

*Our Daughter:
The Dumpster Kid*

AMOS HAWKINS

Copyright 1997 - All Rights Reserved

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter One

"You better take your hands off of me!" I could hear a voice that sounded like a young girl. "All I want is a chance to see Mr. Hankins and ask him for a job!" With that I heard a thud of someone hitting the floor.

Being a wealthy businessman I am continually accosted by unscrupulous people who have devised plans by which they can separate me from some of my wealth. The result being that I have hired a very efficient secretary to screen them and a guard to show them out.

My secretary screamed and came to my door just as I opened it. "What in the world is going on out here?" I could see my rather large guard was lying on the floor with a young girl holding him down.

This little red haired girl all of four feet eight had overcome my guard and was holding him down with her foot on his chest and an arm stretch and twist. I commanded her to let him go and to come into my office.

She let the guard go and came into my office. She marched to the front of my desk and stood straight and proud. The aroma of a garbage truck emanated from her that permeated my office. Her face was smudged with dirt as was her dress. Her red hair was matted. It wasn't too hard for me to realize that this person was one who had been living in garbage somewhere. She had a smile on her face and a sparkle in her green eyes. She appeared to be about fourteen or fifteen years old.

She put her dirty hand out for me to shake, which I did and then she remarked with authority, "My name is Ann and God has sent me to you today so I can ask you for a job. I have to get a job so I can make enough money to rent an apartment and get out of that dumpster."

"You live in a dumpster?" I said this as if I hadn't detected this already.

"Yes I do. I am known on the street as The Dumpster Kid. I live in the first dumpster behind TUTU's in Palm Beach. I have lived there since I was thirteen and I am tired of it. I just want to get out and live like other people."

"Are you quite certain that God sent you here and that you are not acting on your own?"

"Of that I am quite certain. The part I am not quite certain of is whether he sent me for a job or not. I have been wanting to get out of that dumpster and I assumed he wanted me to ask for a job."

"I have no idea why you were sent here, but I do know one thing and that is I am going to let you shower in my bathroom and wash your clothes in my washer. I'll call my wife and let her help you get your hair clean and then you two can go shopping for new clothes."

"In other words you are going to get me all cleaned up and get me new clothes so I can go back to the dumpster like that!"

"You are jumping to conclusions. I want you to get all cleaned up so I can find you a home in which to live. You shouldn't be in a dumpster at your age. You should be in a home with loving and caring parents! I can't give you a job working for me because you are under age, but I can look for you a home."

"I wish you luck on that one! I have been in foster care ever since I can remember. I have longed for a home with loving and caring parents for a long time and

The Dumpster Kid

have never gotten them. Foster care released me and turned me out on my own. I never knew why but they did. The result is that I have been living in a dumpster ever since."

"I am going to let you clean up and then we will worry about where you will live."

"My friend in the dumpster, Lee, takes me to a mansion in Palm Beach some nights and we shower and clean up there. She is about as close as I have ever gotten to having a mother."

"If you will come in here I will show you where everything is so you can take your shower and put your clothes in the washer while you are taking your shower. I had this put in because I sometimes have to work on a car for one of the mechanics and I get dirty. I wash my clothes and take a shower in here and when I go home clean it keeps my wife happy."

"Do you have any children?"

"Yes. We had two boys and the oldest son died a few years ago, so now we only have one son and three grand children."

"I am sorry! I didn't mean to bring something like that up and hurt you."

I led her into the bathroom, "This is the washer and I will set it so all you have to do is put your clothes in and press this button." I showed her the correct button to push and then showed her where the shower is and how to work the knobs. I got her a clean wash cloth and towel. "Do you have any questions?"

"Just one. Where are you going to be while I am taking this shower?"

"I am going to lock the door so you can get out but no one can get in. I will go to the outer office and call my wife to come so she can help you get your hair clean. My secretary will be in my office so if you need help call out and she will help you. Will that be all right with you?"

"That will be just fine! She won't try to have me thrown out again will she?"

I laughed at Ann. She didn't want to get thrown out. "No Ann she won't have you thrown out. She is a very nice lady and does what I ask her to do and more too."

I pressed the lock on the door and shut it as I left the bathroom. I went on into the outer office and told my secretary to sit in mine while Ann was taking a shower. My secretary went into my office and came back out in a second and asked, "How can you stand that awful smell?"

That is strong enough to asphyxiate you!"

"I'll turn on the exhaust fan for you if you wish. That will take all the smell out." I laughed at my secretary.

I took my secretary's phone and called my wife. She came almost immediately. I never have been able to get her to do anything I ask that fast before!

"What in the world is so important that you have to rush me here so fast?"

"There is a young girl in my shower getting cleaned up. Her clothes are in the washer and need to be put in the dryer as soon as they are washed. She came in here smelling like a garbage truck! She has been sleeping in a dumpster and getting her meals out of the garbage. I want you to help her with her hair. It was all matted and dirty when she came.

When she is all cleaned up, I want you to take her shopping for new clothes."

About this time the bathroom door cracked open and a pretty cherub face topped with wet long red hair peeked out and asked, "Is your wife here yet so I can get some

The Dumpster Kid

clothes on and my hair cleaned? I'm cold."

"I'm here dear. Let me get you something to put on besides that towel so you will be warm." With that Joan went to the work room and got a smock and some safety pins. She pinned a dry towel around Ann so it wouldn't fall off and then put the smock over that. Joan took the clothes from the washer and put them into the dryer. After this she commandeered my desk chair and backed it up to the sink in the bathroom and had Ann sit in the chair so her head would be on the top of the backrest and her hair in the sink.

Joan worked on Ann's hair for sometime and then told Ann, "I'm going to have to cut a little of your hair to get the last of the matting out.

It won't make your hair look bad because it is underneath. Do you mind?"

"I don't mind. I trust you because you are trying to help me. I haven't had many people try to help me in all my life. Most of the time I have had to do things for myself if I could."

"Don't you have a home that you can go back to?"

"No ma'am. I have been under Foster Home Care until a while back when they let me go so they could help other boys and girls."

"You mean that they just turned you loose and told you to make it on your own?"

"Not just like that, but pretty close. Anyway I have been living in a dumpster behind TUTU's in Palm Beach every since. I think I have a pretty nifty address. Dumpster #1, Care TUTU's, Palm Beach, Florida. It isn't everyone that has an address like that!" Ann laughed.

Joan cut Ann's hair to get the last matting out and then brushed it, but the soap they had been using didn't have an anti-static material in it and the hair followed the brush each time it was pulled away from the head. Joan did the best she could and then told Ann to get her clothes out of the dryer and meet her in the outer office. While Ann was doing this Joan caught me and whispered, "What do you intend to do with her after she is all cleaned up with new clothes, send her back to the dumpster?"

"I don't know yet. You get her the new clothes and we will have to see what happens. You can be certain that I am not going to send her back to the dumpster to do anything more than retrieve what things she may have there!"

"I'm going to take her shopping and when I get back you better have some idea as to what you intend to do."

Ann came out of the bathroom all cleaned up with her red hair all combed, a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eye. She was ready to go shopping for a new wardrobe. Now that she was all cleaned up I estimated her age at about thirteen or fourteen. With the dirt she looked older.

Joan and Ann went shopping and they came back about two hours later. They were loaded down and I could tell from the smile on Ann's face that she had enjoyed that. I could also see a smile on Joan's face.

She and Ann had hit it off very well together! I was about to have a new resident at my house.

Joan told me that Ann was going to model her new outfits for me.

Ann went into the bathroom and put on an everyday dress and came out for me to see.

"That dress makes you look pretty!"

The Dumpster Kid

She dashed back into the bathroom and put on a pair of shorts and a middy blouse.

"That makes you look cool!" I smiled.

She rushed back into the bathroom and put on a pair of jeans and a matching blouse. She returned for my comment.

"Those jeans make you look sexy!"

She rushed to put on a party dress.

"That dress makes you look like the most beautiful girl in the world!"

Her eyes sparkled and she smiled a big smile as she came to give me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek.

She looked at me, "I have been waiting for a father to tell me that for years! Did you really mean them?"

"Of course I meant them! I don't say things to make people feel good. You are a very beautiful young lady and I am quite proud to have been able to bring about that transformation!"

"I think you are a very beautiful young lady and well developed. I hope you will remember that you are worth waiting for." Remarked Joan.

"I do believe that! I have had my share of creeps who thought because I sleep in dumpster I would willingly sleep with them! I have shown a few of them how I felt about them."

"That was a good girl! I'll bet they didn't bother you again."

"I think they learned the first time!" Ann just looked at me and smiled. Knowing Ann and her capabilities, I am certain they did learn!

"You go back in the bathroom and change to either your street dress, shorts or jeans outfit and I am going to take you home with me.

There is no way I am going to let a beautiful young lady sleep in a dumpster and ruin her new clothes!" Joan had bonded solidly with Ann during the shopping trip. Joan loves to shop with anyone who shops her way and apparently Ann passed the test completely!

"I see you have decided that we are going to have a girl in the family now." I remarked.

"This is just until we find her a place to stay. I don't intend to keep her. She surely must have family somewhere who wants her."

"I'm not so certain about that. She told me that she has been in Foster Care all of her life. She doesn't remember anything about her own mother. She has been told that her mother gave her up for adoption at birth and that she waffled on that until the courts gave Ann over to Foster Care. She has been in more homes than one child should ever have to be! I think I will call Foster Care in the morning and see what I can find out about her and her legal guardian."

"Now who wants to take her home and keep her?"

Just then Ann came out of the Bathroom in her shorts and middy blouse. She really looked like she belonged to us. She was pretty and had red hair and green eyes just like Joan. We left the office and went outdoors heading for the car.

"Now that I am going to stay with you folks, may I call you mother and father? I will be proud to call you that if you let me. No one has ever done for me what you two have today. Even if I can't stay with you, I will always remember what you have done

The Dumpster Kid

today." Her long red hair blew back in the slight breeze and she had that ever present smile on her face and her eyes sparkled as she spoke.

"We will have to see what can be done about keeping you with us tomorrow. Until I can find out something and for the time being you may call us your mother and father. Just don't get any false hopes up. We may have to give you up to a relative or back to the Foster Care people!"

"I don't have any relatives that want me or they would have taken me before now. I know for certain Foster Care doesn't want me. It just looks like you are going to get me-if you want me."

"We will have to see what happens. I don't think there is any doubt as to whether we want you or not. We just don't want either one of us to be disappointed is all." Joan remarked.

"I have an idea. Why don't we go home and get Ann settled in her room and then get dressed up so we can go out to eat?"

"That sounds great to me. I won't have to fix anything to eat and can enjoy being with Ann and you. Where did you have in mind to go?"

"Where would you like to go Ann? Do you have a place you would like to go?"

"I believe I would like to go to TUTU's and see what the inside of that place looks like. The patrons there have kept me alive for some time and didn't know it."

"I think that will be possible. I will have to call and make a reservation and they will let me know if we can get in tonight. We will give it a try anyway."

"Thank you, father. If we go, I would like to go behind the place to my old dumpster and see if my locket is there somewhere. I seem to have lost it."

"By all means! What did you have in your locket?"

"I had a picture that someone told me was of my real mother. I have no way of knowing for certain. If it is of my mother and I ever happen to see her, I have some questions to ask her!"

"I certainly don't blame you for that. I believe that I would like to ask her some questions also." Joan was just as upset over a mother letting her child go through what Ann has endured.

We arrived at the car and put Ann in the front seat between us and buckled her in. We buckled our own belts and I headed the car for home.

Ann was all eyes and ears as we drove through the streets. She had never ridden in the front seat of a car and she just chattered about everything she saw.

By the time we reached home, Ann was fast asleep leaning her head on her new mother's arm. I stopped the car in the drive while Joan unlocked the front door. For a girl in her early teens, Ann was diminutive. She couldn't possibly weigh over eighty pounds and wasn't more than four feet eight inches tall. I gently picked Ann up and carried her into the house. I placed her on the bed in the room we had decided would be hers.

I mentioned to Joan that I would probably have a lot of that to do until Ann had a chance to catch up on all of the sleep she had lost over the years.

I called the restaurant for an appointment and they were full for the evening. I told Joan and she remarked that she was glad in a way as she was a little tired from going shopping and working with Ann. Not that she minded doing any of it, but she was tired. We sat at the table and made a sandwich we called our supper. All evening we went in

The Dumpster Kid

and checked on Ann to make certain she was all right. It worried us a little that she was sleeping so soundly as we were not accustomed to her sleep habits.

We felt she had slept long enough at eight and woke her up. She woke up like a smaller child would. Her first question was, "Where am I?"

We reminded her that she had a new home for a while with us. She looked all around her and then remarked, "Oh yes! Now I remember! You people are so nice. I guess we won't get to eat at TUTU's tonight because I slept so long?"

"You are right about not getting to eat there, but you are wrong on why. They were all booked up and couldn't take us. You see! You haven't done anything wrong!"

"I'm glad to know that! My last foster parents blamed me for everything that went wrong. I was a jinx to them, they said. That was why they turned me back to the agency. They claimed I was more trouble to them than they could handle. The report they wrote up on me said I was a delinquent and hard to handle. All of that was lies so the agency would take me back and the agency believed it and included it in my records. If they couldn't handle me, they must have been pretty weak. Anyone can see that I am not big enough to put up much of a fight."

"I am surprised that the agency would accept such a report. You are with us as of now and I expect we will have no trouble from you. You are a nice young lady as far as we are concerned. I don't care what the records say now or ever. I for one think that you are going to make us proud of you someday!"

"I shall do my best to always please you and make you proud of me. I'd like to change the subject now. Am I going to get something to eat? I haven't had anything to eat since yesterday."

"What would you like to eat? Would you like a pizza? A hamburger and fries? Just name it."

"What is a pizza?"

"It's circular dough with tomato sauce, cheese, hamburger meat, peppers and other things you might want on it."

"That sounds good. Would it be too much bother for you to get me one?"

"Not at all! I keep some frozen in the freezer for just such occasions. All I have to do is heat the oven and shove it in when the oven is hot." Joan heated the oven and fixed the pizza for Ann who apparently had never had one. When the pizza was done, Joan showed Ann how to cut the pizza and showed her how to lift it from the tin and eat it. Ann was going to pick up a hot piece and touched the pan. She dropped the piece of pizza on her plate when she burned her fingers.

"Are they always this hot? Can we let them cool some?"

"You can let them cool some, but they are best hot. You accidentally touched the pan I baked it in. Let me see how badly you burned your fingers."

Joan went over to look at Ann's fingers to see how badly they were burned.

"Mother, they were not burned that bad!"

"We don't let little things grow into big things around here by taking care of them when they are little. Now hold your fingers up for me to look at."

Ann held her fingers up and Joan saw blisters already forming and went to get the aloe and a band-aid.

"This will give your pizza time to cool while we fix your burned fingers." Aloe was put on the fingers and band-aids to keep it in place.

The Dumpster Kid

Ann watched this and mentioned that she had never had anyone do anything for her like that before.

"We do this for any of our children."

A smile came on Ann's face and her eyes sparkled as she said, "Thanks for doing that, Mom."

Ann ate the whole pizza and loved it. It was her introduction to pizza and it certainly was not her last pizza! Like most teenagers she learned to eat junk foods. They may not be good for the body, but what teen ever grew up without eating at least some junk food?

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Two

The next morning after I arrived in my office, I called the Foster Care office to see if I could find anything of Ann's past. To my great surprise they said they didn't even have a record of her being in their care! I suggested that maybe they didn't have her under the name of Ann Green. They replied that they had no such child at anytime for they would remember her.

"If what you say is true, may I come over and look through your records?" The answer was a definite no! They claimed that they had no record of our Ann. I pondered what I should do next and decided to call my lawyer and get his suggestion on the subject. I certainly needed to know who had allowed her to live in a dumpster. I couldn't become her legal guardian without knowing the previous guardian.

I called my lawyer and asked for suggestions. He told me to just let him handle the whole thing and he would get back to me. What was he being paid for if not to do such things for me? I agreed and then phoned Joan to tell her the news.

Joan told Ann what had transpired and what we were doing. Ann suggested that she could take Joan to the house where she had been the last time she was in foster care. Joan jumped at that idea and called me to let me know that they were going over to Ann's former foster parents.

Ann and Joan lost no time in going to Ann's former residence. Joan suggested to Ann that they pretend they were coming to see if Ann had left her locket there. Ann agreed. They walked up to the door of the house and knocked. A young, heavy set boy answered the door. When he saw Ann he yelled to his mother, "The jinx is back with some lady! What do you want me to tell them?"

Just then a heavy set lady came to the door and asked us what we wanted. Ann answered, "I have lost my locket and I wondered if I might have left it here."

"I don't think you did. I haven't seen it anywhere."

We thanked them for their help and left for the car. After we got into the car Ann broke down into tears.

"What is wrong with you, Ann? No one has touched you or hurt you in any way."

"I can't help it, mother. They gave me such a bad time that I cry when I remember it."

"What did they do to you that gives you such painful thoughts?"

"They all called me names and always said I was a jinx. The boy who came to the door always accused me of doing things I didn't do. When he told his parents his lies, they would punish me or beat me with the iron cord or a belt. When they beat me and the belt cut my skin I would have to lay on my stomach all night. If I got any blood on the sheets I had to spend time washing them in the morning by hand."

"You are not making this up are you? I haven't seen any marks on you."

"I thought that you trusted me. When we get home I will show you the marks on my back!"

"I am sorry, dear. I hadn't seen the marks on your back and I thought possibly you were telling me a little story. I certainly want to see those marks!"

As soon as they were home, Ann led Joan into the house where she took off her blouse and revealed some of the worst scars that Joan had ever seen on a child. Joan grabbed her in a big hug and cried, "Any monster who would do that to an innocent child

The Dumpster Kid

should be horse whipped!" It made Joan sick just to think of the pain Ann must have suffered! She grabbed the phone and called me as Ann put on her blouse. "What is the matter, Joan? Has something happened to you or Ann?"

"Nothing has happened to me, but Ann showed me her former home and we talked with the mother and a boy. They knew Ann and talked with us a minute. When we were back in the car, Ann began to cry. I asked her why and she told me of how brutal they were to her. Their boy lied to his parents about Ann and she was punished and beaten with an iron cord or a belt. When we got home she showed me the scars. She must have been treated terribly by them."

"That means that there has to be a record of her being with those people. I'll call Jim and let him know what you have found out. Thanks for letting me know."

Joan made an appointment for Ann to have a physical and another one to see the dentist. It was several weeks before I heard from Jim again so the appointments for the doctor and dentist were honored. The doctor said that Ann was not in the best physical shape. He told Joan to get Ann some vitamins and to make certain that Ann got a well rounded diet. He also suggested that she be given her shots so she would be immune to some of the worst diseases children usually get. Joan agreed to that and the first shots were given that day.

They went to the dentist last and the dental hygienist cleaned Ann's teeth to a pearly white. Her teeth were beautiful and the dentist remarked that she was a lucky girl because she would not have to have braces. She did have one problem. She had several caries that would have to be taken care of, but nothing really bad. The dentist also wanted to put a sealant on her teeth to protect them from future caries.

"I have found some things out like her birth date and where she was born. I also found the name of her birth mother." Jim told me on the phone the next day.

"That is good news. Can you tell me her date of birth so we can have a birthday party when it comes around and we will know how old she is."

"Doesn't she know how old she is?"

"I'm afraid not. She wouldn't know that unless someone had told her and they haven't."

"I'm looking at the information I have on her now. She was born April 17, 1984. She was born here in Good Samaritan Hospital. I can't tell you the birth mother's name."

"That is all right, Jim. I will get that later I'm sure. Thanks for telling me this. Now I can tell her how old she really is!"

Ann and Joan were becoming very close. I was glad to see it, but it worried me in case Ann were to have to leave us for some reason. Joan would really take that very hard. Joan took Ann shopping again. They really didn't need anything, but they managed to come home loaded down with bags and boxes. They both loved to shop and they would look at what they got and make comments or laugh together. Ann's closet and chest of drawers were beginning to bulge with clothes. Ann was really too old for dolls, but I noticed her bed had several small cushions on it and some dolls leaning on them.

One day a hysterical Joan called me. This was unusual for her. I knew that something had happened concerning Ann. "We got a letter from the agency demanding that we turn Ann over to them by the end of the week or they will start legal proceedings against us. I am not turning her over to them if I have to take her with me to a foreign

The Dumpster Kid

country. They turned her loose when they had her before and I don't intend for them to take her from us to do the same thing over!"

Joan was really upset. "I'll call Jim and see what he advises."

"He must not be much good! He has had the case for a long time now and all he has found out is that Ann is thirteen and her birth date! If he doesn't tell us something more than that, I think we need to hire a lawyer who can! I am not going to give Ann up."

"Calm down, Joan! No one has said that we are going to give her up. We have both known that there has always been the possibility that we would have to relinquish her sometime unless we could arrange to become her legal guardian. I have come to love her also and I am not going to give her up without a fight. Now if you will hang up so I can call Jim, I would appreciate it."

Joan hung up and I called Jim. He told me that the state attorney had the case and he would call him for advice. In a minute or two Barry called me personally and told me that he wanted Joan and I to come to his office and bring Ann with us. He would get a stay on any legal orders concerning Ann and he wanted to get pictures of Ann's scars and her physical size.

I called Joan and she got Ann into the car and was in my office so fast that I couldn't believe she got there without a string of policemen trying to arrest her for speeding. We all got into the car and I drove to Barry's office.

When we arrived in his office, his secretary had been alerted to the urgency of the situation and ushered us into Barry's office as soon as we arrived. Barry began, "I know that you folks are upset over the turn of events that have taken place in the last few hours. I have tried to find records of Ann being in foster care and have been rebuffed several times. The last time I threatened them with a grand jury subpoena if they were not produced as we have evidence that she was under their care and know the people who last had her."

"This must have shook them up, because now they are admitting that they had her and are demanding her back. I suspect the reason is that they want to get hold of Ann because she is state's evidence. I do not and I repeat, I do not want you to turn Ann over to them under any conditions unless I tell you to. What they intend for Ann is not very pleasant to think about."

"Do you think they might try to kidnap her or take her by some other means?" I asked.

"It all depends on how deep they are in this and what they have been doing. All I can say is for you to keep your eyes and ears open when you are away from home. When you are home keep all the doors locked and if you do not have a burglar alarm, I suggest that you get one. I will provide you with a phone that if you need to call my office in a hurry, all you have to do is pick it up and it will connect you to me immediately. It isn't any good for any other calls." He looked at Ann and smiled as he said this.

Ann looked at him and remarked, "I seldom use the phone. I don't have anyone to call or talk to except mother and father and they are usually with me." She smiled at Barry and he could see her eyes sparkle with her smile.

"I can see why they want to keep you!"

Barry gave us the special phone and then had a photographer take the pictures of Ann that he needed. Ann was a little reluctant to take off her blouse so the pictures could be taken, so Joan got her a towel to cover up her front. When we arrived home, I

The Dumpster Kid

checked the batteries in my burglar alarm and set it so I could test it. It was working and I'm certain the neighbors wanted to know what was going on.

I put a padlock on both fence gates on either side of the house and instructed the ladies to forgo anymore shopping sprees until this was all over. Ann was in private school and had to ride a bus. I told her that she would not attend school until this was resolved. She was happy about that as she didn't have a real liking for school anyway. I told the ladies to keep the doors all locked and not to open them unless they knew the person outside. I would be coming in the back door with my keys. They were to keep the burglar alarm on all the time.

