

## Chapter 1

Dawn was beginning to break over Manila when the insistent jangle of the telephone awakened us. My husband sleepily answered.

“Pearl Harbor has been bombed.” The voice coming over the wire was tense. “I can’t say more now.” The warning had been relayed from an Adventist physician, an officer at the naval base in Cavite, not far from Manila.

We were stunned.

“You must go to Baguio at once,” my husband said as we tried to think what we should do. “Could you be ready by nine o’clock?”

I nodded my head numbly, but I was too shocked to think clearly. We had been aware of the unrest in world affairs and of the threat to the United States and especially to the Philippines. Because of the war in China, our Adventist missionaries had left that country and had come to the Philippines. Most of them were now living in Baguio, a resort town about a hundred miles from Manila. The China Division had established its headquarters there, and the Philippine Union owned several vacation cottages on Navy Road high in the mountains of central Luzon where the climate was cool. Cases of canned food had been stockpiled in the village for just such an emergency as this.

But leaving wasn’t that simple. My invalid mother lived in our home, and she must be prepared for the trip. Two Filipino girls, Matilda and Juanita, lived with us; and we had to decide where they should go. I awakened the girls and began to lay plans.

## ANGELS OVER MANILA

“You will go with me,” I said to Juanita, whose work was to care for Mother. Then I turned to Matilda. “And you will stay here to keep house for Mr. Wilcox.” Juanita was eager to go, but Matilda broke into wild weeping at the thought of being left. “Don’t cry,” I comforted her. “You will be all right here.” But she would not be comforted until I busied her with work that must be done at once.

As I hurried about, wondering what to take, I thanked the Lord that our two daughters were in California, one at Pacific Union College and the other married. And, of course, our fourteen-year-old son, Wendell, would go with me.

My husband, Lyle, was president of the mission; and he would stay in Manila as long as possible to care for the work and people there. We tried to plan for the future as we gathered together the things we could take with us in the car which would be driven by one of our mission men.

When the car arrived, we found that Wendell could not go with us. There was not enough room for him. I was distressed, but there was no alternative but to leave him.

After Mother was settled in the backseat of the car, I scanned my husband’s face for some encouragement; but I saw only anxiety and apprehension. He helped me into the car and spoke a word of encouragement to Elder O. A. Blake, the treasurer of the mission. We were soon traveling along the national highway leading up into the mountains. We had not gone far when we were surprised to see American soldiers setting up anti-aircraft guns under the trees that bordered the road. Farther up the road an American MP (military policeman) stopped us.

“Where you bound for?” he demanded.

## ANGELS OVER MANILA

“I’m taking an invalid to Baguio,” Elder Blake answered. “Proceed.”

As we passed Fort Stotsenburg, we saw a bomber rise from the airfield and point its nose northward, and soon another followed. It looked frightening - like war.

Soon we were winding in and out around curves up into the mountains. This was the land of the Igorots and other tribes - small brown people who live in these wooded mountains. The air grew cool as we reached the higher elevation, and we felt quite calm and secure as we drove into Baguio. Here we would be safe, we felt, from the troubles that might come to Manila.

At the cottages on Navy Road we were met by one of the missionaries from China. “Oh, isn’t it awful?” she greeted us.

“What’s awful?” We looked around at the quiet peace of the surrounding pines.

“Haven’t you heard? The China Division headquarters, right here in Baguio, was bombed this morning. A Filipino girl was hurt, but not seriously. We thank our heavenly Father for that,” she added.

“I thought we were coming to a safe place,” I burst out, laying my hand on my mother. Was there a safe place in all of the Philippines? I wondered.

We rushed our things into one of the cottages while Elder Blake gave us instructions. “Don’t use any of the canned goods in the bodega [storehouse]. Purchase all you can in the stores. These cases of food must be guarded for future use.”

## ANGELS OVER MANILA

Then he was gone. On his return he would bring more women and children to this retreat we had hoped would be a real refuge.

Suddenly we heard the shrill air-raid siren on the town's ice plant. Juanita cried. I told her to stay with Mother while I tried to get into Baguio to buy food. Hearing a taxi stop nearby, I hailed it and started to town. At the main street the air-raid warden stopped us.

"You can go no farther until the all clear sounds."

I stepped onto the sidewalk and stood inside a shop doorway until the all clear sounded. Then I hurried to the largest store that sold foreign foods. What a sight! It seemed the whole foreign community was there snapping up the remaining goods. I waited twenty minutes, then I decided to try one of the small Chinese shops that might carry canned goods. There I was successful in buying canned goods and some fresh fruits and vegetables.

Next I had to find transportation back to the cottages. I spoke to the shopkeeper. "Will you please call a taxi?"

He looked at me in surprise. "Lady, the taxis in Baguio are all engaged."

"What can I do?" I asked. "It is getting late."

"And there's a blackout scheduled for tonight." He shrugged, turning away.

In such emergencies there is always a recourse. The heavenly Father knew my need. As I waited in the doorway of that shop, I prayed silently, "Oh Lord, please send a taxi." In a few minutes, to my great relief, a very old taxi rattled down the street and stopped right in front of me. The passenger stepped out, and I stepped in!

## ANGELS OVER MANILA

Back at the cottage Mother was feeling rested and ready to eat when I arrived with the provisions. Others had come from Manila in my absence. A buzz of activity provided background as we settled into the five apartments and prepared for the blackout which would leave us in total darkness.

"Where is Wendell?" I asked of each carload.

"Finally one of the men said, "These folk from Manila are now having to pass through American communication lines, which is not always easy to do. The car your son was in was turned back."

Again we prayed, and on its second attempt the car in which he rode was allowed to pass through the lines.

The air-raid signals continued. Some were false alarms, but often enemy planes came diving down, dropping their missiles of destruction not far away.

Without air-raid shelters, we had difficulty deciding just where to go for protection. Since all the men from the church headquarters were in Manila, except one aged man, the women built a cover over a section of ditch which had been dug for a pipeline.

"As soon as you hear the air-raid siren, run to the ditch and hide there" were the instructions given to all the children. Even Mutt, the terrier, soon learned what the siren meant and he would scamper pell-mell with the children to the ditch.

Some of the older folk said, "We feel safer lying flat under the pine trees on the hillside." Others declared, "There is a good hiding place back of the concrete stairs under one of the cottages." As one of the stenographers crawled under the house, she exclaimed, "What a life for a lady!"