

Chapter 1

School Days

The sweet fragrance of fresh hay filled young Harry Miller's nostrils as he opened the doors of the dairy barn. Several of the cows mooed as the early morning sunlight pierced the opening. Grabbing a stool and a bucket from the corner, Harry sat down to milk the first cow. The ping of milk against metal softened as the bucket began to fill.

Harry had been thrilled to land this job at Mount Vernon Academy. With four children still at home, his parents told him he would have to earn his way through school as best he could. Having lived on a farm most of his life, he especially liked working with livestock.

Harry finished milking the first cow and moved to the next. When he was through he poured the contents of all the buckets into one large vat in the back of the pickup. The sweet milk sloshed out onto his overalls. Jumping into the cab, he slammed the door shut. The engine roared to life, and Harry headed in the direction of the campus kitchen.

"Well, Harry, you're early this morning," the matron called cheerfully as she kneaded dough for the day's bread.

"Yes, ma'am," Harry answered, dragging the heavy vat into the kitchen. "I've got a full day of studies."

"So tell me, Harry," the middle-aged woman inquired. "This being your last year here, what are your plans for the future?"

Harry shoved the vat into the refrigerator and leaned against the counter to catch his breath. "I've been giving it a lot of thought lately, and I think I want to be a doctor."

"An honorable profession." The matron's eyes lighted up. "Do you know that a new Adventist college is opening in Battle Creek next year? It will be called the American Medical Missionary College. Perhaps you would like to attend."

"I'll inquire about that," Harry said. "Now I must be getting ready for class."

Harry applied to the new school in Battle Creek and was accepted. That summer he sold religious books door-to-door to raise money for college. He didn't particularly like the work. He ate and slept in a different house every night. Sometimes, lacking any other place, he

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slept in a barn. But the experience taught him how to deal with people, and he realized how fulfilling service for others could be.

Harry looked forward to the beginning of the fall term. Being accepted in a medical school carried a certain amount of prestige. Student rivalry that first year bolstered the egos of many a young man, each one trying to impress the others with his past credentials. Harry was one of them. He learned the hard way that “pride goeth before... a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). His anatomy instructor called on him during class one day. “Mr. Miller, what is the epiphysis of the bone?”

Harry’s knees trembled, and he glanced sideways at his classmates. He remembered reading the word but couldn’t for the life of him remember what it meant. He gulped. “I don’t believe I can answer that, sir.”

“What, then, is the diaphysis?” the instructor asked.

Beads of sweat blistered Harry’s forehead. The silence in the classroom felt suffocating, and he knew that every eye was looking at him. He felt two feet tall.

“That will do, Mr. Miller,” the professor said at last. “You may take your seat.”

The class continued, but Harry felt thoroughly disgraced. From then on he studied his books over and over again, practically memorizing each chapter in the lesson. He vowed never to be humiliated again.

Hitting the books was one thing. But the hands-on part of his education terrified Harry because he had an overwhelming fear of blood and death. He recalled the fireside tales his uncle told when he was a lad - horrid stories of strange happenings in the night. He knew they were only stories, but they had left a lasting impression on him that he could not erase. He hated graveyards, and as a child would run into the cornfield to escape the sight of a funeral procession.

Even in medical school, when a classmate died of pneumonia, Harry refused to attend the funeral. As his fear gripped him anew, he wondered if he would ever be a good physician.

Harry’s money ran out before too long, so, like many of the students, he did odd jobs around the school and sanitarium to finance his education. However, freshmen rarely got the good jobs. Those were reserved for seniors.

Harry’s roommate, Stoops, found a job helping a coroner with postmortem examinations, which didn’t help Harry’s problem at all. Postmortem exams were done to determine the cause of death or

extent of disease. Doctors could learn a great deal about the nature of disease and thus help others in the future. Stoops gave Harry detailed accounts of how he cut open and sewed up the dead bodies. The stories made Harry's flesh crawl, and Stoops knew it. He ribbed Harry constantly, inviting him to help in the lab. But Harry always had an excuse.

One afternoon Stoops came home to report that an elderly lady had died in a fall and there would be a postmortem exam that night.

"Come on over and help," Stoops said excitedly.

"I have to study," Harry said lamely.

"You're a coward," Stoops sneered. "You're afraid to go."

Harry's fear of shame overcame his fear of death. He knew that if the guys found out they'd play all kinds of tricks on him, just to watch his hysterics. Suppose they put a kidney in his pocket or planted a whole cadaver in his bed! Harry would never live the embarrassment down. He had to overcome his unreasonable fear of death.

"Of course I'll go," he answered, mustering all his courage.

"Great!" Stoops said as headed for the door. "I'll see you there."

Harry's stomach clenched into knots the rest of the day, and he shuffled from place to place. He prayed that God would help him through this night. Why did postmortems always have to take place at night, when it was dark and spooky? He felt every passing moment, knowing that it drew him closer to a confrontation with every fear he carried within him. Would God really help him?

"Well, God only helps those who help themselves," he said out loud as the time drew near. "Perhaps I can just peek in and sort of test the waters. What if I faint right then and there?" He reached the building where the postmortem was to be done. Inside, he grasped the door handle and pulled it open. Light poured from the room, and his eyes blinked as he looked at his fellow students gathered around the corpse. Immediately, as if by a miracle, his fears melted, and a great calm fell over him.

From that night on, Harry was engrossed in anatomy. He grew so adept at it that his friends began whispering that he would be a professor someday. He applied for a job in the anatomy laboratory and was given a position that only months before would have been his worst nightmare.

In his senior year, Harry was made a student teacher in anatomy. It was a busy year for him as he contemplated his graduation and the beginning of his medical career.

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Harry began to take an interest in a young lady in his class - Maude Thompson. Harry had never dated a girl before, and he knew that if he neglected his studies he risked failing his courses. He also realized that if he neglected his girlfriend, he risked losing her. So he took a great interest in seeing that she passed her courses. Much of their time together was spent with their noses in medical books.

Both Harry and Maude graduated from the American Medical Missionary College with the class of 1902. With diplomas and medical licenses secured, the two doctors were married.