The next morning I called Ann's school and told them that she would not be attending for a while and for them to make assignments and I would see that she completed them.

Joan complained to me in a few days that she felt like she was in prison living like this.

"I know dear. We live all locked up and the criminals are out there running loose. Just take cheer. Barry called me today and informed me that this would all be over soon. He has been able to get Ann's last foster parents to testify as to what has been going on in the child welfare office. It seems they were in on a scam that was going on in that office involving thousands of dollars. They would agree to take a child for a while and then make false reports to the office which showed up on the child's records. They would then take the child back to the agency and the agency would turn the child out to fend for itself and they would never change their records and continue to get the money for the child which they split with the foster families involved. The government is always slow to check for such things and these people continued to draw this money. There were several children involved and there was a lot of money involved. Because of their actions, he has been able to force them to turn over the records of all the children involved in this. Ann is not the only one."

"Does that mean that we can relax a little now?"

"No! This is the time they will try something if they can. Be on guard every minute!"

The next evening when I arrived home, I found deputies at the front and back doors ready to make a forceful entry. I called Joan on my ham radio and told her not to come out and to call Barry on the phone he gave us. Joan did this and in minutes the police left the premises.

I went into the house and Joan was so nervous that she was about sick.

"If this kind of thing keeps up, I am going to take Ann and go into hiding until this is over."

"It is almost over and you will soon be free to go shopping again. Barry told me today that they are issuing warrants for the arrest of those involved. The Grand Jury is investigating."

"I surely do hope they end this soon. It is going to cause me to lose my mind if things like today keep happening!"

"We are over the worst part now. There shouldn't be a repeat of today ever again."

"I hope not, Pop! Those policemen out there scared me too!"

"You will both be able to do what you want again soon and you will forget all about

The Dumpster Kid

this. I guess that you know when this is all over we will be your legal guardians and you will be ours as long as you want. Of course there is the possibility that if you wish we could also adopt you and you would be ours for always."

"I want to hold off on that for a while until I can see if my real mother is alive and ask her some questions about why she did this to me. I don't want to go live with her, but I do have some questions to ask her."

"I have some questions for her also." Joan always wanted to know how a mother who had carried a child for nine months could possibly give it away and have nothing to do with it anymore.

In June, after Ann was fourteen, we all had to go to court. Both the defense lawyer and Barry presented their case to the court and it was then turned over to the jury to make a decision. The jury returned a verdict in rather quick fashion. The scoundrels were to spend time in prison and we were to be Ann's legal guardians. We were free at last!

We went home, turned off the burglar alarm, cleaned up, changed into our good clothes and went to TUTU's for a celebration and something to eat. Of course Ann took us behind the restaurant to her dumpster. She said she had spent two and one half years in it, but she lost track of time while she was in it and it may have been less time than she said.

When we saw the dumpster someone had written a sign on it that read, "Ann's dumpster. Stay out!" A woman was out there that Ann knew and Ann asked her if she had seen her locket. The lady reached in her pocket and pulled out the locket in question. For the first time we got to see what Ann's birth mother looked like. Ann was a perfect clone of her. The smile, the sparkling green eyes and the red hair.

The woman told Ann, "We have missed you around here. Are these folks going to be your parents now?" "Yes. They have been nice to me and with my red hair, I think I belong to them, don't you?" "I would say so." The woman looked at us and said, "Ann is a very nice young lady. If you take her, you will be getting a wonderful daughter. Always be nice to her or I will haunt you at my death!" "We will always treat her nice. You won't have to worry about that." "Will you please come by and see us once in a while?"

Ann looked at me and asked, "May we come and see her once in a while?"

"Certainly we will. I have a feeling that you wouldn't be here if she hadn't helped you some."

"We have to help each other around here." The woman remarked.

We all left for home, but not before Ann had given the woman some money to buy food. As long as Ann stayed with us, she went by her old dumpster and gave her friends either money or food to eat. Sometimes she could not locate her friends and would leave a sandwich for them on the side of the dumpster.

One day not long after this Joan had noticed in the paper that a dumpster had been picked up by the compactor to empty and a woman who had apparently fallen asleep in it was crushed to death in the compactor. Joan never gave it a thought, but Ann picked up the paper and read the article and discovered that it was her friend that we had met behind TUTU's that evening.

Ann burst into tears and told Joan that this woman was her friend. Ann commented several times about how awful it must have been to be crushed to death like that.

The Dumpster Kid

Joan tried to comfort Ann and asked Ann if she thought there was anything we could do.

Between sobs Ann asked Joan, "Would it be possible for us to see that she gets a decent burial?" "Are you certain that she doesn't have some family that will want to take care of that?"

"I am certain mother. She had no one just like me. She always told me that if she had any money at all, she would will it to me when she died. We were very close mother. She was like my mother while I was in that dumpster! I loved her."

We made all the arrangements for her funeral and had her buried in a local cemetery with a very nice headstone. Ann was happy with that and this helped to console her grief.

The day of the funeral people came from everywhere. The funeral parlor was overflowing. Ann was wondering why so many people came to a funeral when there seemingly was no family.

That evening the answer came as we read the paper. Leona Farley was her name and she was one of the wealthiest women in the world!

She had no relatives, but the public came to her funeral to show respect.

In a few days, some lawyer that we didn't know came by and wanted to see Ann. We called Ann to the living room and sat to hear what this lawyer wanted.

The lawyer began, "I represent the recently departed Leona Farley. She was an eccentric, wealthy woman. She preferred living as a derelict to living in her own home after her husband passed away. She and her husband owned a large business that she has given Ann. The estate is worth several million dollars that is to be liquidated and a trust fund set up for Ann that will pay her a stipend each month of five thousand dollars until she reaches the age of 21. At the age of twenty one she is to receive control of the remainder of the fund. Then she can consider how she will use her inheritance. This monthly stipend will only be part of the interest from the money, so the main trust will still be in trust and growing."

"I will be happy to advise you anytime you wish advice about it. Here is my card with my phone number and address. Call me if you have further questions. For obvious reasons I am not notifying the press about this. They will probably find out about it and hound you when they find out. If you want to put it in the papers, that will be your decision, but I am not going to do that."

"When will I begin getting the payments?" Ann wanted to know.

"It will be a while because we have to liquidate the business and satisfy the estate legally so we can create the trust fund. I assume that it will be in the neighborhood of three months. I will be back in touch with you as soon as I can."

With this he rose and I showed him to the door too stunned to speak. Here was a woman that we never knew who had died, given her a decent burial and she in turn was leaving everything she had to our daughter, Ann. It is incomprehensible to believe that a woman with millions of dollars would live in a dumpster!

"I can't believe that! She always told me that she was going to leave me all she had, but I thought all she had was the dirty clothes she had on. I never realized she was a millionaire!" Ann was struggling with the knowledge that her friend was wealthy and that she had left it all to her.

"This puts a different slant on things now. You are wealthy now and can afford

The Dumpster Kid

that apartment you wanted to rent before. Perhaps you would prefer that to living with us." I remarked.

"You have to be kidding! The thing I have always wanted more than anything is to have a home and loving parents. I don't care how much money I have, I still want to be your daughter!" Ann was surprised that I would even think about giving her up.

"If you still want us, Ann, we still want you. As far as I am concerned nothing has changed." Joan mentioned.

"You know that I want you folks for my parents and when I see my mother and let her know how I feel about her giving me over to the agency, I'll be ready for you to adopt me if you want to."

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Three

One day Jay, our son, came to me and wanted to know if Joan and I had gone out of our minds.

"You don't know anything about Ann except that she came to you out of a garbage can and you want to take her in and rear her as your daughter. You don't know whether she is a thief, a scam artist or a liar."

"Now you listen to me, Jay, Ann is none of the above. She is a young lady who has had a bad time. She was never in a garbage can. It was a dumpster and she is as honest as the day is long. I have left large sums of money where she could get it and gave her the opportunity to take it. She never even looked at it. To be a scam artist she would have to be working with someone else and she is not. I have seen her records from the agency and she has told me the truth about all the homes she has been in. She has had seven foster parents in ten years!

How would you feel if you had no stable home that you could rely on?

How would you feel if you had parents who beat you with a belt or an iron cord and left you all bloody to where you had to sleep on your stomach in order to keep the sheets from sticking to the scabs?"

"You have seen those records, but have you checked to see if she has a police record also? She may have been moved around so much because she has some kind of problem with the police! Maybe she has a problem with drugs or alcohol. Maybe she is a prostitute."

"I know that you are trying to be protective of your mother and I, but you need have no fears about Ann. Why don't I let you and Ann sit down together so you can talk. I think that the two of you will get along fine and you will forget all your fears of her. You will love her for a sister. We had agreed that we would not tell Jay about Ann's inheritance because he is a blabber mouth and tells all. Ann didn't want anyone playing up to her because of her inheritance."

"I'll be glad to sit down with her, but I doubt that I am ever going to love her as a sister."

I asked Ann to come into the living room and talk with her brother.

Ann came into the living room with her ever present smile and remarked to Jay, "I have never had a real brother before and when I get one, he is the handsomest one anywhere! I am really lucky lately. I have the most loving and caring parents and now I have a very handsome brother!"

"Don't try to butter me up! It won't work with me."

"I'm not trying to butter you up. I think you are very handsome and I appreciate a brother who wishes to protect his parents. You think that I am trying to take advantage of your parents and you don't want that to happen. For your information, I only want what every other kid has, a home with loving parents and brothers and sisters. I have never had that in all my life and I hope you won't try to keep me from it. I would never do anything to dishonor your father and mother, or to take advantage of them."

"Do you really mean that?"

"Yes, I do. I have never had a mother. My mother never saw me, not even when I was born. She has no idea as to whether I am a boy or a girl, if she cares at all! She gave me up for adoption before I was born and a judge put me in foster care when she

The Dumpster Kid

wasn't sure she wanted to let me go. I have been in foster care ever since I was born. I have never known what it is like to have a real caring mother or father. Your parents are the first really nice people I have come to think of as my parents. All the rest of the homes I have been in had mothers and fathers that cared some about me, but were mostly just putting up with me. Am I making myself clear?"

"Yes, you have made yourself quite clear and I appreciate you for being frank about this. I have property out in the acreage and I would like for you to come and see it."

"How much land do you have out there and do you have any animals?"

"Yes, I do have some chickens and a couple of cats. I only own an acre of ground, but I built a good sized house on it. I have three good sized bedrooms, three baths, a large living room, a Florida room, a dining room and a three car garage."

"That sounds big when you are used to a dumpster! I love chickens and cats. I have never had either one for my own, but I have seen pictures of them and once a friend brought a kitten for me to pet and play with. My foster parents of the time wouldn't let me keep it. I have never held a chicken."

"You come to my house someday and I will let you do both. I

believe I am going to love you as a sister yet! I never had a sister, so I don't know much about being a big brother to a sister. I will have to learn how to do things to please a little sister."

"I think we can get along well together. If you let me hold a chicken when I am out there sometime and pet your cat, that will be very nice of you."

"Consider that done! My sister can pet my cat or chickens anytime she comes to see me."

I never had any more static from Jay about Ann trying to take advantage of Joan or me. When she said that she loved chickens and wanted to pet one, she won Jay's heart! Jay had never had a sister and he didn't know anything about being a big brother, but he did bond well with Ann. When something happened to Ann, he was as upset as he would have been had it been Joan or I.

I had a problem with my daughter-in-law. She had some concern about our taking Ann to rear at our age. She felt that she might be left with taking care of Ann should something happen to Joan and me. I assured her that we had made arrangements for Ann to be taken care of in that event.

Little Charles was happy to have an aunt. He had never had one before and was looking forward to seeing more of his aunt. Ann took little Charles aside and played little games with him. She was good at that and when Jackie saw how well she worked with little Charles she began to think that maybe this was meant to be.

The older grandchildren were another thing. They never had an aunt on their father's side of the house and being that he was dead they never expected to have one.

I called them over to the house to meet their new aunt and they came on over to see what was going on. When Suzie saw Ann and learned that she was younger than she was, she felt like that was odd.

"Grandma, that doesn't seem right calling her aunt when she is younger than I am. It seems like she should be more of a sister to me.

A younger sister." Suzie hastily added.

The Dumpster Kid

Suzie was five feet seven and older than Ann, so I could see why she might feel odd about a little and younger aunt. I guess that I might have feelings about that situation.

"I guess you know that if we adopt her, she will be your aunt for good."

"I'm glad that you called us over. Do you suppose she would like to go to the Mall with me?"

"She probably would sometime. Why don't you ask her and find out for yourself?" Ann had come into the living room as I made my last statement.

"What is someone wanting to ask me?"

"I was wondering if you would like to go to the Mall with me sometime? It would just be you and me. My friends are funny about hanging around the Mall with younger girls and I don't want one of them causing you any embarrassment."

"You don't have to take me if you don't want to. Mom and I go shopping a lot and I don't want to come between you and your friends."

"I'll tell you what I will do. You come to the Mall with me and my friends and if they cause you any problems, after that just you and I will go together. Will that be all right with you?"

"That will be fine with me. I think I will be OK with your friends. I have had a little experience with older children when I stayed in one of my foster homes."

"You were in a foster home? What was that like? I have heard some things about foster homes, but now you can tell me."

Suzie and Ann began to talk and bond. I had no more trouble from Suzie about Ann. Mat could care less that she was his aunt. He was like his father in that all he cared about was that she was pretty. He fell in love with her from the start. He was proud to be able to point her out to his friends and tell them that she was his pretty aunt. This ended the problems with the family and now Ann was accepted.

Suzie wrote a paper in one of her classes about foster children and told the teacher that she would be happy to bring her aunt in to talk to the class about it. The teacher thought her aunt would be an older woman and so she approved. Ann spent extra time getting fixed up and then went to Suzie's classroom to talk to the boys and girls in Suzie's class.

Suzie introduced Ann to the class, "Class, this is my aunt who has lived in foster homes all her life. She will tell you all about it."

The teacher looked hard at Suzie, "Are you playing some kind of cruel joke on us, Suzie?"

"No, Mrs. Smith, She is my aunt and she has lived in foster homes all her life. She has come to share with us about what it is like to be in foster homes."

Ann rose and stood in front of the class. She assured Mrs. Smith that she was Suzie's aunt and then proceeded to tell the class what life

was like for her in foster homes. The class was especially interested in what Ann had to say when she began telling about her dumpster life and eating from the garbage. Ann went on to tell of the older people with whom she had made friends who were also living in dumpsters. She told of how they all stuck together to help one another. She remarked that this made them seem almost like a family. This was something she had longed for and never had until recently.

When Ann had finished her little talk, one of the boys in the class remarked, "I

The Dumpster Kid

wish I had a pretty aunt like her. My aunts are all old and fat!"

The students laughed at him and then asked questions of Ann about things they didn't understand and how it felt to be living in a dumpster. Ann answered all of the questions until the class ended. She then left for home while Suzie reeled in her "A" for the work on foster children.

After Ann had visited Suzie's class, the boys in particular bothered Suzie about when she was going to bring her aunt back to class. Now Suzie is proud to take her little and younger aunt to the Mall. The other girls have accepted her in their group and no one even thinks about her being younger or shorter than they.

While Suzie and her friends have accepted Ann, Suzie doesn't come to take Ann anymore than she used to come to visit us. She would come to see us when she got a good report card because her Gramma gave her money for her "A's".

Mat comes by once in a while. He probably comes more often than Suzie. Since he has found out that he has a pretty aunt, he has been coming by more often.

Ann goes out to Jay's home with either her mother or me upon occasion. The first thing she does when she gets out there is to grab her can of flea spray and a broom and start cleaning the place up. Jay is a lousy housekeeper and she knows it. She learned that the first time she visited him. He always has chickens in the garage bathroom and fleas in the house from his cats. Ann always puts flea repellent on her legs when she goes to visit Jay. She also brings a can of flea killer insecticide when she comes and the minute she enters the house she will spray the floors. After she has sprayed the floors and furniture she grabs the vacuum and begins sweeping the dirt and dead fleas out of the house.

I think Jay lets his house get dirty on purpose. He loves to see Ann and his mother clean house. He calls them his scrub team. Later when Sam came to live with us she became part of the scrub team. Sam looked at Jay one day after they had finished cleaning his place and remarked, "Honestly, dear brother, it looks like to me that you should put the chickens in here and then you move to their pen. I think it would be easier cleaning!"

Jay looked at her surprised, "You may be right, Sam. I'll have to try that sometime and see how it works."

Jay loves his sisters and commented to me one day about how much Ann is like Joan. He was right! If we had ever had a daughter of our own, she probably would never have been as much like Joan as Ann.

Ann came to me and thanked me for standing up for her when Jay and the grandchildren came complaining about our accepting her. She had been listening at the doors when all this was taking place. She said she wanted to know who her friends were in the family, if she had any.

She was very happy that Joan and I had told them that we had complete confidence in her integrity.

In a few days Jim called me and asked that Ann, Joan and I come to his house as he wanted to show us something and ask us something. We all went to Jim's house to see what his great mystery was. He sounded very mysterious on the phone. He took us to the living room and after we were seated he began to explain.

"When we were working to get things straightened up for Ann, we discovered that there were other children who had been cast offs from the foster care program. Ann was

The Dumpster Kid

not the only one. The revised agency wants to know if you folks would be interested in taking another of those children. There is another little girl with red hair who they have not been able to place. She is only eight and hasn't been beaten or mistreated like Ann."

Joan looked at me and I looked at her. I looked over at Ann and she had her quizzical smile. I looked at Jim and asked when we could see her so we might be able to make a better decision.

She is here and you can see her tonight. I want you to see her so you can make a good decision. I know that you will. I think that you will love her as much as you do Ann. He called for Sam to come to him and this little red haired girl shyly came out of a bedroom. Joan asked her to come to her so she could talk to her. She went watching all of us to make certain that we were not going to grab her or something. She looked like a bag of bones. She hadn't been starved, but she looked like she hadn't been eating properly. Her skin had a sallow look about it just like Ann's skin when we got her. Her eyes had dark lines under them as though she may have been crying quietly to herself.

Joan and Ann began talking with Sam while Jim and I went to another room to talk some more.

Jim began, "Sam came to the foster care because her parents were killed. They were killed by a mad man in front of her. This madman broke into the house while they were all watching TV. He killed Sam's father in cold blood for no reason. Then he turned his attention to Sam's mother. She screamed and yelled from the pain that he inflicted and to attract attention so she might have help. Neighbors did hear the screams and called 911. They then went to the house to see what help she needed.

By the time the neighbors arrived and the police, the madman had succeed in mutilating Sam's mother and killing her.

When the police did arrive they found Sam's mother in a pool of blood along with her father. Sam was too little to understand what had happened and was sitting next to her mother's body crying and trying to get her mother to talk.

You may remember reading about the case in the papers four years ago. She has no grandparents or relatives. She is very much like Ann in that respect. She is a castoff from society because of the situation and not because of anything else! If you decide to take her, I am certain that you will give her a home that she needs badly at this time."

"That is a very sad story. The question comes to my mind as to why don't you keep her and raise her? You could do it as well as we can."

"That is so and I would take her in a minute if it wasn't for Gretchen. She just will not hear of taking her. She claims that she is too old for that kind of thing."

"She isn't any older than we are and we are enjoying Ann!"

"She just won't try it so if you folks think it over and decide to take her, I will get the papers all ready for you to sign."

"I wouldn't want to take her until I have had an opportunity to look at her records from the agency. Are you certain that she is only eight?"

"Of that I am certain! Her records are clean and you will find that all of the foster homes have made record of the fact that she won't eat properly. That is why she looks so boney. They also mention that she seems to be a very sad and shy child.

"I will let you know later. I have to see those records and talk with Ann and Joan about this."

The Dumpster Kid

"I can let you take her records with you this evening if you want."

I went back into the living room and there was Ann and Joan playing with Sam. They were having a good time. It began to look like I was about to have another member of my family. Sam was having fun and laughing as she played.

Jim looked at me and remarked, "That is the first time I have seen her laugh. I believe she will fit right in with your family!"

Ann looked up and inquired, "Is Sam going to be my sister? She has red hair like mom and me. I think she could be my sister! Could we bring her home with us tonight? I would let her sleep in my room with me!"

"Yes, John, I would like to take her home tonight also. I think she will fit in at our house."

"I guess you know that if we take her, people will accuse us of being a den of red foxes." Ann or Sam neither one understood what I meant by that statement, but Joan knew and laughed.

I gathered up all of my family, got the records I needed from Jim and headed for home with our newest family member. That rascal of a Jim, knew that if Joan and Ann saw Sam, they would want her to come live with them.

During that evening I got acquainted with Sam. She was younger and not as mature as Ann, but she was looking for and needed a loving home. I read her records over carefully and found that she was a shy child marked by the sad experience of seeing her parents shot and killed. It had taken her a while to adjust to the fact that she would never see her parents again! She had apparently had a very loving family and they were suddenly taken from her. She was three years old and almost four at the time.

She will get over losing her family probably, but I am sure she will never forget seeing them killed in front of her. I believe that would be one of the hardest things for a person to forget!

I looked at Joan and asked, "What are your thoughts about this? I have looked at her records and they are all clean. She has better records than Ann."

Ann heard my remark and looked at me for an explanation. "Ann, do you remember the remarks your last foster home put on your records?"

"If you are going to hold that against me, then I guess she probably does have better records, Dad."

Sam came over to me and wanted to know if she could call me dad for at least this night. I told her she could. She went back to playing with Ann. She had a big smile on her face.

Joan looked at me and questioned, "Ann and Sam seem to hit it off well together. What do you think we ought to do? I believe I could love her as much as I do Ann and I don't think she will be any more bother than Ann. She needs a home and we would all look like we are related! Besides Ann needs someone near her own age to grow up with. We may love her, but we are not anywhere near her age. I think this would be a good thing for both of them."

"What does Ann think?"

"Why don't we ask her now? She should have input into this also."

Joan called Ann over to where we could ask her opinion.

"Ann, dear, what are your thoughts on having Sam live with us too?"

The Dumpster Kid

"You mean that I get to help decide?"

"Yes Ann you do. You are part of the family now. We need your input now so we can decide also."

"In that case I say let's keep her! We need more red heads in the family don't we, Mom?"

"Thank you for your help, Ann." I looked at Joan and I could see that I need not try to object as all three of them had made up their minds and that was final.

"I guess I am out numbered and out voted. We will keep Sam and see how things go. Ann will have to share her room with her. There are two beds in there and we will have to get Sam another chest. They can share the closet space. Will that be all right with you, Ann?"

"You two are the nicest people I ever knew! Now I not only have parents, but I also have a brother and a SISTER!" She let out a shout that I never knew she had in her. It had always been a smile before.

Now she had given an exuberant shout like any happy teenager! Sam came over and gave me a big hug. She wasn't that shy little girl now! "Thanks for taking me, Dad. I will always love you and Mom!" With that she and Ann disappeared into Ann's room to talk and get ready for bed.

Sam's full name was Samantha. She had red hair that hung just below her shoulders and she had taken very good care of her hair. Her face was round and she had that cherub look about her. Her hair was the same shade of red as Ann's which made them look like they could be sisters and they both had green eyes. Ann was older than Sam so her hair hung almost to her waist.

Sam's hair would grow longer as she grew older. The first night that Sam was with us, she had a nightmare that had frightened Ann also. Ann came stumbling into our bedroom and aroused her mother. "What is wrong Ann?"

"It is Sam, mother. Something is wrong with her!"

Joan came out of bed and rushed to Sam's side. "What is wrong, Sam?"

