced, Mother,” Pearl said with a smile.

“I’m going to tell the minister that I’ll be keeping the proper Sabbath from now on,” Mrs. Lindsay said. “Are you going to join me?”

“Of course I am. I’m not blind either.”

That evening when the minister made a call for all who would keep the Sabbath according to the commandment, Mrs. Lindsay and Pearl were among the first to respond. After the meeting the minister, Pastor Oss, assured them that it wouldn’t be easy to break old habits and start anew. “But God is sufficient for all our needs,” he promised.

Pearl left with conflicting thoughts. No more dancing? Going to church on Saturday? Giving up so much? Could it possibly be worth the struggle? She glanced toward her mother, but the darkness revealed nothing of the older woman’s feelings.

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“Do you really think it’s worth it all?” she finally blurted out.

“Girl,” the mother spoke softly, “anything God asks us to do is worth everything.”

During the next few weeks they made many changes in their home—changes in diet, in worship and Bible study, changes in dress—but Pearl and her mother were happy.

One day after church the minister asked Pearl if she had ever considered continuing her education. Pearl laughed. “Oh, I’ve been out of school so long I’ve completely forgotten how to study.” And with that she dismissed the idea.

But not so the preacher. Several times during the next few weeks he brought up the subject, but each time Pearl turned the idea down. One evening he went to the Lindsay home for another try.

“But I’m too old,” Pearl protested. “Almost twenty-three!”

“Listen, Pearl. God isn’t looking at your age. He wants your talents. People much older than you have gone to school and made a success of it. You can too, if you will.”

Pearl thought about his words. “When you put it that way, you don’t leave me much choice,” she said. “But still, I’m not sure God wants me in school. Mother and I are happy here just as we are.”

“Pearl,” the minister spoke earnestly, “you have many talents that God wants you to cultivate for Him. Just think what a blessing you could be to His work if you were willing to prepare yourself.”

Willing—the word hit her hard. Of course she was willing to do God’s will. Hadn’t she given her heart to His keeping? But go to school! Start out into the complete unknown. That was quite another thing. And besides, where would she go?

As if in answer to her unspoken question, the minister pulled out of his pocket a bulletin and an application blank for Caribbean Training College in Trinidad (now Caribbean Union College). “Here, take these.” He handed them to Pearl. “Maybe they can help you decide.”

Slowly she turned the pages. Her fear changed to curiosity, then to interest, and finally to determination.

“All right,” she said to the minister, “if Mother’s willing, I’ll go.”

Mrs. Lindsay, who had been silently watching from her rocking chair, nodded her consent.

With the assurance of her mother’s approval, Pearl asked, “What do I have to do?”

Together she and the minister filled out the application blank.

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“I’ll write a letter of recommendation to the principal,” the pastor promised as he put the application blank in his pocket. “I’ll carry this with me so you can’t change your mind.” He grinned. “You’ll not be sorry for this decision. Something tells me God has a special place for you in His work, and you won’t disappoint Him.”

After he left, Pearl stood by the window gazing into the night. Another move, another upset, another unknown. What could it mean this time?