"I just had an awful dream. I don't remember it now, but I know it was a bad one. I'll be all right now."

"Would you two like to sleep in bed with your dad and me for the rest of the night?"

"Could we? I think that would be great! My mother and father used to let me sleep with them when I was scared."

This was the first indication that I had that Sam remembered her mother and father.

Joan crawled back into bed next to me and Ann crawled in on my right side and Sam crawled in next to Joan on her left side. We were just one big happy family. There were many other times that the two of them were frightened about something and came crawling into our bed at night. I think that sometimes they invented something to be frightened about so they could come sleep with us. We didn't mind because they both needed love and hugs which they got. The only thing that ever changed in their sleeping with us was when Ann got older, she slept next to her mother and Sam slept beside me.

That was the first and last nightmare that Sam had that we know of. She may have had more and never told us about them.

We sent both girls to a private school in Jupiter and they settled in to their studies

The Dumpster Kid

with a vengeance.

When Jay came for a visit, he exclaimed to his mother, "Ann has multiplied. Now there are two of her!" Everyone laughed at him.

We got a letter and a check in the mail for Ann from the lawyer.

The business had been sold and the trust fund set up for Ann. This was Ann's first check and certainly not her last!

I never told any of the family, but when I found the business was going to be sold, I went to the lawyer secretly and asked to buy it. He looked a little surprised at me and remarked that it would take a lot of money.

"If the price isn't too high I believe that I can swing a deal."

"The going price on the market is this figure," he said as he showed me.

"You draw up the papers and I will have the money when I come to sign those papers." This gave Ann the trust fund and gave me another big business to work for me. I really didn't need the business, but it kept some slick operator from getting the business and start firing a bunch of workers just so he could put more money in his pocket! I dislike those characters and I do what I can to get the best of them.

When Ann received her check, Joan told her that she would take her to our bank and help her start an account so she could deposit her checks herself and learn to write checks. Joan also explained to her that she would have to keep her check book up to date or the checks she wrote might bounce. Ann wanted to know what that was. Joan explained to her that if she doesn't have money in her account to pay the amount of a check, the bank won't cash it and will send it back to her and charge her for writing a bad check.

"Mother, I don't see anything that even resembles something bouncing!"

"Ann dear, where was the check supposed to go first?"

"It was supposed to pay one of my bills."

"That is right. Instead of paying your bill, where did it go?"

"It came back to me because I didn't have the money in the bank."

"That is correct. So it bounced from the person who was supposed to get it back to you."

"I think I understand, mother." Ann was never really sure why they said a check bounced because to her it was paper and couldn't bounce.

Only rubber balls could bounce in her way of thinking. Ann kept her books balanced and we never had any trouble about checks bouncing.

Ann didn't write many checks because she was very frugal. She really didn't have to because we paid for almost everything she needed.

She was our daughter and we expected this. Because of this her monthly checks began to accumulate in the bank and she had a tidy sum before long. Joan noticed this and encouraged her to put some of her money into something that would give her more interest. Ann did this and was happy to see her money grow.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Four

Ann always had a smile. If she were hurting physically, she smiled. If she were happy, she smiled. If she were being serious, she smiled. I never saw a person who always had a smile regardless of what was going on. It took me a while, but I finally figured out that she had special smiles for each different occasion.

She never grumbled about anything. She never said anything bad about anyone. She never told us she didn't like something Joan had fixed her to eat even if it were burned! Ann was just a different kind of person. Sometimes I wondered if she were from a different planet! I told her one day that most children have something to complain about.

She looked at me with her smile and remarked, "If they had seen what I have seen, felt what I have felt, lived with whom I have lived, starved as I have starved they would soon realize that they have nothing to grumble about. They are sitting in the lap of luxury and don't realize it!"

How could I fuss about an outlook like that?

Ann was like a child in an older body sometimes and at others she was like a grown-up in a child's body. One day she asked Joan to let her do the wash. Joan agreed because she thought Ann should know how to put the clothes in to wash. She explained to Ann that she wanted bleach put in with the under clothes because they might have germs that could make her sick. Ann put the clothes in the washer as directed and turned on the machine. She went to get the clothes out of the washer later and let out a yell. Joan rushed to see what had happened. Instead of clothes in the washer there were just strips of material and strings. Joan looked at Ann and questioned, "What do you suppose happened here?" There was no question in Joan's mind about what happened. The washroom reeked with the smell of bleach.

Ann looked at Joan, "That is what I was hoping you could tell me! I did what you said except I put more bleach in because I don't want any germs making me sick!"

"How much bleach did you use?"

"I poured in the rest of the bottle."

This would have been about one half a gallon.

"Ann you put in too much bleach. The bleach ate up our clothes. I guess that we will just have to go shopping for more clothes! After this Ann, just put in the amount of bleach I tell you. Please!"

In a few days a big package came for Joan. She hadn't ordered anything that she could remember, so she wondered why she was getting a package. When Joan opened the package, there were replacement clothes for the ones Ann had accidentally destroyed.

"Ann, please come here a minute."

Ann came in to see what Joan wanted. She saw the package and the clothes and remarked, "I see they finally came!"

"What is this all about, Ann?"

"I'm sorry that I ruined your clothes, so I thought that perhaps I should send and get some replacements."

"You know you don't have to do that, Ann. Besides this means that we can't go shopping for new ones now!"

The Dumpster Kid

"I guess that we will have to go shopping for something else, Mom."

Joan had been fussing for me to wash her car because she had gotten onto a road that was just being resurfaced and her red Corvette had tar spots all over it. Joan was quite proud of her Corvette and wanted the tar spots removed. Ann told Joan that she would be happy to wash her car. Joan looked at Ann a little skeptical, but figured that any one could use a water hose, bucket, soap, sponge and wash a car. Ann worked on the car for several hours and Joan thought Ann was surely giving her car a good wash. Ann finished and got Joan to come and look at her car. Joan looked at her car and had to stifle a scream! There sat her red Corvette looking like a huge red Dalmatian with silver spots!

Ann was quite proud of her accomplishment. "I had a hard time getting the tar off, but I finally did."

"What in the world did you use to get the tar off?"

"I used some steel wool. I couldn't get them to budge with anything else." Ann had used the steel wool and scrubbed tar and paint off.

"I guess the paint shop will be happy because they won't have as much sanding to do when they repaint it."

In a few days Joan came to me and complained that her red Corvette was missing.

"Are you quite certain?"

"Yes, I am. I usually keep it in the garage don't I?"

"That was where you have been keeping it. You wouldn't have driven to town shopping or something and come home with me or someone else and forgot your car was still in town?"

"I may be getting forgetful, John, but I don't think I am that bad yet!"

"Suppose that you tell me how it got out of this garage without you or me knowing it was going."

"I can't explain it. Do you suppose that Ann was trying to learn to drive it or something and took it out and smashed it up?"

"Knowing Ann, that would be a strong possibility. Why don't we ask her. I have a feeling that we will at least find out what happened to it."

We went inside the house and looked for Ann. She was in her room cleaning it and straightening it up some. When we walked in, she stopped what she was doing and stood looking at us. "Have I done something wrong?"

"I don't think so, but we want to question you about something."

"I don't know that I can answer your questions, but you can surely ask."

"I went to get my car to drive you and me to town to do some shopping and my car is missing. Do you have any idea about what has happened to it?"

"I know what happened to it and I was going to surprise you. You found out too soon I guess."

"Ann, what have you done to my car. You didn't have a wreck did you. Are you all right?"

"I am fine, mother. I was hoping to surprise you, but I guess I am going to have to tell you."

Just then the doorbell rang and I went to answer it with Joan and Ann trailing behind. When I opened the door, there sat Joan's red Corvette! There was no one at

The Dumpster Kid

the door. I told Joan to look.

Joan looked over my shoulder with Ann looking out beside her. "What is wrong, John?"

"Look in the drive!"

She looked in the drive and ran out to her car. "This is my car and it smells like it has just been painted. The spots are all gone. Ann, what do you know about this?"

"I started to tell you inside. I had the garage pick it up the other day and take it to be painted. I think they did a good job, don't you mother?"

"It is a good job, Ann. Now suppose you tell me why you did that without telling me!"

"When I was supposed to wash your car I took steel wool and scrubbed that tar and paint off your car and made it look bad. I thought that you would be pleased that I had it painted for you."

Joan hugged Ann and kissed her on top of the head. "I am glad to have my car painted, but you didn't need to have that done just because you put spots on it. I would have had it painted in a few days."

"Ann, you goof-up once in a while because you are young and haven't learned how to do some things, but we do not expect you to do things like this to make up for it. If we want you to make things better by doing something like this we will tell you. I think it is real sweet of you to want to do this, but it isn't necessary."

"If I make a mess then I should be the one to pay for having it corrected." Ann was quite adamant about this. She had her money coming in each month and she can spend it as she sees fit, but this isn't necessary. We are her parents and have to take a few losses when we are rearing children.

"Let's go shopping as you suggested we might earlier, Mom. We can see if the car runs like it should while we go shopping." Ann had a big smile on her face as she said this.

"Let me get my purse and we will go." Joan went to the house for her purse with Ann trotting along beside her. They returned, crawled into Joan's newly painted car and took off for a shopping spree. I just stepped back out of the way. I certainly don't expect Ann to do these things, but I am not going to stop her. She has the right idea anyway.

Another time Ann was removing the polish from her nails and set the bottle of polish remover on the coffee table. She put her foot up on the coffee table in order to get to her toes easier. In the process she accidentally hit the polish remover and spilled it over the top of the table. She went immediately for the paper towels to clean up the mess. This was when she discovered that the polish remover was doing a number on the varnish of the coffee table. She sopped up all the remover that she could and smeared the rest with a paper towel and then placed a newspaper over the top of it so it wouldn't be noticed. The result being that we are the only people I know with a newspaper finish on a coffee table!

Ann wouldn't let that go like that either. She found a refinishing paint shop, checked them out and then had them pick up the coffee table one day while Joan was gone. When Joan noticed that the table was missing, she just pulled another smaller table over to take its place until the other one came back. She remembered what Ann wanted to do. This business of getting things to rectify mistakes showed that Ann was very mature for her age. The goof-ups showed her immaturity. I never knew which Ann I

The Dumpster Kid

was going to be dealing with.

Her first summer with us, I told her that we were all going to go on a vacation together. I asked her if she had some place that she would like to go. She looked at me with her quizzical smile and asked, "What is a vacation? I've never been on one."

I looked at her a little bit surprised and then realized that she was no doubt telling the truth. "A vacation is a time when all the family goes somewhere they want to go and relax for two or three weeks. They might go to a relative's place some distance from home or they may travel to some place to see the scenery. Sometimes they go to a place called a ski resort so they can go skiing. They might go to a lake or ocean beach where they can swim and play on the beach. There are all kinds of vacations."

"Then I know what I would like to do. I would like to see if I can find my mother. We know where she lives now, so maybe I can get a chance to see her and find out why she gave me away."

"If that is what you want to do, we will do it. I am going to add some other stops in on our vacation."

"What other stops are you going to add, Dad?"

"I thought that it would be nice to go see the Grand Canyon, Mt. Rushmore and others. Would you like that?"

"I don't know. I don't know what those are."

"They are parks that are known for various things. Some are known for their beauty, some are known for what is in them."

"I guess that I would like that, but I do want to find and talk with my mother if she is still alive."

"That will be the first thing on our list. Will that be all right with you?"

"That will be just fine with me."

I couldn't help getting the feeling that she was going along with us and doing what we were going to do just so she could get to see her birth mother. Ann always left me wondering what was going on under that mop of red hair. Her facial expressions certainly didn't betray her thoughts!

We made arrangements for our vacation. I had Jay take over for me while we were gone. We packed all of our suitcases. Of course Joan had packed the most cases and saw to it that Ann and Sam had almost as many. I told Joan that we weren't going to be gone for years or permanently move! We were just going to be gone a short while. She looked at me, "You are a man. You don't know what a woman is going to need!"

"I may not know what a woman is going to need, but I do know that she will go shopping on the first stopover and buy a whole lot more things she doesn't need. Where will you put all those shopping spree things you will buy?"

"We will find a place for them, won't we Ann and Sam?"

"I hope you will remember that we will be flying in the company plane and not Air Force One! With all the luggage you have to take, we're going to be lucky to get off the ground!"

"Quit fussing about the luggage we are taking and get it to the airport and on the plane. We have to get to Syracuse today. The rate you are going we will never make it."

"All I can say is that if we can't get it all on the plane, some of it is going to have to stay home. You better thin out what isn't necessary or I will have to do it at the airport!"

Joan took some of the luggage she had packed for the three of them and put it

The Dumpster Kid

aside. I picked up the remaining luggage and put it in the car, helped the three ladies into the car, got in myself and headed for the airport.

Once at the airport we drove to the company plane and the hands there loaded the luggage onto the plane for me. As soon as the luggage was loaded and we were all aboard, seated and belted, the engines roared to life. We sat there for a few minutes waiting for clearance and then began to taxi for takeoff.

"I'm a little bit frightened. I have never flown before."

"I'm a little scared, too." Sam remarked.

Joan put Ann on the seat next to her on one side and put Sam in the seat on the other side and put her arms around both of them and hugged them tight. "There is nothing to be afraid of. We will be in Syracuse talking to your mother before you know it, Ann."

We took off in a minute and all of Ann and Sam's fears fled as their curiosity overcame them. They looked out the window at the land under them and saw how little the houses and trees looked. I took Ann to the pilot's cabin and let her look at all the things in there. The pilot looked at her smiling face and asked, "Would you like to fly the plane a while?"

"I don't know if I should. I might crash the plane!"

"I'll be sitting over here and won't let you do that. I don't want to crash either."

"Why don't you give it a try, Ann? I think you will like it. It is a lot of fun."

"Have you done it, Dad?"

"Yes, I have. That's how I know it is fun. Why don't you sit in that seat there beside the pilot and he will show you what to do?"

Ann sat in the co-pilot's seat and looked over at the pilot for instructions.

"Do you see those two pedals in front of your feet?"

"Yes."

"Those pedals make the plane turn either right or left. I want you to keep your feet off of them."

"All right, I will."

"Do you see the wheel in front of you?"

"Yes. I don't have much chance of missing it."

"I want you to take hold of that wheel. Don't move it in any way. Just take hold of it."

"I have hold of the wheel now. What should I do now?"

"You just hold that wheel where it is. Now watch that gauge in front of you that looks like a little airplane. Do you see it?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Now you keep that little plane straight like it is now. I'm turning the flying over to you. You are doing fine! Just keep that little plane like it is."

"What do I do if it starts to change?"

"Then you move the wheel to bring it back to level. Let me show you." With that the pilot moved his wheel a little bit and the little plane moved also. He then moved his wheel to correct for the change.

"Did you see how I did that?"

"Yes, I saw that and I felt this wheel move as you moved your wheel."

"Good! You see how it is done. Now you fly the plane while I get a cup of coffee."

The Dumpster Kid

"I don't think you better leave me alone here!"

"You are doing great! I'm going to put you in for your wings when we get back!"

"You have to be kidding me! I don't know how to fly this thing!"

"You are doing it! Just keep on doing what you are doing and you are flying the plane!" With that the pilot stepped out of the pilots seat and went back into the cabin. Ann sat with her hands on the wheel and I noticed them tighten a little. She was all tensed up from fear.

"I hope he gets back soon. I am scared I might wreck this plane!" About that time the plane hit a small air pocket and the plane came back to it's normal flying position.

Ann looked at me and remarked, "I guess I did pretty good on that didn't I, Dad?"

"I would say that you did. I guess you are just a natural born aviator!"

The pilot returned to his seat, "How are you doing? I see the plane is on course yet. You can do it, can't you?"

"We hit a bump back there and I brought the plane back to course. I guess I can do it. I do want to go back to my seat and let you fly the plane."

"Don't you like to fly the plane?"

"I do but it scares me. Maybe if I had more lessons I would feel better about flying."

What Ann didn't know was that the pilot had set the auto pilot before he left his seat and she wasn't really flying the plane at all. The important thing was that she thought she was.

Because Ann had flown the plane, Sam wanted to know if she could too. The pilot agreed and Sam went to the cockpit and had her chance to fly the plane. Sam was happy to get a chance to fly the plane. She was not afraid of that!

It wasn't too long after this that we were over Syracuse and coming in for a landing. Everyone had to get in their seats and buckle up. After landing and we were all getting off the plane, a rental car was brought out for us to use while we were in Syracuse. I drove to a motel that looked like a nice one and took two rooms.

Ann looked at me and remarked, " You don't need another room for us. We can all sleep in the same room if it has two double beds."

"If you want to do it that way,Ann. Just remember that you two won't have the privacy you usually want."

"We can put our jammies on in the bathroom and you two can do the same."

"I guess it will be OK. You are our daughters and there shouldn't be anything said about that." Joan, who was usually overly cautious about such things, put her stamp of approval on the sleeping arrangements.

We went to our room and brought the overnight pieces of luggage in and then headed for the restaurant to get a bite to eat before we took off to find Ann's mother.

In the restaurant she got very excited and couldn't wait for us to eat. She was anxious to see her mother. This was the first time I had ever seen her act even remotely like a teenager. "Ann, I realize that you are anxious to see your mother and that you have been waiting for this moment for fourteen years, but I happen to be hungry and do intend to eat something before we go to find her!"

"I am sorry, father I will try to be more considerate of you. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't even be this close to seeing my mother."

I had unintentionally sent her back into her shell again. Joan gave me a big kick

The Dumpster Kid

on the shins to remind me of what I had done. She was good at that and my shins were getting all skinned.

We ate in silence and then headed for our room so the women could get all fixed up proper. Ann was ready first. She was bouncing with excitement along with Sam. Joan came from the vanity and looked at Ann.

"I want you to look your very best when you see your mother. I want her to see what a beautiful young lady you have turned into. Please put on this dress and let me put you on some make-up."

"Mother, please! I want to see my mother. She won't care if I am pretty or not!"

"I will and that is what counts. If she sees how pretty you are, it will help to make her feel sorry that she gave you up!"

"That sounds like you are trying to get revenge for me!"

"Not really. I just want her to realize what a blessing she has missed."

Ann changed her dress and Joan put a light coat of make-up on Ann. We were finally ready to go find Ann's mother. The desk clerk in the motel told us how to find the street and even which house it was. This was a big help. I followed her directions and there was the house we were looking for. It was a three story Victorian style house with what looked like plenty of room for a large family. I parked the car and we got out and walked up a sidewalk to the front of the house. There were beautiful flower beds over the grounds and up the sides of the sidewalk.

"Ann, I know you want to do the talking, but I want to do the talking until I find out if this is the Green home. After that you can do all the talking. Is that OK with you?"

"Yes, father. May I ring the bell now?"

"Yes, dear. I want you to be standing in front of us when they answer the door."

Joan, Sam and I stood behind Ann. I wanted whoever answered the door to be certain to see Ann when they opened the door.

No one came at the first ring so I told Ann to ring the bell again. She rang again and in a couple of seconds a lady opened the door. There wasn't too much doubt that we had the right place for she looked a lot like Ann.

She looked at Ann and questioned, "Why are you here Sue? Who is that with you?" She looked again and remarked, "You couldn't be Sue because she is in the home."

I spoke up and asked her if she were Mrs. Green, the mother of Sue who had a child in Florida.

She looked at me, "How did you come by that information? There are only a few people who know that."

"This pretty young lady you see is that baby she gave up. May we come in so we can talk?"

"Certainly! I am sorry. I don't have company very often and I'm afraid my manners are slipping a little. Come into the living room and sit so you can tell me all about this."

"I am going to let Ann tell you about this and ask you some questions."

"Before you begin Ann, suppose I tell you what I know. Sue was a pretty young lady like you and we had brought her up in the church. She knew right from wrong and supposedly had good morals. When she was fourteen she had a boyfriend. He seemed like a very nice boy and so my husband and I said nothing about it. He was two years

The Dumpster Kid

older than she and what we didn't know was his intentions from the start. He had been pressuring her from the start and after the senior prom she gave in to him. She had a promise from him that they would marry after her graduation. When she found out later that she was expecting, she called him and told him the news and he dumped her and told her she was on her own unless she got an abortion for which he would pay. Sue would not agree to that for she had been brought up to respect life."

"In a few weeks George was out driving while drunk and smashed his car into a tree. He had a girl with him. He was killed and she was badly injured. When she recovered she told what had happened and the whole town knew what a bum he turned out to be."

"Back to Sue and her problems. When her father found out that she was expecting, he immediately made plans to go to Palm Beach and stay there until the baby was born. We stayed here long enough for Sue to graduate from school as this was her senior year. After her graduation we packed and moved to Florida for the duration."

"Sue's father insisted that she give the baby up for adoption when it was born. He maintained that he was not going to have a bastard child in his house. Sue pleaded with him to no avail. A young couple who seemingly could not have a child of their own was found. They agreed to adopt the baby. Sue signed preliminary papers agreeing that she would let them adopt the baby if she still wanted them to have it after it was born. All this did was to lock them in as the only ones eligible to adopt the baby."

"As time drew closer for the birth Sue grew more strongly against letting this couple adopt her baby. She wanted it for herself. She wanted to nurse it and watch it take its first steps. She wanted to dress it in pretty clothes. The couple took her to court to make her keep the agreement."

"On the day of the hearing, Sue lost her cool and the judge ruled that he would place the baby in foster care until he could render a decision. Which he never did!"

"When the baby was born, Sue was not even allowed to see her own baby. It was taken from her and placed in foster care. The couple who had wanted to adopt withdrew and the baby remained in foster care."

"No one wanted all of this to happen and it killed Sue's father. All this worry caused him to have a heart attack from which he succumbed. We returned to Syracuse. Sue loved her father very much and blamed herself for her father's death and gradually lost her mind. She is now in a mental institution here in town. She has days when she is OK and days when she is violent. If you want we can go see if she is lucid today so you can talk with her."

"I would like to see her and I know she will be happy to see her baby at last."

We all got into the car. Gramma sat in front with me in order to direct me. We drove a short distance in the city and pulled into the parking lot of the home. We got out of the car and walked in to the desk.

"She is doing well today. You may go on back and see her Mrs. Green along with your guests." Informed the nurse at the desk.

We walked into this room and sitting in a chair was a clone of Ann. There couldn't be any question that Ann had found her mother. Ann walked over to her mother and gave her a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. Her mother raised her five foot two frame from the chair and gave Ann a big hug and a kiss.

The Dumpster Kid

"I am your long lost daughter, Ann. I didn't ask to come into this world, but I certainly have caused an uproar!"

Sue laughed at Ann's remark and the two of them sat and talked about everything imaginable. In a while the nurse came and told us that we would have to leave as they had to do some things with Sue. We all went to the car, drove back to Gramma's house, let her out and then on back to the motel.

On the way to the motel Ann remarked, "Things haven't gone like I thought they would."

"Sometimes God doesn't follow our plans. He has his own agenda." I remarked.

"I would like to go see my mother again tomorrow if it is all right with you folks."

"I wouldn't stop you for the world! You have waited a long time to see your mother in the flesh."

"At least you have a mother to see!" Sam remarked sadly.

I picked Sam up and gave her a big hug. She smiled then.

The next morning after breakfast, we all got into the car again and headed for Ann's mother. This time the nurse at the desk told us that she was violent today. They had to strap her into the bed to keep her from getting hurt. We went into her room and she was strapped down.

Ann walked over to her mother, "Mother, I love you and I forgive you for giving me away. I know now that you didn't. Now I want you to fight this thing you got and get well. I know that you can."

Sue aroused from her stupor and cried, "Where is my baby? You have taken my baby from me!" She then strained at her bands and fell back into her stupor again.

Ann looked at us and remarked, "I guess we may as well go on back to our motel and get ready to leave for the rest of our vacation."

"We don't have to if you want to stay longer." I suggested.

"I want to leave. This isn't turning out like I had thought it might." She said this with tears in her eyes.

"Sometimes God lets us imagine things the way we want to see them and when we see the real live thing, we see what God saw all along. If the sight we see hurts us and makes us feel bad, what do you think it does to God?" Joan wasn't always one to make a statement like this, but she had this time.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Five

We went from Syracuse on through the rest of our vacation and as we stopped in Texas for fuel, Ann went to her mother and told her that she had a bad pain in her side. It had been there for several days. Ann had thought that maybe it was normal, but when it didn't go away she knew better. It was steadily getting worse. Joan asked to feel the spot where it hurt and found a very sensitive and hot place. Joan told me and we decided we would try to get home as fast as we could and take her to her own doctor.

When we were fueled and ready to take off, I asked the pilot to fly as fast as the plane would go for we needed to get Ann to a hospital fast.

As we were speeding home, Ann said that the pain had quit and that she was all right now. Joan looked at her and told her that she was still going to see a doctor and go to the hospital.

The pilot pushed the plane to its limits and when we got close to Palm Beach International he radioed ahead for an ambulance to meet us for we had a very ill person aboard. When we were ready for landing and circling the airport, the tower cleared us for landing ahead of all the other planes. Even before the plane had ceased rolling on the runway, the ambulance was rolling with us to be on the spot to get Ann off the plane and on her way to the hospital.

The paramedics on the ambulance checked Ann and remarked to Joan that it looked like to them that Ann had appendicitis and that it may have already ruptured. Joan couldn't believe that she might lose Ann after all and there wasn't anything she could do to stop it. She went in the ambulance to the hospital and I drove the car with Sam and all the luggage in the back seat. I just threw the luggage in the back and followed the ambulance. The police saw that I was following the ambulance and did not stop me for speeding.

When we arrived at the hospital, Ann's doctor checked her over. I had called him on my car phone and asked him to meet us there.

He announced what Joan and I had feared the most. Her appendix had ruptured and he was going to have to do an emergency operation in order to save her life. Even that had no guarantees. It all depended upon how long ago the rupture had taken place.

We gave our permission and they took her to an operating room. She had passed out a short while before so none of us ever got to tell her we were praying for her. Sam was beside herself. She was afraid that she was going to lose her sister. I knew that this was not good for Sam so I had Jay pick Sam up and take her to his place until this culminated in whatever the end was going to be.

The doctor was in the operating room for what seemed like hours. The time dragged on for some reason and we lost track. In two and one half hours according to the clock on the wall, the doctor came out of the operating room and explained what he had done and gave us the prognosis.

He had to make a large incision in order to get the mess cleaned up where the appendix had burst. The area had to be washed and then antibiotics had to be administered. He had sewn the incision and now she was resting comfortably. Her prognosis was what bothered Joan and I. There was no certainty as to whether she would live. The doctor had done all he could and now it was up to the Lord.

"Where is she now?" Joan wanted to get to her and be with her.

The Dumpster Kid

"She is in the recovery room and will be for a short while. After she has recovered from the operation, she will be in intensive care as long as she needs to be. Two can go in the ICU at a time, but only for ten minutes at a time. Actually being in there with her isn't going to do you any good and she cannot respond as she is in a coma. Your best time is going to be spent in the chapel praying for her. I know that you are not going to listen to me and you are going to spend time in the ICU with her.

You have my advice even if you won't head it."

"How long is she going to be like that? Do you have any idea?"

"I have no idea. Sometimes it is hours and sometimes it is days and sometimes they never come out of the coma."

"You certainly are real cheerful! What happened to your bedside manner?"

"I thought that you wanted to know the truth and didn't want me to beat around the bush and build up your hopes!"

"I do but I guess that the truth is a little hard to take when you are hoping for the best."

"I have other patients to tend so I have to move along. As of now her heart is doing better. It was beating at about 190 beats a minute and her blood count was up. We will have to watch her vital signs for the next little bit."

"Thank you doctor. We can see that she is in a very serious condition. We'll be doing a lot of praying as you prescribed."

Joan had heard what was said and she was in tears. I walked over and put my arm around her and said, "We didn't have a little girl before and if the Lord doesn't want us to have this one and takes her from us, then so be it. I for one will praise him for the time he did give her to us! We have a lot to be thankful for. I remember when she first came to the office wanting work so she could rent an apartment and get out of the dumpster. She was very confident of herself and her abilities. She stood on the opposite side of the desk from me. She smelled like a garbage truck and was smelling up the whole office. She didn't care. She was after a job so she wouldn't have to stay in that dumpster any longer! All the time she talked, she had a smile on her face. It didn't matter to her that she was too young to work. Either that or she was unaware of it."

"I remember that day. You called me to come to the office right away. I flew down there to see what was wrong and you wanted me to wash Ann's hair and get it clean and then take her shopping for some clothes. While you were telling me that she opened the bathroom door and stuck her little cherub head out with that red hair and asked if I were there yet because she was cold. She had that smile on her face and my heart melted. I asked you what you had planned for a place for her to stay after I got her cleaned up and new clothes. I couldn't see sending her back into a dumpster with new clothes on. Besides that I wanted to take her home with me."

We both laughed at our thoughts of when Ann first came into our lives. What a little waif she was and how she had changed herself and others around her.

"Do you remember the time she bleached your clothes?"

"Yes and I remember when she washed my car." Both of us were laughing about these incidents now.

"What about the time she spilled polish remover on the coffee table and then covered it with newspapers."

"She has had a time learning to live in a home with parents who love her. I guess

The Dumpster Kid

part of that is from being a teenager."

I told Joan, " We are going down to the chapel and we are going to pray together that God will heal her. Jesus told us that where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I will be in their midst."

We went to the chapel and there was a group of boys and girls there from the church and the school Ann attends. They all came to us and wanted to know how Ann was doing. We told them that she was still on the brink of death, but the doctor seemed to think she was a little better because her heart was not racing now and her blood count was down.

They insisted that we all have one big prayer meeting for Ann, so we all got on our knees in that chapel and had one big prayer meeting. I don't know whether the Lord planned to answer our prayers, but that prayer meeting helped Joan and me. We didn't feel alone in this thing now. We now had a number of her friends and the Lord with us.

We asked to stay in the hospital in a room close by ICU so we could be gotten easily should something happen to Ann- one way or the other. Joan called Jay on the phone to let him know what the problem was so he could tell Sam and assure her that everything was going to be all right. He wanted to come in, but she told him he best stay put and entertain Sam and keep he mind off her sister. He finally agreed to stay home, but he was going to have his cell phone handy all the time to hear news from us.

That night during the early morning hours we heard a commotion in the hall. A code blue had sounded and a team of doctors and nurses were rushing to Ann's bed. They pulled a curtain around them so we could not see what was being done, but we knew what a code blue was. We dropped to our knees in our room and prayed that God would have his way, but we would like for him to let Ann live.

In a few minutes the assembled team dispersed and a doctor came to our room to apprise us of the situation. He had a very glum look on his face, so we feared the worst.

"I guess you know by now that we just had a code blue on your daughter. That means that her heart stopped and she stopped breathing. We went in and revived her. She is breathing normally again and her heart function seems to be normal. We are giving her oxygen to help her breathe and to get enough oxygen in her body to overcome the poison. I guess that you know that we have been giving her antibiotics ever since the operation. That is about all I can tell you at this time. I would advise that you only be in ICU with her for ten minutes an hour. I will go on now and if you have questions feel free to tell the nurse that you want to talk with me.

After the doctor left, Joan and I fell to our knees and thanked God for letting us have Ann a little longer. That had been a close call and I was thankful it happened in this day and age. If it had happened when I was growing up, she would have been dead by now.

I couldn't sleep the rest of the night and I know that Joan didn't get much rest after that either. In the morning we freshened up in our room and then went in to ICU to see Ann. She was lying there so still and death like. I went up to Ann and took her hand, "Young lady you scared the bejabbbers out of your mother and me last night. We are expecting you to get well so we can do some of the things we have planned. I guess you know that if something happens to you, your mother will have to go shopping with Sam. I am going to tell you what I know you told your mother. I want you to beat this thing. I know you can do it! By the way a group of your school friends and your church friends

The Dumpster Kid

were in the chapel last night praying for you. They are your cheering section. I'll let your mother talk to you now and then we have to go. The doctor said we shouldn't be in here with you for more than ten minutes an hour, So we won't be by your side as much as we would like, but we are praying for you any way."

Joan went up to Ann's side and began to weep. I couldn't stand that and I felt it probably didn't do Ann any good either so I put my arm around Joan and led her out of ICU. I took her back to our room and we sat down on the edge of the bed. Joan was still weeping and I tried to console her as our doctor came in to talk with us.

"I guess I must have failed to tell you that sometimes in cases such as this where the patient has peritonitis, the patients heart will stop and breathing will stop. With the modern methods we have we are able to bring them back from the dead-so to speak. It isn't too unusual for it to happen once during there illness, so don't be too alarmed. Sometimes it happens twice. If it happens a third time we are in deep trouble! I don't think it will happen with Ann again because she is young and healthy. If you have any questions about anything, feel free to have the nurse buzz me and I will come as soon as I can."

The doctor left and we felt a little relieved knowing more about what could and did take place with Ann. We went to the chapel again and Ann's friends were in there either again or yet. They wanted to know the latest on Ann. We told them about the code blue during the night and that she was revived. They wanted to know if when she got well she would be OK mentally or if having her heart stop would impair her in some way.

"Now boys and girls I want you to understand one thing. When blood doesn't get to the brain for more than five minutes there will be brain damage. As soon as her heart stopped last night a squad of nurses and doctors were right in there using CPR to get blood to the brain. She should not be impaired in any way from it. I hope that answers that question."

All the boys and girls wanted to have another prayer meeting for Ann, so we all got on our knees and prayed for Ann again. After the prayer, the boys and girls left the room and the hospital. I assumed that they were going home to clean up and change their clothes. They had gone to a store and bought all kinds of get well things for Ann when she got into her own room. They wanted to know if they could leave them in our room until she was able to have them. Joan and I without any hesitancy told them they could. These boys and girls were beginning to mean a lot to us and I know that Ann appreciated them too. Ann didn't seem to have many friends when we first took her, but she was gaining them now!

After all of the things were placed in our room, the boys and girls left for home, I assume. All except one boy who stayed and asked me if he might go in and see Ann. He wanted to kneel beside Ann's bed and pray for her there. "What is your name?"

"I'm Robert."

"Does she mean that much to you?"

"Yes, she does. When we get old enough I want the right to date her if she will."

I went over to the desk and asked the nurse if we could warp the rules a little and let Robert go in and have prayer at Ann's bedside. She opened the door and looked in all directions and then said, " I will bend the rules for him just this once. Tell him to go in and make it a short prayer or I will get in trouble if he is caught in there."

I went back to Robert and took him into ICU and he knelt beside Ann's bed and

The Dumpster Kid

said a very short but appropriate prayer. When he finished he got up and left ICU. I followed him.

Before he left the floor he looked at me and remarked, "She seems to be so quiet and still. She is OK isn't she?"

I assured him that she was or there would be bells ringing.

That day was the longest. We went in to see Ann and stayed our ten minutes and left. She was so still that I felt like the young boy did.

The doctor came and checked her as he had the bandages changed. He looked at the incision and could see some redness around some of the stitches. He put an antibiotic cream on those stitches and then put clean bandages over the incision. He was being very careful. He had come to love Ann as much we do. He was the one who gave her the first physical and had given her shots that she hated. She always told him that she couldn't see how making her sick would keep her from catching something. He always got a chuckle out of that. He was putty in her hands. She just had that knack!

We tried to keep Jay apprised of the situation. There just wasn't much we could tell him except for him and Sam to pray for Ann.

The third day was longer than the second. There was no news-good or bad. The days dragged by. Ann was still in the coma and there had been no indications that she would snap out of it soon. The doctor told us to keep praying and talking to Ann as we went in to see her.

He told us, "Ask her to squeeze your hand or to do what ever she might so we would know that she was able to hear us."

We began doing this and got no response. It was like holding a dead persons hand and asking them to squeeze.

One day I changed my tactics a little and told her a funny story that she loved to hear me tell. A smile came on her face. I saw it and asked Joan to come and see. She agreed. Ann had shown a sign of life!

We told the doctor when he came in. "Are you quite certain? If that is so, that is a good sign." He checked her all over and then tickled the bottom of her foot with a feather. Her leg kicked a little. It wasn't much of a movement, but she did move it. The doctor was well satisfied with that.

"I would say that she will be back with us in a day or two. I don't want you to get any false hopes up, but that was a good sign."

The next day was just as long as the days before it. The doctor tickled her foot again, but there was no response. He left the room muttering to himself.

The second day arrived since her kick and she was still in a coma. I was getting a little tired and irritable, I guess. "You told us that she would be snapping out of the coma in two days. Two days have elapsed and she is in a coma yet. Isn't there something you can do or maybe we need to call in a specialist in this field!" I would never have said something like that any other time.

"I did tell you that and I expected just what I said. Ann is different than other people somehow. She always has to do things her way. As for seeing a specialist, I trust you remember that I am one! I know that you and Joan haven't had much rest since this happened. Why don't you go home tonight and sleep in your own bed? If anything happens here we will call you on the phone and let you know right away. Don't you think that would be a good idea?"

The Dumpster Kid

"I suppose you are right. We will go home tonight and sleep in our own bed."

Joan and I went home and slept in our own bed. I did sleep better and I am quite certain that Joan did also. We woke up about eight o'clock and were alarmed at how long we had slept. We wanted to get up and over to the hospital in time to see the doctor after he made his rounds.

I got a shower and cleaned up. Joan followed me. I went to the kitchen and got a bowl of cereal for me and one for Joan. I sat down and ate my bowl of cereal and Joan came down and ate hers. I guess that I should say that we gulped them down.

Upon arriving at the hospital, Ann's friends ganged around us and wanted to know if there had been any changes. We had to tell them that there had not been. They were very disheartened. I felt like telling them that they were not the only disheartened ones around.

We went up to ICU and walked in to see Ann. She wasn't there! Joan and I nearly had heart attacks on the spot. I went to the nurse at the desk and asked her where Ann was. She looked at me and asked, "Don't you know? We have taken her out of ICU. The doctor is waiting to speak with you in your room."

We went to our room with our hearts bouncing along on the floor behind us for we were certain that Ann must have died during the night. We thought surely that the doctor must want to see us to tell the grim news himself.

We rounded the corner to our room and the doctor greeted us at the door. He asked us to come in and sit down so he could tell us the news. Joan was crying and I was about to when I heard a familiar voice say, "Don't cry! I am going to be all right now! I won't have an appendix to bother me anymore, but I don't need this kind of trouble again!"

Joan rushed to the bed and kissed Ann on the cheek. "Welcome back! You had us all worried even your friends have been here praying for you and asking about you. They must love you very much! They went out and got all these things you see so you would have them when you were able."

"I know that you people are glad to see her out of the coma, but I still need to talk to you about some things. In a way of an apology for not having notified you, we did try to call you several times after she came out of the coma, but we could never get up with you. I don't know what happened, but that is the truth."

The doctor gave us the information on how to care for her when she was home. He also told us that the incision was about healed and she could go home the next afternoon if we wanted to take her. We confirmed to him that we did want to take her home as soon as possible.

The next afternoon the doctor came into the room and explained all his directions for her care at home again. He handed us a fist full of prescriptions to be filled and taken. He cautioned us that she was not to have a bunch of rowdy friends in to see her yet. She was to lie in bed with no exceptions for the next week. I went down to the office and signed papers and received her discharge papers. I went back to the room and a pink lady came with a wheelchair for Ann to ride in. Ann got into the chair and the pink lady pushed her to the front door. We passed through her friends and when they saw Ann they all shouted, "Praise the Lord!"

I brought the car around to the front and helped Ann get in. She waved weekly at her friends as we pulled out for home. I silently thanked God all the way home.

The Dumpster Kid

Once we were home and Ann was safely in bed, Joan called Jay and told him that he could bring Sam home and see Ann. He was so excited that he barely hung up! In just a few minutes he and Sam were racing from his car into the house to see Ann. They really did love her.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Six

On our way home, Ann asked Joan if she would write something that she had been instructed to write. Joan assured her that she would be happy to write anything Ann wanted written.

When we arrived home and Ann was situated in her bed, she asked Joan to get a pencil and pad so she could write and then Ann began dictating to Joan what she wanted written.

"While I was sick, I saw some things I need to tell about. I heard a lot of noisy bells and things of that nature. When that quieted, I saw some people working on my body. I was floating above them and could see everything they were doing. There was a young doctor there and some nurses. Then I saw a bright light that didn't hurt my eyes when I looked at it. A voice came from the light and it said to follow it. I followed it and we went through a long tunnel with a lot of other people. On the other side of the tunnel was this beautiful place. The colors of the grass and the colors of the sky were very beautiful. In the background I could hear a lot of people singing beautiful songs. The light I took to be Jesus led me on. There was a big wall in the distance that I could see. It was gorgeous! It was made of gold and the road was of gold. The gates in the wall were made of gem stones of various kinds."

"When we got close to the gate, a voice spoke out and told Jesus that I could not go in for He had more work for me to do in the world. If she sees me she will have to stay here!"

"The light brought me back and I could see my body lying there and the next thing I know was that I was back in my body and awake."

"That was all you saw?" Joan asked.

"Yes, mother. I saw heaven and Jesus. Heaven is a beautiful place!"

Joan wrote all of this down as Ann dictated it to her and then handed the paper to Ann to keep.

"It was so peaceful and wonderful! Mother, do you know what time it is?"

"I will go look and see." Joan left the room and came back in a minute fussing that the clock in the kitchen had something wrong and didn't run anymore. "It is now four eighteen and I am going to leave you so you can rest."

Ann rested in her room and took her medicine as she should. After the second day she became restless and wanted to get up and go about the house in her housecoat. We wouldn't let her until the doctor said she could.

She looked at us with that smile on her face and demanded, "Well, then call the doctor and see what he says!"

We called the doctor and he said that as long as she didn't overdo and was taking her medication as he had prescribed, he didn't see any reason for making her stay in bed any longer. We let her up and she was elated to get up. She sang songs and admired God's world. She wanted to help Joan, but Joan was a little leery of her help.

Sam was happy to have her sister up and around. She wanted Ann to play with her, but I had to stop that as they might play rough and hurt Ann. Sam remarked that she would be happy when Ann was well again so they could play and do things together again!

One day Joan fussed at me for not getting the clock in the kitchen fixed. "The

The Dumpster Kid

least you could do is to take it to a jeweler and let him clean it!"

"If I remember it, I will take it tomorrow as I go to work."

Nothing more was said about the clock and when I went to get it the next morning it was missing! I asked Joan if she had seen it. She hadn't. Ann spoke up, "I know where it is." Saying that she walked to the dishwasher and pulled out a melted plastic clock. The heat of the drying cycle of the washer had melted the plastic!

Ann looked at the clock and then looked at me and said, "I guess I fixed it didn't I?"

"Why in the world did you put the clock in the dishwasher?"

"I heard you say it needed cleaning, so I thought that was the way to clean it. That's how we clean the dishes."

I laughed and told Ann, "We don't clean clocks that way."

"I guess I fixed that problem though. Now you will have to buy a new clock."

The place where the clock had hung was bare and stayed that way for sometime. Joan began to fuss that I still hadn't gotten her that clock she was due. In the meantime Ann was pronounced well and able to go where she wanted and do what she wanted. We put her in school as soon as we could for she had missed the opening and several weeks of school. We also had an ulterior motive in getting her in school which I think would be obvious.

One evening Ann called me from school and wanted to know if she and Sam could go to the mall. I thought that she at last was becoming a teenager and gave her permission to go. I told her I expected them to be home at a certain time. She agreed and we didn't see them for the next several hours. When they returned Ann was carrying a huge package.

"What in the world did you buy? It looks like it may not fit in your room."

"It's not for me. I bought it for the two of you. I love you very much and you have done so much for me that I thought you deserved a nice present." With that said she handed the huge package to me.

Joan and I opened the package and found a tremendous clock inside that neither of us could figure where it would go.

"I ruined your other clock so I bought you this one to replace it." She took the clock and tried to get it on the wall in the kitchen, but the space was too small for the clock. "I guess I goofed again. I'll take it back tomorrow and get a smaller one."

"You'll do no such thing!" I know where we can use it. With that I took the clock to the living room and pointed to a space over the mantle and said, "I believe it will just fit there." To my surprise Joan agreed with me. We got another smaller clock for the kitchen and Ann was happy about our clock situation.

"If I hadn't ruined the clock in the kitchen you never would have gotten a clock for over the mantle and the kitchen. I'll bet you are happy now that I came along!"

"We certainly are happy you came along. We would miss you very much if something were to happen to you or you left us."

"I would miss my sister. I never had one before and I love her! She better not leave me! I was very worried that time when she was sick and prayed for her each day. I thank God for answering my prayers!" Sam remarked.

"I almost did leave you that time, but God sent me back. By the way, when are you folks going to adopt me? I'm about the only kid in school without real parents of

The Dumpster Kid

some kind."

"If you want that I will have the papers drawn up tomorrow and present them to the judge for his signature. Will that be soon enough for you?"

"That will be great. I'll start telling the other kids that I now have real live parents! You people make me so happy I could cry!"

Joan spoke, "You are no more happy than we are! We could cry too."

The next morning I called Jim and told him that Ann had agreed to being adopted and that I wanted him to do what ever legal procedures had to be done. He was happy that this had finally been resolved.

That afternoon Jim called me and told me that I would have to bring Ann and Joan to his office at eleven o'clock the next morning. He was going to have everything ready by then and we would go into the judge's chambers at eleven thirty and by twelve Ann will legally have two proud parents.

I was so happy about this that I couldn't contain myself and called Joan to tell her the good news. When she heard the news she was so happy that she hung up on me!

The next morning Joan laid out the clothes she wanted me to wear and laid out the clothes Ann would wear. Ann didn't say a thing about Joan picking out her clothes for her. I guess she thought that this was a happy day for Joan and she wouldn't spoil it by being disagreeable. For some reason Ann never wanted to spoil a happy time for us. I don't know what her thinking was. I have no idea as to what went on under that red top knot and I never tried to figure her out.

Sam inquired, "What does adopt mean? What are you going to do to Ann?"

I explained to her, "That means that we are going to sign legal papers that will make Ann our daughter. She will no longer be Ann Green, she will be Ann Hankins."

"Why can't I be Samantha Hankins?"

"You can and when you get a little older and you want, we will adopt you."

We all went to Jim's office as ordered at the correct time and then we all went over to the courthouse and the judge's chambers. Once there the judge was all business. He checked the papers Jim handed him, signed some and handed some to Joan and me to sign. After all the paper signing was done he looked at Ann and asked her, "Do you know what is taking place here?"

Ann looked at him and answered, "Yes I do! I am at last getting parents which is something I have never had before."

"Thank you Ann. These two people, John and Joan are now your legal parents. They have done a lot of things for you in the past and now are adopting you to be there own daughter. Don't ever do anything that will make them wish they hadn't done this."

"I would never hurt them knowingly. I love them too much for that!" Ann smiled her special smile at the judge.

"Very good young lady! You are no longer Ann Green and are now Ann Hankins. Congratulations to all of you!"

Ann walked up to the judge and gave him a kiss on the cheek. The judge looked at her and said, "Thank you! You seem to be a very nice young lady. Please stay that way." After he stated this he left his chambers.

Ann went over to Jim and hugged him and kissed his cheek. "I owe a lot to you. You helped me get out of the agency and fixed it so I could live with Mom and Dad!"

"I was paid by your father to do that. When I saw you and knew how much your

The Dumpster Kid

parents wanted you, it was a labor of love. Let me know when you need other legal help, John." Jim left for his office.

I looked at the three ladies and held out my arms for our first family group hug. We all hugged there in those chambers and then started for our car and home.

Joan looked at me and remarked that such an occasion as this demanded a big celebration by the three of us! Ann and I both agreed so we decided to go back to TUTU's for a meal and all of us would take a look at what was Ann's home for two and one half years before she came to my office looking for work.

When we looked at the dumpster, it still had the writing on it that was put on by her friends. Ann's dumpster! Stay out!

Ann looked and couldn't find her old friends. They all seemed to be gone from the area. This was a little sad for Ann, but the happiness of the moment cast the sadness from Ann.

Ann was four feet eight when we got her and now she was five feet tall. She had grown two inches in the time we had her. This was not much in the annals of history, but to us it was a milestone for Ann's past had stunted her growth some. If not stunted at least delayed.

When the next April rolled around, we celebrated her fifteenth birthday in grand style. Joan celebrated with us because her birthday was the next day. She knew I wouldn't go for a second birthday celebration.

Sam's birthday was on the same day as mine, so we got to celebrate our birthdays together. We tried to make a big thing out of their birthdays because birthdays are important to children. The only thing more important is their name.

The biggest birthday celebration Joan could have was to go shopping with Ann. She enjoyed that more than anything I could possibly do for her.

Ann didn't know how much of a blessing she really was to Joan. Joan always said that she was glad she had boys, but now that she had Ann and Sam the three of them were inseparable!

Ann still goofed once in a while, but not as often as she used to. Her problem was that she had some things that she hadn't learned and in her desire to please and be helpful, she would pull a boner. Now that she was learning some of the things she had never learned, she could help more.

I guess that the last boner she pulled was when she came to her mother and wanted to learn to cook and bake. Joan looked at her and asked, "What do you want to make?"

"I really don't know, mother. What would you suggest for a novice?"

"I believe I would suggest making cookies. I have a recipe for chocolate chip cookies. How does that sound?"

"I'm for that! I can taste them already!"

" Good! Here is the recipe. Do exactly as it says and you can't go wrong." Joan was being a bit over confident of Ann's abilities.

Ann got all of the ingredients. She read the recipe and carefully measured all the ingredients. She buttered a cookie sheet and dropped the cookies onto the sheet. She had the oven hot and put the sheet of cookies in the oven. She watched the time carefully and when it was up she took the cookies out of the oven and let them cool for a few minutes. She then took a spatula and lifted the cookies out onto a plate. They really

The Dumpster Kid

looked good. She took one and bit into it and puckered her mouth.

Joan saw this and asked, "What is the matter with the cookies?"

"I was hoping you would tell me! They are awful! I guess I flunk cooking 101."

Joan took a cookie and tasted it. Ann was right, they were awful. "You must not have followed the directions or something. Let me go over this with you and see where you went wrong."

They sat down side by side and Joan would ask Ann how much of each ingredient Ann had put in. When they got to the salt Ann had put in a tablespoonful when the recipe called for a teaspoonful. They checked and found that Ann had mistaken the abbreviation for teaspoon as being tablespoon.

Another batch of cookies was made using the correct measurements this time and they were delicious! Ann was beside herself because she had made something worthwhile. This really bolstered her self image. Ann needed her self image boosted a little. Having grown up as she did and making occasional goofs, she wasn't too confident of herself or her skills. When she was determined to do something, she would do it and not be shy. This was evident the first day I met her. She wasn't a bit shy about coming into my office and asking me for a job. She wasn't bashful when she went in to talk to her birth mother. So there were times when her self confidence was up to par.

Sam had smelled the cookies baking and came for a sample. "Mom, did you make these delicious cookies?"

Ann looked at her with a big smile, "I made them, squirt! Thanks for telling me they are good."

"Mom, tell her to quit calling me squirt. I will probably grow up to be taller than she is and then she will be the squirt!"

"I have no idea as to how tall either of you are going to be. Just call each other by your given names of course unless you are not proud of them." This hit the girls in a soft spot and they agreed to call each other by their given names.

Ann worked with her mother more in the kitchen and about the house than she had before. She was beginning to take interest in the domestic arts. At school it was a different thing. She took a liking to soccer ball and joined the team. She had to try out for the soccer team and the other girls looked down on her chances of being on the team. They were all close to six feet tall and Ann was only five feet tall. With her usual confidence in her own capabilities, Ann tried out for the team. The day she tried out, everyone on the team was astounded by her ability to get the ball from an opponent without committing a foul. She would get the ball and send it to a teammate who would take it to the goal. She proved to be quite fast on the field and it wasn't long before she was the teams star athlete. During the season she won several awards from the school. She had helped the team win all of their games through the season. The team had won all of the playoff games and was now in the tournament for the championship. They defeated all the teams up to the last one.

The coach wanted this last game and had the girls practice a lot.

One day after one of these practices, Ann collapsed in the locker room. The other girls called for the coach. She called 911 and proceeded to do for Ann what she could. Ann seemed to be breathing OK. The school notified us and we went to her side immediately.

The paramedics could find no problem, but took her to the emergency room

The Dumpster Kid

anyway. They said they would feel better if a doctor examined her. The doctor in the emergency room checked her over very carefully and could find nothing wrong. In the meantime Ann came to and wanted to know why she was in the hospital. The doctor told her that she had passed out after practice at school.

Ann looked at him and remarked, "That is nothing. I'm all right now. May I go home?"

The doctor looked at me and advised, "If that were my daughter, I would take her to her own doctor and have him find out what is wrong. She apparently has done this before!"

"Thank you doctor. I shall take your advice on this."

We left the hospital and I questioned Ann, "Has this happened before?"

"Yes, it has. I didn't want to worry you people or get kicked off the soccer team so I haven't told anyone."

"You are going to see your doctor as soon as we can get an appointment. You remember how you didn't tell us about that pain in your side and you almost died. We are not going to do that kind of thing again!"

"I'm certain it isn't anything much. I think I run too hard or something when I am playing."

"Well, we shall just see when the doctor sees you!"

Sam was worried about her sister and tried to do what she could to help Ann. Ann got a little provoked at Sam because she didn't think there was much wrong.

When we called the doctor, he wanted her to come in the next day so he could run some test.

The next day we took Ann to the doctor and he drew blood, then he poked around on her body some. He had her take several deep breaths. He listened to her heart. He sent her for x-rays of her chest and abdomen. He gave her an electrocardiogram. When he finished he hadn't missed much. He looked at Joan and informed her that he couldn't say anything yet, but he would be able to give a good diagnosis after all the test results were in. We all went home and that night Joan and I neither one slept well.

In a few days the doctor called and asked that we all come to his office for the results of the tests. Joan and I got Ann from school and nervously drove to the doctors office. We asked Jay to come in and watch over Sam when she got in from school.

The doctor looked at us and began, "All of the test results are in and they still are not conclusive. We are going to have to take a brain scan before we can come to any decisive conclusions. I have everything set up to where we can run the scan now if you can wait."

"We will stay regardless. Ann's health is more important than anything else right now."

"Are you going to poke any needles in me? I don't like that."

"That all depends, young lady. If we don't find what we think we will, we won't give you any shots or take any blood. If we find what we are thinking, we will have to put a dye in your blood with a needle so we can see exactly what we want to see."

"Well, I for one hope you don't find what you are thinking. I don't like the way that sounds."

The doctor had us take Ann to the hospital for the scan. Once there Ann recognized some of the nurses that she had become acquainted with the time she

The Dumpster Kid

almost died. They took her to a room and had her take off her clothes and put on one of those backwards gowns. As soon as this was done they led her to the room where they were going to do the scan. In a few minutes the doctor emerged from the room and had us sit down with him while he explained the problem to us.

"Ann has a very large and dangerous aneurysm. That is a place in an artery that for some reason has ballooned out and could burst. Her aneurysm has already been leaking some blood and this has caused her to pass out. If the aneurysm ruptures it could kill her or at least make her a vegetable for the rest of her life. Her problem seems to be close to the surface of the brain and therefore operable. I suggest that we operate immediately for the least little thing could cause it to rupture. I am surprised that it hasn't ruptured from her playing soccer."

"What are the chances of her being able to lead a normal life after this." I wanted to know.

"I don't care if she can lead a normal life! I just want to know if she will be OK mentally. This is the brain were fooling with here." Joan was very concerned.

"I understand your concerns and I will let you talk with the neurologist who will be performing the operation. He has more knowledge on the subject than I."

Joan began to cry and sobbed, "Poor Ann! She almost died from her appendix and now this! Is all of this caused from her not having a stable home life and living two and one half years in a dumpster?"

"I can't answer that, Joan. All I can say is that it may have contributed to it. Certainly the anxiety of desiring a stable home and loving parents could have contributed to this."

"I do hope this will be the final time she has to go through this kind of thing."

The doctor left us and in a few minutes Ann was dressed and back with us. "What did they say was wrong with me this time? Am I going to get to go back to school so I can practice soccer this afternoon?"

"The doctor will be back in a few minutes and he will explain your problem. In the meantime there will be no more soccer. Perhaps not for the rest of the year."

The doctor came in with another doctor with some x-rays that he put up on his viewing board. Our doctor introduced us to the other doctor. Joe began explaining to us that Ann was a very sick girl even though she showed no signs of being sick. He stepped up to the x-rays and pointed to a huge mass of something and stated, "This is an aneurysm that has formed for some reason in Ann's head. As you can see it is quite large. It could rupture at any time and that could cause Ann to either die or be a vegetable the rest of her life. It seems to be very close to the surface and that makes it operable. As large as it is, I am surprised that it hasn't ruptured before now. I suggest that we operate as soon as practical."

Ann got up to look at the x-rays. Being short, she had a problem trying to see the x-rays. The doctor got a chair for her to stand on so she could see, as she put it, 'inside my head'. She looked at Joe and asked, "You plan to take that thing out of my head?"

"No! We will put a clamp over that swelled portion and it will make the thing go away."

"Will that clamp be a great big one? I don't want to have to go around with my head tilted sideways because it is so heavy and big." Ann had seen clamps that were used on water hoses and she thought that was what they were going to use in her head.

The Dumpster Kid

Joe laughed at her and went ahead to explain the size of the clamp. "It will be very small. and made of a material called titanium which is a very strong material and light weight. You will never know it is in there."

"Will it fix it up for good so I won't have this problem again?"

"It will fix this one up. That doesn't mean another one couldn't form in the future."

"Let's take care of this one now and get me fixed up to where I can play soccer again." With that we signed the consent forms and other papers that had to be signed.

Joe looked at Ann and remarked to her, "You will not be able to play any soccer or do anything that makes your heart beat fast. You can't even think about your boyfriend if it makes your heart beat fast."

"I just have to worry about soccer. I don't have a boyfriend yet."

"I am certain that a pretty young lady like you will have one before long. Any boy who wouldn't want you for a girlfriend has to have something wrong with his head!"

"See,doc, I'm not the only crazy one!"

"Just because you have an aneurysm does not mean you are crazy! The only thing that this does is to make it possible you could die if it were to burst. You are not crazy by any means and I don't want you to even think that.!"

"I know that I am not crazy, but there will be a lot of people think I am I suppose."

"I don't want you to even think that! Just forget those words!"

We let that be the final words and left for home. Now that we knew Ann's condition we were very careful and protective of her.

When we arrived home, Sam wanted to know what we had found out about Ann's condition. Jay wanted to know also for he was concerned about Ann, she was his sister.

We had to tell them that she was going in for an operation and it was a serious operation. In the meantime she was to rest and take it easy until the operation.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Seven

We took Ann in for the operation as soon as the doctors could get it scheduled. She was admitted to the hospital the day before the actual surgery was to be performed. They had to shave her head and other things were done to prep her. The next morning about 6:00 AM she was taken to the operating room. Joan and I both told her that we were praying for her and to keep her chin up. She was drugged and did not understand what that meant and we did not have time to explain it before they wheeled her through the doors to the operating room.

We felt that it was best for Sam to go to school and have as near a regular day as she could. She was terribly worried about her sister, but there wasn't anything she could do for Ann.

We didn't see or hear from anyone until about 1:00 PM. At that time the doctor came out and took us to a private room.

"We have just finished operating and Ann is doing fine. She is in the recovery room and will be there for about an hour. When we got into the area of the aneurysm, we found that we had a bigger problem than we had thought. She didn't have one but there were two separate aneurysms in the area. We discovered to our dismay that the second aneurysm was the one causing the problem and we were going to have to go a little deeper into the brain to work on it. We couldn't leave it because it was the one that if left longer, would have ruptured. As we worked on it, it ruptured and we had to clean the entire area of blood before we could proceed. If we had not gotten that one when we did she could have had a major stroke!"

"We sutured that vessel and then clamped the other aneurysm. We checked our work, closed the opening and sent her to recovery. It shouldn't have taken this long, but as I have told you we had complications in the operating room. She should be out of recovery in about an hour and you can go see her in intensive care."

"Please don't be frightened by her bandages when you see her. Her head is covered with bandages and because of having to go deeper her left side is somewhat paralyzed. She will be partially paralyzed until the swelling in the brain goes down. When you see her the left corner of her mouth will droop a little and she will not be able to use her left arm and leg. Please don't do anything that will pull her spirits down. This is more or less normal for this type of operation. Therapy will help her, but she will have to have the determination that she is going to overcome it."

In an hour we went to see if Ann was out of recovery. We found she was awake and very much alert. I looked at her and reminded her that I had thought that she was from another planet and now I had proof!

"At least now you know what you have for a daughter!" She laughed like her old self. She had half of that perpetual smile on her face.

"Mom! Dad! I can't move my left arm! There is something bad wrong here!"

"I don't want you to get over excited, honey, but they told us that this was one of the side effects of the operation. They will give you therapy to help you overcome that. What you have to think now is that you are going to overcome this so you can play soccer again."

"Why didn't they tell me about this. I am the one that is going through all this."

"I guess they didn't want to worry you before the operation."

The Dumpster Kid

" They should have told me so I would know what to expect! It bothers me that I can't even move my left arm or leg and my face doesn't feel right either. Did something happen to me as they were operating?"

"If I tell you the truth, will you promise not to get excited and worry?"

"Dad, I have gone through a lot. Some before I met you and some after I met you. I will try very hard not to get overly excited about what you have to tell me. I just want to know the truth."

"The doctor came to us after he had finished the operation and told us that once they got into the area of the aneurysm, they discovered that you had two instead of one as they had supposed from the x-rays. The second one was the one causing the trouble and it burst as they worked on it. The second one was a little deeper than the first one so they had to go in a little deeper. The paralysis you have now is from that. When the swelling in the brain goes down and with therapy it should all go away and you will be able to get feeling back and the use of the affected areas."

"Did he say how long this is going to take?"

"No, he didn't say, but I assume that it is going to depend on how determined you are to get better."

"You better believe I want to get better! I don't want to be like this the rest of my life."

We talked for a while and then we left her alone with her tubes and bottles whose contents were being pumped into her body.

We went to her room later and the therapist was there working with her. It was a young lady and she was pumping Ann's lifeless left leg. The leg certainly did seem to be lifeless. There was no sign of life in it. Jill, the therapist, would ask Ann to push against her hand with that leg and Ann would try with no response. Jill kept pumping Ann's leg and massaging it. After Jill had worked on her leg for a period of time, she began working on Ann's left arm.

This was a little more than we could take. Joan and I left the room and in the hall Joan broke down into tears.

"I can't take that, John. What have we done to our little girl?" Joan said this with tears streaming down her cheeks. I took her in my arms and held her while she cried.

After a while of crying with Joan, I managed to remark, "Joan, we haven't done anything to our daughter. We allowed what was done to her because we wanted to save her life and did save her life. This way she has a chance of recovering. Had we not done anything, she surely would be dead or a vegetable today. I am satisfied that we have chosen the right course for her. God will see her and us through this."

"It is hard to watch her try to move her leg or to move her arm when before the operation she was able to run and play as any child would. Now she is only half able to move."

In a few days she got some feeling back in her face and her face was no longer contorted. The therapy did continue on her leg and arm.

We were allowed to take her home in a week. The doctor told us that she was going to continue her therapy and we would have to bring her in for her therapy twice a day for a while. We agreed to that.

Jill helped Joan dress Ann and then showed me how I should handle her to get her into her wheelchair. I picked Ann up and placed her in the wheelchair to take her to

The Dumpster Kid

the car and home.

Ann was pleased to be going home. She couldn't walk, but she had her smile back and showed everyone how happy she was to be able to smile again.

Joan and I had mixed feelings. We were happy she was coming home but saddened by the fact that she was not able to walk.

I put Ann in the passenger side of the car and then pushed the wheelchair back into the lobby of the hospital. I noticed Robert standing on the side and went over to him. He had tears in his eyes.

"Its hard to see this isn't it?"

" It is really hard when one has seen her run and play soccer like she did."

"All I can say is for you and your friends to say a lot of prayers for her."

"You can rest assured that we will!"

With that said, I left Robert, got into the car and headed home. I stopped in the drive a short distance from the front door. I got out of the car and Ann had opened the door and was trying to get out of the car on her own. I hurriedly grabbed her just as she was about to fall. She looked at me and remarked, "Thanks Dad for catching me. I guess that I am not ready to walk just yet, but it seems like I should be."

I carried Ann into the house and to her room. Joan had already pulled the spread off and the sheets down. I placed Ann on the bed and she used her good arm and pulled the sheets over her.

We had told Sam what to expect when she saw Ann. She looked at me as though I had committed a crime and asked, " Why did you let them do that to her?"

"Sam, I love Ann and I don't want her to die or be a vegetable. Would you want her dead or a vegetable?"

"Couldn't they have done something a little less drastic?"

" I don't like what has happened to Ann, but my choices weren't good. I could set by and let her die from the aneurysm or I could let them operate and give her a chance at life. What choice would you have taken?"

"I guess that I would have taken the same course you did. I'm sorry Dad. I didn't mean to be cross with you. I love Ann so much that I just can't stand to see anything hurt her."

I walked over to Sam and put my arm around her and gave her a kiss on top of the head. "Sam, you love your sister and when something happens to her, you hurt too. That is the sign of a good sister! You don't need to be apologizing about that. Your mother and I have sat down and cried because of how the operation has left Ann. We all feel sad about this and I'm certain that you do also."

"I have cried and I am hoping and praying that when I see her she will be all right."

The day I brought Ann home, Sam was in school and when she arrived home and went into her room, she saw Ann, dropped her books on the floor and ran to give Ann a big hug. Ann raised up with her good arm and gave Sam a big hug with her good arm. Sam sat on Ann's bed and they talked into the night. I finally had to go tell them both that they needed their rest, especially Ann.

Sam had gone into the kitchen and made the two of them a pizza earlier. She took the pizza in to Ann and they ate pizza for supper and talked as they ate it. Each day Sam was home from school she waited on Ann for her every need. Ann began to get a little lazy in her therapy sessions and I had to remind her that she was going to have to

The Dumpster Kid

get serious about getting better or she would remain as she was. The next therapy session she worked hard even though her legs and other parts of her body would hurt or refuse to work.

The second day at home in bed she called for Joan. She wanted to know if she could have a cat or a puppy to help her while away time. Joan came to me with the request and I went in to see Ann.

"If we get you a kitten, will you take care of it and feed it when you are able?"

"I will, Dad, just as soon as I can get out of bed. I can't take care of it in bed."

"Very well then, we will try to find you a kitten that you will like and bring it to you for your approval."

I discussed what type of kitten Ann would like and then phoned the County Animal Shelter to see if they might have one for her. They had some kittens that had been turned in with the mother. The kittens were old enough to leave the mother and they had all been given their shots. I went to the shelter and looked them over.

They had one that wasn't quite what Ann had said that she wanted, but it was the most playful one of all and I thought that it would probably please Ann. I took the kitten home and the little thing crawled into my shirt pocket and stayed there until I gave it to Ann.

Ann looked at the kitten and remarked, "That isn't the color I wanted or the kind, Dad." At that time the kitten had crawled up to her face and batted her nose with its paw. Ann picked the kitten up and looked it in the face and said, "You better not do that again, Feisty!"

"I thought you didn't want it and here you have named it already!"

"I really don't care for the color, but it is so playful I guess I'll keep it."

"I'll be glad to take it back. You don't have to say you will take it if you would rather have a different one."

"This one will do fine, Dad. It is looking for a home where it can be loved. I was that way once and I don't want to disappoint the feisty little thing."

When Sam arrived home from school, she went straight to her bedroom to see Ann. She had bought Ann a wig because they had shaved her hair off when they operated and Sam wanted her sister to look like she always did. She had bought a red wig the same shade of red as her hair. Ann put the wig on and Sam brought her a mirror to look at herself. "Why did you buy me this wig, Sis?"

"I didn't want you going around looking like a cue ball."

"Now you just be honest and confess, you love me don't you?"

"Of course I love you. You are my sister!"

"Thank you for the wig, Sis. It will help to keep my head warm and I won't look like a cue ball!" With this Ann laughed and Sam laughed with her.

When Sam saw the kitten, she wanted to know if she could have one when she got sick. I had to tell her that I thought Feisty was cat enough to let both of them love him.

Ann kept the kitten and loved it. She had never had a pet before and was so happy with the kitten that she stayed up half the night playing with it.

She would have Sam get her a saucer of milk and they would watch the kitten lap it up. They had never seen this before and it intrigued them. The big thing the kitten did was to help Ann pass the time. At the end of five days we took Ann to the doctor for a

The Dumpster Kid

check up. The doctor told us that everything was looking good.

"What about the paralysis? She is still unable to move her leg or her arm. Why hasn't that gone away yet?"

"That will improve with time. She is young and I think she will overcome it, but it will take time. She has got to do therapy and be serious about doing it. If she doesn't, she may very well stay the way she is."

"That doesn't sound like you feel she is ever going to get completely over this. I thought you were the one who was confident all was well?"

"I was confident, but when you are operating in the brain you can never be certain what may happen."

"Now you tell me! Why didn't you tell me this before you operated. You could have at least told us that this was a possibility."

"If you will remember, we thought there was only one aneurysm before we operated and it would have given her no problem. We discovered the other one after we started to operate. All this waiting for something to change is getting to you. Don't be impatient. Changes will come and she will walk again."

With my heart full of doubts, I went to the waiting room and got Ann and Joan. I was carrying Ann to the car when one of her friends saw us and came over and spoke to Ann. What she said would have been better left unsaid. It upset Ann to where she broke into tears and made me want to set Ann down and give that girl a piece of my mind. I thought better of it and went on to the car. What she had said was done in all seriousness and compassion. She told Ann that she was sorry Ann was paralyzed. She really was sorry, but at the wrong time and place.

When we arrived home, Ann became a bit upset with her mother and me. "Why couldn't you have left things like they were and just let me die? I am not going to be any good to you or anyone else like this!"

"Now Ann, I know that you are getting impatient with your condition. You have a right to be. The doctor told me that you just need more time to heal."

"A hot lot that doctor knows! He told you that I would be OK in a while. It has been over two weeks now and I still can't use my arm or my leg. I am beginning to think he is a quack and has messed me up for good."

"I don't like what I am hearing. You are apparently full of self pity and blaming others for your problem. Your mother and I love you very much and we want you alive not dead. That is why we agreed to have the operation. We really did not have much of a choice. This business of self pity is not like you Ann. I want you to think like you always have that this is the will of God and He will watch over you and heal you."

Feisty jumped up on her bed and crawled up next to her face and began to purr.

"You are right, Dad. I should ask God to help me instead of blame everyone else."

Ann picked Feisty up and held him next to her face. "I don't understand God. Why doesn't he want me to play soccer? I was pretty good at it if I do say so myself. Now he has fixed it so I can't play soccer at least for the rest of the year."

"I think you were very good at soccer, but that was all you could talk about."

She looked at me with tears rolling down her cheeks, "It just isn't fair! I'm cheated out of a loving mother and father all during my childhood. I have had to live in a dumpster and eat what others threw away if I wanted to live and now that I have found

The Dumpster Kid

happiness, I can't do anything because I am paralyzed." The tears really came now.

I couldn't help it as tears welled up in my eyes also. What Ann was saying was true and there was nothing I or anyone else could do about it!

Feisty licked her tears to where she remarked to him, "Stop that Feisty. That tickles." In a moment she was laughing. Feisty had helped her get her mind off her problems. That cat might be worth something after all!

"Do you remember that time that you nearly died and God sent you back because He had something for you to do? Do you suppose God has been trying to tell you what He wants you to do for him and you haven't been listening?"

"How do I know that he is trying to tell me something?"

"For one thing you have to be attentive to him. Let me tell you a little story. There was a man who went to a horse trading market to get him a new mule for plowing. We will call the man who wanted the mule, Joe and the man who sold the mule, George. Now Joe asked George all about the mule especially if it worked good and was assured that it was a good plowing mule. Joe bought the mule and took it home to do some plowing in his field. He put the harness on the mule and hitched the plow to the harness and off they went towards the field to be plowed. When they got to the field and began to plow, the mule started going on down the plow line working good. When they had made one round on the field and were close to the fence the mule stopped and wouldn't go another step. Joe did all kinds of things to make that mule go. He remembered that George had told him that if the mule stopped all he had to do was take hold of the plow handles and yell 'heeeyup' and the mule would go again. Joe did this and the mule wouldn't go, so Joe thought that perhaps George had sold him a deaf mule so he yelled 'heeeyup' louder. The mule stood there and wouldn't budge. Joe thought that perhaps the mule was very deaf, so he went up next to the mule's ear and yelled 'heeeyup'. The mule just stood there. About this time George came by and saw that Joe was having trouble with the mule. George came over to Joe and asked what the trouble was and Joe told him he had done everything he knew to get the mule to work and nothing seemed to work, not even what George told him to do. George looked around the edges of the field and found a thick limb that had fallen from a tree. He brought it back to the mule and told Joe that what he had told him to do did work. With that said he cracked the mule real hard between the eyes with the tree limb and yelled 'heeeyup' and the mule started to plow again. George looked at Joe and told him that he had to get the mule's attention first!"

"Now in your situation, do you suppose that God put you in the hospital and made it so you couldn't play soccer anymore just to get your attention? You have been eating, living and sleeping soccer ever since you began to play. Maybe God has tried to talk to you and couldn't get your attention!"

"That was a funny story, dad, and I see what you mean. Maybe I haven't been listening when God was trying to tell me what he wanted. When I say my prayers tonight I will listen to see if he will speak to me."

"Ann, God doesn't usually speak to us directly. Sometimes he guides us into doing something or he puts words in our minds so we can write them down in order to help someone else. Don't feel that you have failed to listen if you don't hear a voice telling you what to do."

When Sam came home that evening and entered her room, she went to see how

The Dumpster Kid

her sister was. Ann looked at her, "Sam, I am going to beat this thing! God has things for me to do and I can't do what he wants lying on my back."

"How do you know that he has something for you to do? Has He been talking to you?"

"He told me that time I nearly died. I don't know what it is, but I know that he will tell me and I have got to get myself to walking so I will be ready when he does tell me."

"Just how do you intend to do this miracle? Your leg and arm haven't responded to all the therapy you have had!"

"They have to! I am going to let you give me the therapy routine here at home extra so maybe that will stimulate my leg and arm to working."

"I will be glad to do that for you, sis. Just show me what to do."

"The first thing Jill does is bend my knee and hip joint like this. Then she has me try to push against her hand."

Sam stood silent for a moment and then grabbed Ann and gave her a big hug. "Sis, do you know what you just did?"

"Not really. What did I do?"

"Go back over the instructions you just gave me and see if you can do it again."

With this Ann went over the instructions she had given Sam again. Then she noticed what Sam had seen. With that she jumped out of bed and grabbed Sam in a big hug and cried with Sam. Both of them yelled for Joan and I to come quickly to Ann's room.

I thought that perhaps Ann had fallen or something else just as bad or worse.

When we got to Ann's room, there was Ann standing by herself. She looked at her mother and I and then walked over to us and gave each of us a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"My leg and arm are not paralyzed anymore. I am weak from not using them, but I am able to use them!"

Both of them started telling how they discovered this. They were both excited about this and certainly had a right to be. This was big news!

Ann still was not allowed to go to school for she had three therapy sessions a day. The doctor hoped that the extra session would strengthen the muscles so Ann could walk without a limp at least. School would soon be out anyway. She would just have to make this year up and there was no other way.

I felt sorry for her. She went out in the yard one day to see if she could run a little and her bad leg tangled in her good leg and tripped her. She fell to the ground. She laid there a moment and then got up, dusted herself off and came into the house mumbling that she couldn't play soccer anymore.

That evening Joan told me that Ann had tried to wash her cat in the washing machine and now the kitten was hiding somewhere in the house dripping water and frightened. Ann and Sam had tried to find the cat, but the cat wouldn't come to either of them. I went to Ann and asked her why she tried to wash the cat in the washing machine.

Her response was, "I just put a little water in and had it on the gentle cycle so it wouldn't hurt Feisty. The machine does such a good job on the clothes that I thought it would make Feisty fluffy like the clothes."

"I will help you find Feisty and perhaps he will forgive you. We never put living

The Dumpster Kid

things in the washing machine no more than we put clocks in the dish washer."

"I'll never do that again!"

We looked through the house and I called for Feisty to come and he did come to me from behind some things in the Florida Room. I picked him up and petted him. I told him that Ann really did love him and she wouldn't do that to him again. I went to the dirty clothes hamper and pulled out a dirty towel and dried the water from his fur. By the time I had his fur dry he was purring and cuddled up next to me trying to go to sleep.

I carried him to Ann and she was happy to see him again, but that feeling wasn't mutual. When Feisty saw Ann he watched her close and was all set to run if she made any sudden moves. I told Ann that she would have to get his love again by moving slow. "If you want to pet him, just slowly move your hand over the top of his head and gently pet him so he will know that you mean no harm."

Ann did this and Feisty let her pet him. She kept petting him gently and he began to purr.

"Now gently pick him up and cuddle him up next to you. I believe that he is about to forgive you!"

Ann did this and it appeared that Ann and Feisty were friends again, so I left them to make up. As I left I heard Ann tell the cat that she was sorry and would never do that again.

These times of childish foolishness came less often now, but there was no assurance that they would ever stop. We couldn't punish Ann for them as they seemed to be a part of her makeup. I have no idea if that is an inherited trait or if it comes from her upbringing.

Just before school let out for the summer, the athletic department had their annual athletic awards banquet. They sent Ann and the family an invitation to attend. I asked them if this was a mistake and they assured me that it was not. It was to be a formal affair so my girls all had reasons for shopping and they took advantage of it. They went shopping for days and came home with nothing. One day they came home with some boxes. I could hear them in the bedroom laughing about something that had apparently happened a store.

In a few minutes Ann came out of the bedroom with a formal on. She looked at me and asked, "What do you think, Dad? Is this the formal I should wear or should I try for another one?"

This formal had a very low cut back, I could see through it and the neckline was too low for Ann. Besides it didn't fit good at all.

"I think you better try again. That one just isn't you."

"This was the best one I could find for the price. I guess I will just have to go to a higher price."

"If I were you I would go to the higher priced ones if they are better than that! That one looks like it was about two sizes too large for you."

She looked at me with sheepish grin, "You're just too smart for me. You knew that I had a more expensive gown didn't you?"

"Of course! Your mother has pulled that on me until I can recognize it by just seeing the gown or dress. Why don't you go put on the gown you really want me to see?"

"I'll do that just for you."

The Dumpster Kid

In a moment or two she came out with the gown she wanted me to see.

"What do you think of this one?"

This gown was just right for Ann. It had a slight tint of green which went with her hair. It was made of some kind of material that couldn't be seen through and it fit her like a glove. The skirt ballooned out and swept the floor. The back was cut low, but not as low as the other one.

I looked at Ann and told her that one was a keeper as far as I was concerned. "It would have to be a blind boy that couldn't tell how pretty you are in that!"

"Thanks, Dad. You really don't know how much I appreciate you saying that."

She walked slowly back to the bedroom and Sam came out in her gown.

"Well, what do you think of my gown?"

Her gown was very similar to Ann's. "I think that one is a keeper also. You and your sister are going to turn the heads of all the boys at that banquet."

Joan came out with her gown on for my approval. It was similar to the girl's gowns.

"That's a keeper also."

Joan just stood there for a moment and then asked if I weren't going to tell her something else.

Sam came up to me and whispered in my ear that she wanted me to tell her how pretty she was.

"Do you really think that is it."

"I know that it is. Now tell her."

"Sam says that you want me to tell you how pretty you are."

"Don't you think that would be nice?"

"That makes you look pretty, too. I'm going to have to watch or some of those good looking boys will be taking you from me." I winked at Sam as I said this.

"Dad, you are good at that. I hope I find someone just as good at it when I get married." Sam remarked.

"You could have told me that to begin with. I shouldn't have to pull it out of you." Joan remarked. "Now I want you to try on the suit you are to wear."

With that said, all three of my girls led me into the bedroom and showed me the outfit I was to wear. They left the room and I put the suit on that they had gotten for me. I came out and stood in front of them. Ann and Sam giggled and Joan looked at me as she commanded, "You go back in there and put that on right! We can't tell you how handsome you are if you have it on wrong!"

I went back into the bedroom and put the suit on right. This time when I came out, the girls all told me how handsome I was. I returned to my room, took the suit off and came back to my easy chair to watch the news.

The night of the banquet, I hired a stretch limo to take all of us to the big hotel where the banquet was to be held. Jay had been invited also, so he showed up in a tux complaining about having to get dressed up.

"If it hadn't been for my sisters, I would never have gotten into this thing. I feel like a penguin."

"I think you are very handsome in that suit and I'll bet there will be a lot of girls wanting to date you." Ann remarked with Sam agreeing.

We arrived at the hotel and some of the students ushered us to the room the

The Dumpster Kid

banquet was to be in and to the table where we were to be seated.

One of the boys, Robert, took Ann to the head table and informed her that he was her escort for the evening.

"Just how did that happen? I didn't hear you ask me."

"They drew straws and I got you."

"You have to be kidding. Am I so ugly that they had to draw straws to see who would get stuck escorting me."

"You are the prettiest one here. All the boys had to draw straws to see who they would escort because they all wanted to be your escort."

"You still have to be kidding! You know that they didn't all want to escort me."

"Yes they did." Just then another boy passed close by and Robert grabbed him and asked him who he really wanted to escort this evening. The boy looked at Ann and assured Robert that he really wanted to escort Ann, but he lost the draw.

"Now do you believe me?"

"Whether that is true or not, you make me feel good thinking it is."

After the meal was over, a person came up to the podium and told several funny stories. When he was finished the head of the athletic department of the school went to the podium and gave out letters to all those who had participated in some sport for the school. Ann got one for participating in soccer. Then the most valuable athlete award was to be given. One to a boy and one to a girl. The boy received his first. None of the boys and girls knew who was to receive these awards so it came as a surprise to all of them.

"These awards are decided by the boys and girls in the school, the faculty and the media. There was no question as to which girl should receive this award. She has been out of school since an operation, but when she was playing soccer for the school, she encouraged all the students with her, 'We can do it, lets go!' yell. Because of her enthusiasm and superb playing ability our soccer team won the state championship this year for the first time. It gives me great pleasure to present this award to a person who fate has handed a bad hand and will not be able to play soccer or any other game again, Miss Ann Hankins."

Ann walked haltingly to the podium to receive her award and everyone in the audience rose to their feet and applauded her, giving her a standing ovation. Ann was overcome with emotion and had to wait a few minutes before she could say anything. When she could speak, Ann thanked them for the award. "I shall cherish this award the rest of my life, but I did not win it by myself. It was a team effort and without the team I am nothing. Thank you team. You may come to my house and touch it sometime." Ann laughed.

Sam was standing at our table applauding her sister and shouting, "At a way, Sis!"

Sam had come to us from a family that had been murdered in front of her. She had no brothers or sisters and had not made any remarks about her family for a long time. Now she was standing and cheering for a girl that was no blood relative, but she had learned to love her as her sister. I couldn't help feeling proud of both of my daughters!

After all of the awards were given out and the meeting over, we all headed for the limo. Robert asked if he might see Ann home with us. Hoping to stimulate something in

The Dumpster Kid

Ann, I agreed for him to come along. I let Robert sit on the seat next to Ann. Jay sat next to Sam and of course I sat next to Joan.

After we arrived home and Ann had told Robert good night, Robert started to walk home. I asked him where he lived and when he told me, I asked the driver of the limo if he wouldn't drop Robert off as he went back with the limo. He agreed and Robert got onto the limo and they drove off.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Eight

Ann began to attend church regular now. She was going on sixteen now and didn't seem to have any interest in boys. I felt somewhat relieved to know that she wouldn't repeat the mistake of her mother. I was also concerned that this didn't seem normal to me. When I asked the doctor about it, he assured me that Ann was slower to mature than the other girls and therefore hadn't arrived at the boy crazy stage. He asked me to just give her time.

In church the group she was in was having a better speakers tournament. Ann came home with a big smile on her face and announced that she was going to enter it.

"Good for you! I know you can write and give the best speech in church." I remarked.

"Dad, you don't understand. The winner in church goes to the region and the winner in the region goes to the state. All of the state winners go to Washington and give their speech in The Kennedy Center and they also get a free sight seeing trip around Washington in a big stretch limousine!"

"That is really big stuff, huh!"

"I think it is because if I go to Washington, you get to go with me."

"I think you better not get your sights too high. You haven't even won the church contest yet!"

"I think I will, because there are just two others entering."

"What if they win?"

"If they do, I guess God didn't want me to win and He still will have to reveal what he wants me to do."

Ann went to work on writing her speech with the usual fervor she gave to all of her work. I had no idea of what she planned to speak. It seemed to be a closely guarded secret. Ann borrowed my camera and took off one day to take pictures of something and then returned with the camera and asked me to take the film out and get it developed for her. She asked me to have slides made for her of the pictures. I gladly did this and then she found one of the pictures the lawyer had taken of her back when we went to court. She asked me if they could make a slide of that picture. I assured her that they could, so I went to the camera shop to get a slide made of that picture. I got the first pictures she had taken and it was of some man and the dumpster she had for a home for two and one half years. From this I deduced that she was going to make a speech about her early life.

Some time after that, Ann announced to Joan, Sam and me that she wanted to try her speech out on us. We agreed to be her guinea pigs.

Ann gave her speech and showed her pictures at the proper time and when she had finished, we were in tears. She had done a masterful job on the speech. It wasn't quite what I had expected for it was by far better than anything I have ever heard on the subject of child abuse.

She had dug out the old dress that she wore all the time she was in the dumpster and showed it and then showed the pictures of where she had lived in the dumpster. She had chosen her words well and each one added to her speech.

"Ann, you are amazing! If that speech doesn't win you that trip to Washington, I'll be glad to take you anyway."

The Dumpster Kid

She was all smiles now. "Do you really think it is that good?"

"I certainly do!"

Joan spoke up, "Ann, I agree with your father. I don't see how you can lose."

Sam added her support by telling her that her speech would turn a stone to jelly.

"You people wouldn't happen to be a little bit prejudiced would you?"

"We might be, but we feel it is well placed."

In a few nights Ann had to present her speech to the church as did all the other boys and girls who had entered the contest. Ann was the last to give her speech and some of the people were about to leave the church for home as the hour was late. When Ann got up and announced that she was the Dumpster Kid, those people sat back down and listened to Ann. She had the audience's attention from the very start. There was no one whispering or moving about. They all had their attention riveted on what Ann was saying. When they saw the picture of her back and the scars from being beaten with a belt, they all winced. When Ann had finished all of the audience was in tears. Ann had moved every heart there.

The pastor came to Ann and remarked through his tears that he had never known all about her past. He mentioned to her that she had given a very stirring and moving speech.

The judges gave there decision. It was hands down for Ann!

Ann smiled and said, "I knew I could do it. I'm going to go to Washington!"

Sam wanted to know if she could go to Washington with her when she won the state meet.

"You better come down a little young lady, you have only won the church competition!"

"I know Dad, but I will, you wait and see. I think this is what God wants me to do. Too many young children are being abused in this way and if I can do anything to make life better for some other foster child, I am going to do it!"

"Well, you got these people's attention anyway."

We collected Ann's materials she used in her speech and left for home.

Ann was in another world she was so happy at her success at speech making.

"Ann, I know that you are very happy with your success this evening. Just be certain to thank the Lord for your success. It is apparently what God wants you to do and it is the reason he brought you through all the things you have suffered growing up. Your speech tonight was given to you by the Lord and you knew what he wanted you to say because He had your attention. Don't ever get the big head and think you have done this on your own! The first time you think you can do it on your own, you will be on your own."

"Thank you father. It just makes me feel great to know that God wants to use me for His purpose. It is hard not to feel that I have done something great, but I know that I couldn't, had it not been for Him."

Ann went around singing little songs she made up for the next few days. She was happy that she had won the church meet. Now she would have to go to the associational meet. There would be many more boys and girls there and perhaps some might do better than she, so the closer the time came for the meet, the harder Ann worked on her presentation. She not only worked on her presentation, she spent a lot of time in prayer asking for help in doing God's will. She prayed that should she lose that

The Dumpster Kid

she would be a gracious loser. If she won that she would be a gracious winner. She left it up to the Lord whether he wanted her to win.

I just couldn't help but feel very proud of my daughter being willing to take defeat if it came.

We went to the place of the meet and they had put Ann on the end of the speaker list. I felt like that was a bit unfair as it put a strain on her for worrying about her speech. I asked one of the people in charge and they told me that they had heard of her speech in our church and wanted her to come last so as not to worry the other contestants after hearing her. A number of people in the audience had come to hear her speech and would stay to the end to hear it.

I was surprised that word had gotten around about Ann's speech. I don't know if our pastor was bragging on her or if he had just told people in a matter of conversation. No matter how word had gotten out, Ann was still the last one to speak and that I couldn't change.

All of the other speakers gave their speeches and it came to Ann's turn at last. Ann got up and began her speech by telling the audience that she was the Dumpster Kid. The audience hushed and listened throughout Ann's speech. It was like she had mesmerized them. Even the small children were quiet! When she finished almost every eye in the audience had tears.

We waited for the judges decisions. It seemed like an eternity before the results were announced. They gave all of the runners up first and all of the alternates and then finally got to the first place. Ann had won the meet!

We helped Ann get her materials together and left for home. In the car Ann said, "Don't say it, Dad! I am trying not to get the big head, but it is hard when people tell you how good you are."

"I wasn't going to say anything. I said all I need to say last time. A smart young lady can remember what was said for longer than that and will put it to use!"

"Sis, you have a great speech and you give it well. I am certain that you will win all the meets and get to go to Washington. Now what I am waiting for is for you to tell me if I can go to Washington with you." Sam was tired of waiting for an answer.

Ann confirmed to Sam that the trip was for the family to go to Washington.

Ann was really happy over her victory. I didn't tell her why they had put her last at the meet. If she found out that people were coming to hear her because they had heard what a good speech she had, she would have a hard time trying not to get the big head.

Ann looked at me one day and said, "I'm going to the regional meet soon, Dad. Do you think I can make it to the state meet?"

"I'm certain you can if you prepare yourself as you did for the last one and include God in your planning."

"Thanks. I wouldn't think of doing any other way."

Sam had been after Joan and I to adopt her. We wanted to make certain that she knew what she was doing. We didn't want her to ask to be adopted just to please us. She was eleven now and Joan and I felt that she should surely know what she wanted to do. I asked her if she really wanted us to adopt her and if she knew what that meant. She assured me that she understood and still wanted to be adopted. In three years time not one of her parent's family had written or come to visit her. I called Jim to get the adoption papers ready for her and to let us know when and where to appear. The

The Dumpster Kid

papers were ready the next day and we were to meet Jim in the judge's office at three thirty. We all went and the

judge recognized Ann. He mentioned that he had heard her speech and that she was a compelling speaker. The papers were all signed by the proper persons and the judge looked at Sam, "Do you know what we are doing here today?"

"Yes. I am becoming a legal daughter of Mom and Dad. My name will now be Samantha Hankins."

"Very good! I know your parents and they love you very much. I hope you will always make them proud of you."

"I will your honor!" With this she kissed the judge on the cheek. After this the judge left his chambers and I gathered my family together for a group hug.

I believe that Ann was happier than Sam! Sam now had a family and was no more our legal ward. Both of our daughters were very happy and I have to admit that I was happy also. These two girls had come into our life at a time when most adults are thinking of getting out the rocking chair. I believe that they have extended our life! They have brought us nothing but joy and happiness. Now they are ours forever.

The time for the regional meet came. Ann had prepared herself as she had before. When we got to the place of the regional meet, we found that once again they had put Ann on last. I asked one of the people in charge why they had done this to her again.

"We have heard of her and we don't want to put the others to a disadvantage by having her on before the end. You know that we expect her to win tonight. For her this is just a formality."

I looked surprised at him. They were admitting that Ann was the winner and they had not even had the meet yet! I hoped that they had not shown that confidence to the other speakers!

The first speaker was introduced and she spoke. They went on down the list and finally came to Ann. Ann held up her tattered dress and announced that she was the Dumpster Kid. Then she proceeded to tell why she was. Then she brought in how she had been abused by the system. Every eye was on her. She had succeeded in mesmerizing the audience again! When the results were given, Ann had won the regional meet.

On the way home she reminded me that she only had two more meets and she would be seeing Washington. I reminded her that she had not won the last two yet.

"I know, Dad. I will study and pray more. These people in the state level should really be good. They are the best from all over the state."

Sam remarked, "You can do it Ann! You are a Hankins like me.!"

Ann didn't need a cheering section, her sister was all she needed. She just smiled at Sam's enthusiasm.

Ann was happy with her successes, but never let them go to her head to where she didn't study. She knew that she had to work to win and did.

The day of the state meet came. We had to travel to the northern part of the state, so we left early in the morning for the meet was that evening and Ann would need some rest before going on. We arrived safely and got a room and had Ann rest while we looked around. I noticed the order of speakers had been posted on a bulletin board outside the main office. I looked at it and Ann's name was not on it. I went to the main

The Dumpster Kid

office and asked why her name had been excluded.

The secretary didn't know but she would see if she could find out. In a minute or two the secretary returned and said that she must not have won in the region. I bristled at those words.

"She did win and she has won each of the meets up to here. Are these people afraid to compete against her? They better get her name on the list or give me a good explanation post haste!"

A man came out of the office and looked at me, "Are you threatening me and the judges?"

"I am saying that my daughter has won all the meets she has been in all the way from the local meet to this one. I have driven up here with her so she could speak in this meet. If you people are trying to keep her from competing by leaving her name off the list, I shall see you in court! My daughter has gone through a lot of disappointments in her young life and I do not intend this to be another one for her. Those disappointments almost cost her, her life not too long ago. Now are you going to let her speak or do I take you to court?"

"Don't get so excited! We have heard of your daughter's speech and the committee has decided to award her a special award and not let her compete. She will give her speech at the end of the others and she will win the prize of going to Washington. She and the winner of tonight's event will represent Florida at the national. If you desire, we will put her name on the bottom of the list, but she still will not be competing against the other young people. She is too good for them."

I was amazed that they had declared her the winner without hearing her. I felt much better knowing that she would get to speak.

I left the office and went back to my room. I didn't tell Joan or Ann as I wanted Ann to feel that she was competing. In reality the man was right. Ann was too good for the others. She had beaten her competitors each time by a large margin.

We all went to the hall where the contest was to be held. The MC announced each contestant and when it came to the end of the list of speakers the MC remarked that there was one more speaker. He mentioned the fact that Ann had won all of the meets coming to the state and that Ann would not compete with the others this evening, but she would go to the national meet with the winner of the meet this evening. Ann looked at me with a puzzled look on her face. The MC gave her name and Ann got up and delivered her speech. When she finished there were no dry eyes as usual and the MC remarked to the audience that they now could see why she did not compete!

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Nine

Ann was confused as to why she wasn't allowed to compete in the state, but was happy to get that prize of going to Washington and a tour in a stretch limousine. When it came time to go to Washington, we flew and Ann remembered the last flight she had.

"I know that I can't get appendicitis again, but flying makes me feel like I might."

Joan looked at her, "You don't have to worry. You don't have any appendix to take out anymore. Nothing else can happen as God is protecting you so you can speak in Washington! Just sit back and relax. You will be all right and do well in the meet."

"Thanks, mom. I needed that."

We arrived in Washington with some time to spare. We went to the hotel we had been assigned and found a very pleasant room overlooking the Potomac. It had two double beds and lacked very little.

That evening before the meet, we got a call from the limo driver telling us that he was to take us to a restaurant for our dinner. We went with him and found that others from all over the nation were there eating also.

After we had eaten, the limo driver reappeared and was ready to take us to The Kennedy Center for the meet. Again they had put Ann on the list last. I was getting to where I didn't mind it as I knew why, but when they left her name off altogether, I was deeply concerned.

The officials called Ann and I into the office for a chat.

"We have heard of the moving speech that Ann gives and we plan to let her speak last, but not as a competitor. As far as we are concerned she has won the meet now. We have some news media present and the President will also be present. The TV people are going to take clips of the contestants speaking."

"What I need to know is, will this arrangement suit you folks?"

"Will I still get to tour Washington in a stretch limo?" Ann didn't want to be cheated out of her limo and tour.

"You will indeed tour the capital in a limo and there will be some extra things you will get for cooperating with us."

"How many people will I be talking to on TV?"

"Probably in the neighborhood of ten million people!"

"What do you think, Dad?"

"It is not my decision to make. You have to do that yourself. You wanted to get your message out to the people and here is a good chance."

"I will do as you request." Ann informed the official.

All of the speakers were given their time to speak and then came Ann's turn. The cameras were set up so they could pick speaker up from any angle. Ann began her speech as she always did with her tattered dress and telling that she was 'The Dumpster Kid'.

I was as proud of her as I would have been had she been my own flesh and blood! God had surely blessed Joan and me by giving this child to us.

Sam saw her sister on TV and was overwhelmed that her sister was famous and being seen by millions of viewers.

When Ann had finished, the President, whom she could not see because of the lights, came from his box to the podium area.

The Dumpster Kid

He looked her in the eye, "That was a terrific speech and most compelling. I would like to see you in my office in the morning at ten so we can talk more about this and see what can be done."

Ann's eyes glistened and sparkled, "Yes sir! I'll be there-the Lord willing-at ten!"

The President left and Ann remarked to me, "What about that?"

This was just the beginning of invitations she got. All the talk shows wanted her and several disk jockeys ask her to appear on their show and all of them offering sizable amounts of money for her to appear.

Newspapers wanted the right to publish her speech in its entirety. Ann told all of them to contact her when she returned to her home in Florida, so she could get the dates down on her calendar. As we rode in the limo back to the room, Ann was about to burst from happiness.

She was now a kind of star! She was really enjoying this! I don't think Ann slept a wink all night. She was too hyper from her success. The thing she was most happy about was the fact that the president of the whole country was going to try and do something to help people like her. She finally got to sleep about four in the morning for a short while.

The next morning we ordered breakfast to be eaten in the room so we could let Ann sleep longer. We finally told her she would have to get up at nine. She looked at the clock and ran to the bathroom to freshen up and to put on her clean clothes. In a few minutes she came out of the bathroom with her clothes on worried that she was going to miss meeting with the President.

We got her calmed down long enough for her to eat, brush her teeth and put on some make up.

We went down to the limo driver and Ann told him to take us to the White house for she had to see the President at ten.

The driver pulled up to the gate of the White house and a guard stopped us. He asked who we were and when we were supposed to see the President. Ann told him that she was to see him at ten. The guard didn't smile as he looked down a list of people the President had scheduled to see on a clip board. " I'm sorry miss, I don't see you on the schedule."

"I must be on there somewhere! He invited me after I made my speech last night at The Kennedy Center."

"I'm sorry. You will have to leave. I don't have your name on the list."

"Have you a phone where you can call him and ask him?"

"I do, but I will not call him." About that time the President appeared in the door and saw Ann about to cry from disappointment. He walked over to the limo and looked at Ann.

"Don't cry! I didn't have time to get you on the guest list last night and I was just coming to tell the guard now. It isn't the guard's fault. He is doing his job."

"I'm sorry young lady. I have to go by the rules." The guard was very pleasant but stern.

We went into the White house following the President. Ann looked up at the high ceilings and the size of the rooms and exclaimed, "This sure isn't a dumpster!" We all laughed at her.

If I had been an artist like Norman Rockwell I would have painted a picture of Ann

The Dumpster Kid

sitting in a chair of the Oval Office talking to the President. She was grown now and was only five feet tall, so she looked a lot younger than she really was. She was intently talking to the President and he would listen and then he would speak to her. The scene reminded me of the picture Norman Rockwell painted of the little girl with her doll in the doctor's office. Ann was never afraid to talk to anyone. She would talk to people of high office or people from the dumpsters.

After the White house conference with the President, the limo driver began our tour of Washington. One place we didn't have to visit was the White house because the first lady had taken us through the place when Ann finished with the President. We were shown areas of the White house that the general public never sees.

The limo driver took us all over Washington and stopped at places for us to get out and walk through. Places such as the Smithsonian and Arlington. We also went to Mt. Vernon and walked over George Washington's home place. All in all the limo driver gave us a grand tour. When we had finished the tour a messenger came with a note from the President for Ann. She couldn't understand why he would send her a message. She opened the envelope and read. She looked at me and explained that congress wanted her to come and speak to a joint session. Some of the members of congress had heard her speak the night before and wanted the full congress to hear her plea.

They requested her to speak the next evening at eight pm. She couldn't refuse this so she scribbled a note on the back of the message she had gotten that she would be there. The messenger left and we went back to our hotel room for one more night. We freshened up, changed clothes and went down to the hotel restaurant. The Mater D told us that he was sorry that he didn't have a table for us. He then looked at Ann and remarked, "You are the girl on television last night aren't you?"

"I guess I was at least one of them. I was speaking at The Kennedy Center."

"You are the one then that I saw. For you we have a table. Just follow me. I don't want you to have to get your supper from a dumpster around here!" He took us to the dining area where the aristocratic people of Washington eat. As soon as we were seated one woman in an evening gown came over and began talking to Ann. It wasn't long before several woman had come to visit Ann. Some stayed to chat a minute and some just complimented her on her speech the night before and left. The crowd of people around the table was making it hard for us to place an order. The Mater D noticed this and came and asked us to bring our things and follow him. We followed the Mater D to a small private room. We then could place our orders. Ann was just too noticeable. People recognized her from TV the night before and wanted to have her sign an autograph or compliment her for her speech.

Ann and Sam were tired from all the sightseeing in Washington and I know Joan was also for I was. We retired early that night and the phone jangled to arouse us at different times during the night. It was people from different organizations wanting Ann to speak to them. I told them to please call us in Florida so we could be certain we were not double scheduling or something. I finally had to tell the clerk at the desk to have all calls to our room cut off for the night. I don't believe anyone in Washington ever sleeps!

The next morning we went out for breakfast to a very fancy place at the request of Ann. It was one of Mac's steak houses! No one recognized Ann for a while and we got our orders placed and to our seats before anyone noticed Ann. As soon as they saw Ann and recognized her, they were over to our table to congratulate Ann for an excellent

The Dumpster Kid

speech. We managed to eat our Egg Muffins, drink our juice and get on our way without causing any hard feelings. This had always been one of Ann's favorite meals.

We looked around at some of the buildings in Washington and wondered if they were some that the British had burned in the War of 1812. After looking around we went on back to our hotel and enjoyed a relatively quiet morning and afternoon. We had our lunch sent up and thus avoided the curious and well wishers. We didn't mean to be rude or unthankful, but we enjoy our solitude when we eat and sleep.

That evening we found our limo driver had returned to take us to the place Ann would have to be. He had been a big help throughout our stay in Washington, so I slipped him a sizable tip. He wouldn't take it. He remarked that he enjoyed helping Ann and his services were free.

We went into the congressional building and a secret service agent took Ann with him and a guard took Joan, Sam and me to seats that had been reserved for us in the gallery.

It seemed like it took forever for the congressmen to get to their seats. They always had to stop and talk to a fellow congressman about something. They finally were all seated and then the Supreme Court judges marched in decked in their robes. In a few more minutes the President was announced and he and Ann came marching in side by side. It was something to behold. Here was the President, a tall husky man marching in with Ann who looked like a little girl beside him. As they marched in all of the others, Gallery and Congressmen stood. When the President and Ann were seated, everyone else seated themselves.

The Speaker banged his gavel and brought the group to order.

The President stood to introduce Ann. The audience hushed. After he had introduced Ann most of the congressmen stood and applauded.

Ann walked up to the podium and most people could only see the top of her head.

Ann started to speak, "Mr President, Mr Vice President, Mr Speaker, Honorable Judges, Members of Congress and guests in the gallery. I have been asked to speak to you on the subject of the homeless and child abuse, but before I begin Mr. President I would like to be able to see who I am addressing. I don't know if this thing is this high to give the speaker something to duck behind when the rotten tomatoes fly or not, but I have had them dumped on me regularly when I lived in that dumpster. Would it be possible for me to have a box or something to stand on?" The audience roared with laughter and applauded.

I was amazed at Ann! Here was a place where reigning monarchs have stood. A place where every president since the building was completed has stood and addressed congress. A place that is more or less hallowed by those who have stood there and the momentous occasions that prompted them to stand there. Here is little Ann asking the President of the United States to bring her a box upon which she will stand!

The President got up and remarked, "There will be a few minutes delay until we can find something upon which the speaker may stand."

Some men brought in a raised platform for Ann to stand on as she gave her message. As soon as it was in place and they tried it to see if it were suitable, the speaker called the group to order again. This time everyone could see Ann from the shoulders up.

"I have come to you people to tell you of the plight of children who are abused and

The Dumpster Kid

of the horrible conditions of the truly homeless people in our country. I am 'The Dumpster Kid'! This is the dress that I wore all the time I was in the dumpster. On the screen behind me you can see a picture of the dumpster in which I lived for two and one half years. It is dumpster number one behind TUTU's in Palm Beach. If you look close enough you will see a sign that my friends painted on it: Ann's dumpster- stay out!"

"Not only am I 'The Dumpster Kid' but I am also a bastard child. I was born to a mother who had an illicit relationship with a man I never knew. When she discovered that she was expecting me she told him. He told her she was on her own unless she got an abortion for which he would graciously pay! My mother was brought up to respect life so an abortion was out of the question."

"My mother wasn't promiscuous by any stretch of the imagination. My father had promised that he would marry her when she graduated from high school. She thought that he would keep his promise and that he loved her. He had been pressuring her ever since he started dating her and because of his agreement with her about marriage, she gave in to his advances after the senior prom."

"You are probably sitting there saying to yourself that I wouldn't know all these things about my birth. To relieve you of that thought I can tell you that I visited my mother in Syracuse, New York, the year after my adoptive parents gave me a home. My grandmother told me these things."

"Because I was a bastard child, my grandfather didn't want me in his house. He told my mother that she was going to put me up for adoption when I was born. In order to keep things secret from our neighbors, after I had graduated in June, my grandfather brought the whole family to Palm Beach for the duration."

"My mother was against letting me be adopted, but my grandfather found a couple who wished to adopt me at birth. Papers of intent were signed against my mother's wishes. As time came closer for my birth, my mother notified the young couple that she did not intend to go through with the adoption. The couple took my mother to court to make her uphold the agreement that had been made. The day of the court hearing, my mother lost her cool and the judge was a little fearful that she was unstable and still he wasn't positive of this so he ordered that I be placed in foster care until he could make a final decision. He did not want to put me up for adoption if my mother was competent. The couple who had wanted to adopt me backed out of the agreement in lieu of the judge's failure to render a decision. This meant that I was to be in foster care and could not be adopted by anyone or given back to my mother until the judge made his decision. I was stuck! The judge never rendered a decision on my behalf and I was in foster care for ten years!"

The day I was born, my mother was not even allowed the privilege of seeing me to where she didn't know if I was a boy or a girl. In accordance with the judge's ruling, I was placed in foster care. I have had some nice foster parents so I can't say that all foster care parents are bad, but I can say that I have had some real bummers!"

"No matter who the foster care parents are, they have a job of taking care of the foster children. They have to be careful not to get too attached because it will hurt when the child is taken from their home. Because of this, foster care children do not get the love they need and would get from a parent. Some of those parents I had during my ten years with them, and I had seven of them, would dress me up on Sunday and take me to church with them. They usually had children of their own and dressed them up and took

The Dumpster Kid

them to church also. I may have been little, but I noticed the different way I was treated. These parents didn't do anything bad to me, but I noticed that their children got love and care that I didn't."

"I didn't know what it was to be loved and fussed over by my parents! I was taken to preschool when I was old enough and my parents would take me by my hand and lead me into the center. When other children came with their parents, they were hugged and kissed as the parents left. My parents just let go of my hand as they turned and left for work. When evening came, my parents just took my hand and led me to the car and headed for home. They might ask me how things went that day or something similar. I saw the other children get hugs and kisses. Oh, how I longed for that! I would have loved to have a parent pick me up and hug me and kiss my cheek! I longed for a mother who would take me shopping for new clothes and then help me put them on and tell me how pretty I looked! I would have loved to have a dad who would pick me up in his strong arms as he returned home from work and hug and kiss me as he called me his little princess! You understand, I hope, that I did not get that kind of attention because I was a foster child who might be taken from that home at any time. I was taken from three different homes by the time I entered first grade! By the time I was ten, I had seven different homes and the last one was a real bummer. Many a night in my earlier years, I would bury my head in my pillow and cry because I had no parental love in my life. After I had my cry, I would pray that God would send me some parents who would love me and care for me. Parents who would make a fuss over me! I didn't get an answer to my prayer and I decided that God must be busy with more important things than a little kid wanting parents! I believed he could be trying to find me some parents who would be just right for me. I decided that was probably what was going on and lived with that hope."

"The agency decided that they did not have to observe my ethnic background and that any foster parent of any ethnic background would do for me. My seventh parents were of a different ethnic background and let me know immediately that I was different!"

"They had a son who was displeased with the fact that I was going to be living with him in his house. He hated me from the very beginning and started making up stories of things I had done and his parents believed him and wouldn't listen to me. They at first admonished me, but when the boy's lies continued, they began using racial slurs. The boy saw how he was getting his way and continued with his lies and his parents began denying me the right to eat supper. The boy was overjoyed with his success and began to make up worse lies about me. His parents then began to beat me with an iron cord or a belt. The belt would cut my flesh on the back and I would bleed. If I went to bed and got blood on the sheets during the night, I would have to take the sheets from the bed and wash them by hand in the morning! The result of that was I slept on my stomach all night. No one offered to treat my cuts on the back. They would put more on there the next time the boy lied about me!"

"The picture you see on the screen behind me is a picture of the scars on my back that I will carry with me to my grave! This picture was taken by the state attorney's staff in Palm Beach."

"When I was praying in the evenings I would always mention to God that if He didn't do something soon about this I would be with him and he wouldn't have to find me any parents! I was getting weaker each day from not having any supper and from being

The Dumpster Kid

beaten so much."

"One day at school the teacher noticed that I seemed sore in the back and neck. She called me to her desk and asked what was wrong with my back and neck. I pretended that there wasn't anything wrong when she put her arm around me, I winced. She asked me to stand with my back to her and she pulled my dress away from my neck to where she could look down my back. She said no more and took me straight to the principal who in turn took me to the clinic and had the school nurse look at my back. The nurse wanted to know how that had happened and I told her that my foster parents had done it. She immediately took me in her car to a doctor and he had me take off my dress so he could see how bad things were. He found that my back was covered with scars and bruises from being beaten. Some of the marks were infected and he treated them with something and then put a bandage over them. He called the agency and asked them if they knew anything about this. Of course they denied any knowledge of it. The doctor told them that he was going to press charges against the people and that he wanted me out of that home immediately or he would prefer charges on the agency also."

"That evening I got some supper for the first time in a long time and stayed at the home of one of the supervisors. Things remained this way until after the trial of those foster parents who were sentenced to jail terms for beating me. Just two years and probation!"

"After the trial, the worker made a false report to cover her tracks and so the agency called me in and told me that they were going to let me be on my own so they could spend their money on children who were more appreciative than I. I was turned loose without any clothes other than what I had on my back. I would have no place to go, no shelter from the elements and I certainly would not have the most important thing-food!"

"I was a bag of bones from not having sufficient food for so long and being mistreated. The first thing on my agenda was going to have to be food. My stomach was already telling me that food was overdue! I found a restaurant by accident and went to the back door to see if they might give me something to eat. As I arrived in the back, I saw a young fellow carrying a bag of garbage to the dumpster. I watched him throw the garbage into the dumpster and my stomach growled so loud that I guess he thought it was some kind of animal. He raced back into the restaurant anyway. I jumped into the dumpster and wildly opened that garbage bag and started searching for food to eat. When I think back on how I acted, I guess that I did act like some kind of wild animal! I was hungry. You are probably asking yourselves how could a person eat old dirty garbage. Have you ever eaten a cold greasy pork chop? Have you ever eaten left over pancakes saturated in butter, syrup and dirt from the kitchen sink? When you are hungry enough you will eat anything that looks like food. Magellan's crew ate the leather of the ships rigging when he sailed around the world. I think that would be worse eating than what I had to eat!"

"After I finished chowing down on the garbage, I decided that I wanted a better place to eat, so I walked over the bridge to Palm Beach. I saw all the people walking over there or sitting on their porches enjoying the cool of the afternoon. By accident I arrived at TUTU's as people were lined up to go inside to eat. They were dressed in their evening wear so they could go out after they had eaten. I hurried to the back of the

The Dumpster Kid

restaurant and dove into dumpster number one. After I had gotten up from my dive in, I noticed that there was a woman already in that dumpster."

"That woman, her name was Lee, helped me and educated me to the homeless life as well as dumpster life. She introduced me to some of the other homeless people and one of the men was worried about me being small and perhaps attacked by some of the ruffians who came by occasionally to bother the homeless. The truly homeless are those who are homeless because they have lost their jobs and all they had for one reason or another. They are not those who are drug addicts or alcoholics. The latter are those you see begging for money on the streets. The truly homeless are those who try to find some kind of work so they can get on their feet and get out of their homeless situation. The others are nothing but bums who only care for the next fix or the next drink of liquor. They occasionally hustle one of the homeless for what little money they might have."

"This young man was worried enough about me that he taught me a few judo holds. After he had taught me those holds and I learned to use them correctly, one of the bums came to hassle the homeless for money and he saw me. He came to me with the intention of doing things to me that I didn't want done. He made a grab for me and I threw him to the ground with a thud. I stood with my foot on his throat and his arm in a twist that must have hurt. He gurgled for me to let him go and he would leave us alone. I looked at him and saw that he was about to pass out so I let him go. He got up and told me that he was going to come back and get me yet. I told him that he would get more of the same except worse! He just looked at me and smirked as he left. I guess you know that he did come back with a couple of punks to help him. All of the homeless in that area went together and beat the living life out of those guys and even broke some bones. They never bothered us again. I think their hands were broken so badly that they couldn't hold a knife or a gun. The point that I am making here is that the truly homeless will stick together when it is necessary and they do not stand on the street corners or in the median with signs saying they will work in order to get money. Most of the money that is sent out from you folks goes to the bums to carry on their habit! The homeless don't want a hand-out, they want a hand-up! If you are going to spend money on the homeless make certain that it gets to them in the form of food, clothing or a place to stay."

"As far as the foster program goes, you have the power to regulate it and control how the money is spent. See to it that no other child has to go through what I have had to endure! "

" I now have a very loving and caring set of parents that I think sometimes I can see the shine on their halos! God was waiting for the right parents for me and I am happy now. The only time I could be happier here on earth will probably be when I am married and have a child of my own to love and cherish. I now have an older brother and a younger sister. In other words I now have a F--A--M--I--L--Y! My mother, father and sister are in the gallery tonight. They are no doubt the proudest people up there!"

"I no longer have to cry in my pillow at night! I now have that love of family and the nurturing that I so longed for and cried for through the years."

"Let me go over this one more time. This is a picture of dumpster number one that I lived in for two and one half years. This is the dress I wore when I lived in the dumpster. This is a picture of my back depicting the beatings I took from cruel foster

The Dumpster Kid

parents. This is a picture of my friend who taught me those judo holds and how to use them."

"The question you folks have to settle is, 'What are you going to do for the truly homeless? What are you going to do for the foster care program? Do you want a healthy citizenry both in the children and the adults or do you want the things that are going on now to continue?'"

"Thank you for asking me to speak to you tonight."

The applause when Ann finished was deafening. The people who heard her that night were going to do something about the abuse children in foster care get and something for the truly homeless.

Ann and the president walked out of the hall and he was holding her hand as they walked. Anyone might have thought they were father and daughter.

We found Ann and went back to the hotel for the last night's stay. It had been quite an experience for Joan, Sam and I and a memorable one for Ann. How could any parent fail to be proud of a young girl such as Ann?

When we had returned to the hotel, Ann asked me if I thought she had enough money to build a home for the homeless people in Palm Beach.

"I kind of doubt it Ann. I would think it best to find an old run down motel that has several units that someone wants to sell and buy it. Then you can renovate it and fix it like you want for a small place for the homeless. If that is a success and people begin giving you donations to continue this work, then you can expand to another building or maybe build a new one. Always start out small then you don't have a lot of money tied up in a failure."

"That is a good idea, Dad! I think Lee would like that idea too. I believe that she gave the money to me to use to help those in need. She felt that she could trust me to use the money wisely and the way she would have."

"I believe that you should dedicate the building in her memory."

"That is another good idea, Dad!"

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Ten

We left for home the next morning. Ann appeared to be downcast for some reason. I asked, "What is wrong with you. I would have thought that you would be happy after all that has happened to you here!"

"Do you remember that I told you when I started this speaking I was going to win and go to Washington and take the three of you in that stretch limousine to see Washington?"

"I certainly do! You kept your word and had some surprises thrown in on the side!"

"Now that I have done that, I don't have any other things to do. I have reached my goal and even surpassed it. Now it will just be me and Feisty!"

"You aren't going to have to worry about that. You still have us and besides you are going to have a host of offers for you to speak at all kinds of functions and organizations along with being on TV and radio shows. Surely you haven't forgotten how they all swarmed you for dates to be with them!"

"It had slipped my mind. You are right."

Sam spoke up. "Are we going to get to go to these places with you, my famous sister?"

"I want all of you to go with me if you can. I am not ready to give up my family yet!"

Ann cheered up and when we returned home, she found that people had been trying to get in touch with her to make appointments for her to speak or just be a guest on a show.

Ann had Joan work as her personal secretary to post all the engagements that she could. At first Ann would take an engagement that she could do close to home and on a weekend. That was so she could finish school. She did this for two more years and went to summer school so she could finish at the age she should have graduated had she not been on her own for two and one half years and in the hospital so long.

Anyone might get the idea that Ann and Sam never had any differences or disagreements. They did have little petty arguments once in a while and would come to either their mother or me to settle it. We usually tried to work out the problem by letting them solve it themselves.

Ann and Sam were always buying new clothes with the result that their closet wasn't big enough. I changed their closet to a walk in closet by taking part of the room next to their room. This gave them a nice sized closet and left the room next to them small. When they would have a disagreement it was usually about being in the other ones space. The one would come to their mother or me and demand to have a room by themselves. We would agree that they should have a room by themselves and I would go into their room and start to take down their bed to put it into the small bedroom next to their room. The bedroom next to theirs didn't have a closet and it was too small for their chest of drawers. As I worked to move the bed, I would hear a voice say, "Don't bother dad. I believe that I can get along with Sam/ Ann now." I would take the bed back to their room and go back to my paper or TV in the Florida Room. They always knew that if they did move out of their room they would have a lot more disadvantages than just having to put up with their sister.

The Dumpster Kid

Despite the occasional fusses they had, they loved one another very much. They were no blood relation, but they had come to be like true sisters. No one dared do anything to one of them unless they wanted to contend with the other one.

Whenever they went somewhere together, they would try to dress alike. When Sam got a little older and was as tall as Ann, they enjoyed dressing alike and pretending they were twins. They looked almost alike and were about the same height. People often took them for twins and the girls enjoyed that.

One evening when it was coming up on Sam's and my birthday, Ann and Sam wanted to go to the Palm Beach Mall and shop for a birthday gift for me. Joan gave her OK providing that they were home at a certain hour. Ann had her license to drive now and she talked her mother out of her red Corvette for the occasion. They drove to the Mall and as they were walking through the parking lot to the mall a mugger attacked them for their purses. Ann wasn't about to give her purse up and when the mugger made a lunge for her purse, she grabbed him and threw him over her shoulder to the ground. While she had him on the ground she twisted his arm and stepped on his throat with the heel of her shoe. The mugger couldn't breathe very well and Ann asked Sam, "Should I go ahead and put him out of his misery or let him go?"

"Let him go, sis. I think he may have learned his lesson."

Ann and Sam left him on the ground gasping for air and ran for the Mall. The mugger being taller and faster caught up with the girls and grabbed Sam from behind and cut her with a knife he had.

Ann screamed and grabbed the mugger and soon had him subdued. She took his belt from his pants and tied him to a nearby tree.

She then went to Sam as she yelled for someone to call 911 for her sister had been stabbed. She bent over Sam and put a jacket she was wearing under Sam's head and told Sam to hang in there.

There had been a crowd that had gathered to see if there would be any blood spilled. There was and the crowd dispersed without calling 911. Ann kept yelling for someone to call 911.

When Ann thought she had waited long enough, she helped her sister get into the car and drove her to Saint Mary's Hospital and the emergency entrance. She yelled for help and an orderly came to help her get Sam inside.

Ann was not allowed in the emergency room and had to wait in the waiting room. The person at the desk asked her questions about what had happened to Sam. Their main interest seemed to be who was going to pay for the services.

Ann became upset with them and called me on the phone. I came as quickly as I could. When I got there, Ann was almost hysterical. All she could think was that her sister was in there dying and all these people wanted was money to pay for killing her.

She was really upset. I have never seen her so upset. She didn't know that a team had taken Sam into the operating room and were working to save her life at that very moment. I gave the person at the desk all the information they needed and worked to calm Ann down.

It wasn't too long before a doctor came to me and told me that they needed blood for Sam. I readily volunteered if my blood matched. It did match and I gave blood for Sam. They tested Ann, but her blood was the wrong type. Sam hadn't lost as much blood as Ann had thought she had, so no more blood was necessary.

The Dumpster Kid

After what seemed like hours, the doctor came out and called us into a little room for a conference. "Your daughter has been stabbed twice in the abdomen one stab penetrated the colon and the other cut into the stomach and liver. We have had to clean up the abdomen and give her a high dosage of antibiotics to keep her from getting peritonitis. We have sutured the cuts and the abdominal wall. She will be in the hospital for a few days. Has this been reported to the police? "

I looked at Ann. "No, I don't think it has. I tried to get someone in the crowd to call 911 and no one did that I know of. I brought Sam over here in the car and left the guy tied to a tree in the parking lot."

The doctor remarked that he had to report this to the police. It was the law.

"While you are at it, you can tell him that I am pressing charges for attempted murder!" Ann was going to get the attacker and put him behind bars. She wasn't going to let anyone treat her or her sister that way.

The police were notified and they found the mugger still tied to the tree where Ann had left him. They couldn't believe that a person as small as Ann could possibly overcome a man as large as the mugger.

"Maybe some of the would be assassins will take note that they can't do that kind of thing and get away with it!" Ann proudly remarked.

Ann had a bed put in Sam's room to where she could sleep next to Sam and help her if she could. When Sam recovered consciousness, the first thing she saw was Ann. She wanted to know how she had gotten home. When she saw Ann she assumed that she was home. Ann told her that she was in the hospital and had been knifed by that mugger.

Sam looked at her sister and told her, "I know where he stabbed me. It hurts."

"Does it hurt so bad that you want something to kill the pain?"

"Let me see how it goes. I can stand some pain."

"If it gets to be too much for you, I will call the nurse for you."

"You aren't such a bad sister after all! I guess I love you after all."

"You know that I love you, sis. You really had me worried when I saw you bleeding all over the place."

"Did you take care of that guy?"

"I left him tied to a tree with his belt. The police have him now and I have told the police that I am pressing charges against him for attempted murder."

"How did you ever learn to throw people around like you did? He must have been at least six feet tall and was a lot bigger than you."

"That is a long story. Why don't you rest so you can get well?" Ann had told us as she told congress and the nation that one of her friends of her dumpster days had taught her some judo moves because he was afraid that some scum bum might try to attack and hurt her.

She commented to me that she had to use her skills of Judo several times while she was in the dumpster.

"There was that time I told about in my speech to congress when that bully thought he was going to get me. There were other times that I had to use my Judo, but I won't bother you with those tales now."

Sam looked at Ann and remarked, "I am flat on my back and not able to get up or move much. Where he stabbed me and I guess where they operated hurts when I

The Dumpster Kid

move."

"You just lay still! When you want something, just tell me and I will get it for you. What is probably hurting you so bad are the stitches they put in to sew you up. Those things hurt worse than the surgery when you move or get them in a twist someday. Believe me! I know!"

"You are the best sister anyone could have! You tried to protect me from that guy and now you are trying to help me get well."

"Quit bragging on me or I will quit. You helped me when I was paralyzed and now it is my turn."

"It doesn't matter if you quit. I know that you love me and I know that I love you!"

"I guess I am going to have to call the nurse. You have gone to hallucinating!" Ann said this and laughed. Sam laughed also ever so careful as that made her stitches hurt worse.

There was no question about it. These two girls who had a hard time in their early childhood had bonded to where no one could separate them.

Sam recuperated quickly and the two of them were back in their room at home fussing at one another about little things. They never wanted to separate into different rooms even though they fussed.

Sam would tell Ann that she was blood related to me being that she had some of my blood in her. They would laugh about this.

Ann was special in ways that Joan and I never could figure out. She always had that smile on her face. Even when she was so worried about Sam, she had that smile.

During Ann's last year of school, she began to date a boy. It was Robert who had waited for her all these years! He really cared for her and didn't try to do anything that would cause her to dislike him. He didn't know about Ann's mother and the problem her boyfriend presented her. He never seemed pushy about anything concerning Ann. He knew of her near death experience and her brush with death because of her aneurysm. He also knew that she couldn't play soccer any more or be over exerted at any time. He was very gentle with Ann and we couldn't help admiring him. When he finished high school he took a job with me and turned out to be one of my best workers.

Robert dated Ann all the time she was finishing high school and when she graduated, he asked her to marry him. She readily accepted his proposal and it wasn't too long after that they were married. She really did love Robert and looked forward to being married to him.

Ann looked at me with her beautiful wedding dress on just before we were to walk down the aisle to the alter for her wedding and remarked, "Dad, you have done more than give me that job I asked you for years ago. You have given me a life with loving, and caring parents not to mention a sister and a brother! You have done more for me than I ever asked of you. I will never forget you and mom. I love Robert and I want to make a home for my children when they come along like you have made for me. I love you, dad!"

Yes, we will miss our daughter: The Dumpster Kid. Especially the goofs she made. We are, however, not losing a daughter, but we are gaining a son and hopefully several grandchildren who will never know the horrible childhood their mother had to live. Sam was happy to be Ann's Matron of Honor, even though by now she towered over Ann by several inches. When she goes into that empty bedroom to sleep, she misses her

The Dumpster Kid

sister. She is like the rest of us, we thank God for the time Ann has blessed us with her presence! Robert will never know how we have been blessed by her having come this way, but we know that he will be blessed for having taken her into his life!

Ann and Robert moved into a house they had bought. It wasn't a big house, but it was their house and they had bought it with their money.

Ann had Jay come over and work on things that needed fixing. He was her brother and she could trust him and his work. When he worked on things for himself he was a tightwad. When he did something for his sisters he spared no expense. He always wanted his sisters to have the very best!

When I questioned him about this one day, he remarked, "They have had the bad things in life up to now. I feel that they have earned the right to have the very best!"

Ann went ahead and bought a small abandoned motel one day. She hired workers to clean and fix it up as a home for the truly homeless people. She went out with her mother and bought some furniture for each room in the motel and stocked each room with food and everything that would be needed for a person to set up housekeeping. Over the front entrance to the motel was a sign that read:

"The Leona Farley Home for the Homeless."

This was never meant to be a permanent home for anyone. Those who live there know that they must get a job and be on their own as soon as possible so others may have a place to live.

It is Ann's joy to see the homeless move in and the workers move out into their own homes! She has this home run by people who are homeless and know what it is all about. This way dead beats don't get a chance to take over her home.

Ann's greatest joy came one day when she gave birth to a little green eyed, red haired baby girl. Ann never lets her baby get out of her sight unless one of the family is caring for it. She wants to make certain that her baby knows who her mother is and that she has a loving home. This is something she never had in her early childhood.

Ann and Robert spend a lot of time at our house. Ann would come over to talk to her mother when she was pregnant. She also spends time talking with Sam or goes shopping with both of them. There is no question about her love for her family. She tries to spend as much time as she can with Robert's family, but I'm afraid they get shorted a little as she is at our place more than she is at her own home! She is our daughter and we don't mind having the three of them present. I just feel sorry for Robert's parents. We have them over occasionally so they can see their son, granddaughter and daughter-in-law.

Robert and Ann have their disagreements and then make up or Ann will come to see either her mother or me for us to get them reconciled. We try hard not to take sides, but it becomes a delicate job at times.

Their greatest disagreement came one day when Ann pulled one of her goofs. They had just purchased a new vacuum sweeper and Ann used the sweeper and it started making a noise because she had sucked something into it like a marble. Ann was unaware of this and decided that she would fix it, so she got some of Robert's tools and proceeded to take the entire sweeper apart. When Robert came home from work that evening he found Ann and the baby sitting in the middle of the living room floor with sweeper parts all around them. Joan and I had neglected to tell Robert about Ann's little

The Dumpster Kid

quirk, so he was totally surprised.

"What in the world happened to the sweeper?"

Ann looked up at him with her face smudged with grease and dirt from the sweeper and said, "It was making a funny noise and I thought I could fix it, so I took it apart. Do you know that there are a lot of parts in that thing?"

Robert looked at her and reminded her, "That thing cost a lot of money! I hope you know how to put it back together again. I assume that by now you have found the trouble and can put it back together."

"Don't be angry, honey! I was only trying to save us some money!"

"Are you aware that it is still under warranty and all you had to do was call the company to come and fix it? They would have fixed it in short order and it wouldn't cost us a cent."

"I don't know anything about any old warranty, whatever that is. If you had bothered to tell me that before now, I wouldn't have had all this work to do!"

They continued to argue and the first thing I knew Ann was at our door with little Samantha and a suitcase wanting to come home. In a minute or two, Robert was also there and the sweeper parts were still scattered around their living room.

Joan and Sam got supper for all of us and while we were eating, Joan and I told Robert about some of the goofs Ann had made through the years and we all had a big laugh over them. When supper was over, the two of them saw things from a different aspect and made up.

As usual, Ann bought another sweeper and gave all the old sweeper parts to one of the people living in the Leona Farley Home.

I guess that Ann will never get over doing her little goofs.

The Dumpster Kid

Chapter Eleven

While this book is about Ann, I must by all means included a little about my second adopted daughter.

Sam was a girl that looked almost identical to Ann. They both had a small round face that made one think of a cherub when one saw them. They had deep green eyes with red hair. When they first came to us they had a sallow appearance and it would make one think that they might have something wrong with their liver. This appearance came from the poor diets they had been on. Ann was not getting the proper diet in her dumpster and Sam had the proper food placed in front of her, but she would only eat certain things and then only pick at them. We put them on vitamins and a proper diet. It wasn't too long after they came to us that they filled out and had rosy, pink cheeks. They were two happy, healthy girls. This was not due so much to our diet we gave them, but by the fact that they now knew that they had a permanent home with loving and caring parents. They had both longed for this and when they got it they responded.

Sam was eight when we got her which made her close to six years younger than Ann. Sam had not been mistreated by her foster parents and several of them wanted to adopt her, but for some unknown reason she never was.

When Sam grew to about the same height as Ann, the two of them liked to pretend that they were twins. They fixed their hair alike and dressed alike. Sam had no monthly check as did Ann, so if Ann and Sam were shopping by themselves and they bought a dress, Ann would pay for Sam's matching dress. Ann was very generous with her sister and was happy to be able to do this. They asked us to introduce them to others as our twin daughters. As long as this pleased them we accommodated them. This pleased them very much and it boosted their spirits.

One day Sam came to me and told me of a dissatisfaction she had about not having money of her own to buy things.

"I am happy you came to me about this, Sam. I have been concerned about your lack of money and I think I can cure it. I will give you a thousand dollars a month to put in your own bank account if you will do some things I don't call unreasonable."

"Before I can agree to that I have to know what you have in mind for me to do to earn it."

"I think it would be nice for you to keep your room clean, help your mother keep the house clean and in general help your mother."

"I will be happy to do those things. I would do that for nothing because I love you! I don't need to be paid for that!"

"We expect to pay you something so you will have some spending money. We will continue to pay for your clothes, your school materials and your board and keep. Those things we agreed to pay when you came to stay with us and we are very happy to pay for those things because you are our daughter!"

"I don't really need that much money for shopping money! What in the world would I do with all that money?"

"You could do like Ann and invest some of it wisely. She does and she has accumulated quite a sum by now. Of course she is going to need a lot if she goes ahead with her plans for a place for the homeless. You are going to need a lot also if you go on to college."

The Dumpster Kid

"Does Ann get that amount of money each month?"

"I don't think I ought to tell you how much she gets nor how she gets it. If you want to know more about her financial affairs, talk to her and if she wants to tell you that is fine. If she doesn't want to talk to you about her finances, then don't press her. Her finances are her business just like yours are yours. It's kind of like keeping a secret diary."

"When am I going to get my first check?"

"If you want I will write one for you now, but I want you to have your mother take you to the bank and let her show you how to keep your bank records straight. Will you do that?"

"I will,Dad. Mom can show me what I need to know."

With that conversation over, I sat down and wrote a check to Sam for her first thousand dollars. When I finished writing the check, I gave it to Sam and cautioned her not to lose it or someone else might have fun spending her money.

Sam looked at the check for a few seconds and then went hunting her mother muttering,"I'm rich! I'm rich!"

From that time on, Sam was always fixing her half of her room and cleaning it. Her mother showed her how to make her bed and how to wash clothes. Sam just couldn't find enough things to help her mother do. This made it so both girls had money to spend and save.

Sam never did goof like Ann, but she did grow into some problems as she matured.

Ann and Sam would go to the Mall with their mother and shop like they always had. The only difference now was that Sam had her own spending money if she saw something she wanted to purchase. Even then she would talk her purchase over with her mother before buying it. I had always thought that Ann was frugal, but Sam was more so. She would never buy a doll or a stuffed animal without first consulting her mother. Sam loved stuffed bears in particular and bought some to place on her bed. She noticed that Ann had some cushions on her bed with a doll leaning against them. Sam copied this with her stuffed bears. Ann had to watch what she did because Sam copied her all the time. I was certainly thankful that Ann was a very nice and pleasant young lady. This gave Sam a roll model worthy of emulating.

When Sam was stabbed by the mugger in the parking lot of the Mall, I thought Ann would go wild! She had apparently thrown the mugger to the ground several times and stepped on his throat until he was nearly dead by the time the police found him tied to "Ann's" tree.

Ann wouldn't hear to anything but staying in Sam's room to help her get better. The hospital wasn't too happy with her being in the same room, but they did make an exception for Ann.

The two of them enjoyed being twins and I honestly believe that twins cannot be any closer than these two. They loved to do the same things the biggest of which was to shop with their mother. I don't appreciate shopping so what went on as they shopped I have no knowledge.

When Sam turned eleven she began to get a growth spurt. She grew taller than Ann and this broke up the twin thing, but this didn't keep them from doing things they enjoyed together. When Ann got her drivers license, she would borrow Joan's Corvette

The Dumpster Kid

or my car and she and Sam would be off to the mall. They didn't do like other girls at the mall. They went to shop and that is all they did. When they finished shopping they came home. I was happy for them to take Joan's Corvette as I knew they couldn't get any one else in the car and perhaps get into some kind of trouble.

When Sam turned thirteen, she had grown to five foot seven and her growth spurt wasn't over yet. The doctor told us that she would probably grow to over six feet! This worried her mother and I a little because that would put her taller than most boys. I was beginning to think that we had a giant on our hands!

When she got into Junior High, she carried out her promise to Ann when Ann found out she could no longer play soccer. Sam tried out for the soccer team, but failed to make the team. Her problem was that she was growing so fast that it was making her uncoordinated. She had a hard time walking across the floor with a pair of lace up shoes because she would trip over the laces some how!

One of the coaches at school saw her and convinced her that she ought to try out for the girl's basketball team. She did and being so tall they put her in as center. She would run to her teams basket when they had the ball, get the ball and drop it into the basket. She became the basketball champion for the school. She came home one night after winning still another game for the school and reminded her sister that she couldn't make the soccer team, but she did make the basketball team and was doing her best for her there.

Ann, who was much shorter than Sam, looked up to her and said, "Thanks Sam. I knew you would do something for me. Now sit down so I can hug you and kiss your cheek." Sam laughed and sat down for Ann.

"Do you remember the time you called me shorty or something similar and I told you I might grow up to be taller than you?"

"I do remember, but I think you have overdone it a little!"

They sat and laughed. They looked like Mutt and Jeff. Sam was so much taller than Ann. Sam was so tall that we had to get her an extra long bed with three legs so all of her would be on the bed when she went to sleep. She picked out the kind of bed she wanted and we purchased it for her.

Word got out at school that everyone needed to be cautious around those two because they could kill if they were irked. Some of the doubting boys looked at them and remarked to each other that the little one couldn't hurt them but the big one might be able to. Some of the boys that knew Ann let the others know that Ann had almost killed a mugger at the mall. "The only thing that kept her from killing the mugger was that she wanted to get back to Sam and help her."

The boys looked at one another and questioned, "You mean that the little one is more dangerous than the big one."

"I wouldn't aggravate either one. They could either one put a hurtin' on you!"

"Do you think they would hurt a guy if he asked them for a date?"

"No. They would probably be flattered to be asked. Why don't you ask one of them for a date?"

"I don't trust you guys. One of you do it."

The boys all agreed that they didn't have enough nerve and that ended that.

When Ann was a junior and the prom was coming up, one of the boys did ask her to go to the prom with him. Ann accepted and the other boys stood by to watch at the

The Dumpster Kid

prom. When nothing happened, the other boys felt that they had been misled.

When Sam was fifteen and still growing, one of the coaches at the school asked Sam to try out for track. By now Sam was towering over most of the teachers and children in school. I felt a little sorry for Sam as some people began to look at her as a giant or oddity of some kind.

Sam tried out for the track team and with her long legs she could easily outrun most of the others. When she took a stride she would travel over six feet! The coach put her on the team and she broke several school records and helped the team win meets all over the state.

By now Ann had gotten married and moved out of the room she and Sam had shared for so long. It was a sad time for the two of them, Sam visited her sister often in her new home. When the baby came along, Sam was right there to help Ann. One day she told Ann in confidentiality

that it looked like she would never marry because she was so large and there wasn't any boys her size. A tear welled in Sam's eye as she said this. Ann saw this and reminded Sam that God had a mate for her somewhere. All she had to do was ask God to show him to her.

Sam felt better after that and attended church more regularly. When it came time for her junior prom, a boy almost as tall as Sam asked her to go to the prom with him. Sam was so happy with being asked that she didn't even give him a chance to say what he was going to say!

By the time Sam was a senior, the doctor told us that it looked like she had reached her growth peak and would grow no more. The doctor measured her in his office and had to have her stand next to a wall and put a mark on the wall. He then measured from the floor to the mark. She had peaked out at six feet seven and one half inches!

During her senior year at school she began to date Phil who had asked her to the junior prom. The boy was two inches shorter than Sam, but it was close enough that they made a very nice couple. Phil got a job for the summer after he finished school and then went off to college in the fall. Sam went off to college also. By now she had a nice nest egg saved and wanted to pay her own way through college. I told her I would pay for it, but she insisted on paying her way.

When she and her boyfriend finished college in three years, Her boyfriend got a good job with a high salary. He proposed to Sam and they were married. Sam settled into married life and went to see her sister and parents once in a while. When Sam had her first baby, Ann went to help her. Despite the difference in size and years, they were still very close. They were still the same two happy, healthy girls that we had started with, just grown now.

Now Joan and I had done what the Lord had set out for us and were ready to retire! I gave the business to Jay to run and put my grandson to work with him. Joan and I spend our time traveling around visiting our children and grandchildren and enjoying what few years the Lord has left for us.