

**BEYOND
TOMORROW**

BOOK V
BEYOND THOSE HILLS SERIES

**BEYOND
TOMORROW**

Vernal Lind



© 2015 by Vernal Lind. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible and are quoted by characters in the story.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-218-0 (Print)
978-1-63232-219-7 (ePub)
978-1-63232-221-0 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2015934727

CONTENTS



AN INTRODUCTION	VII
PROLOGUE	XI
CHAPTER 1	17
CHAPTER 2	27
CHAPTER 3	35
CHAPTER 4	41
CHAPTER 5	49
CHAPTER 6	59
CHAPTER 7	67
CHAPTER 8	75
CHAPTER 9	85
CHAPTER 10	97
CHAPTER 11	107
CHAPTER 12	115
CHAPTER 13	123
CHAPTER 14	131

CHAPTER 15.....	143
CHAPTER 16.....	151
CHAPTER 17.....	159
CHAPTER 18.....	167
CHAPTER 19.....	175
CHAPTER 20.....	187
CHAPTER 21.....	197
CHAPTER 22.....	207
CHAPTER 23.....	215
CHAPTER 24.....	223
CHAPTER 25.....	231
CHAPTER 26.....	239
CHAPTER 27.....	249
CHAPTER 28.....	257
CHAPTER 29.....	267
CHAPTER 30.....	273
CHAPTER 31.....	283
CHAPTER 32.....	293
CHAPTER 33.....	303
CHAPTER 34.....	313
CHAPTER 35.....	321
CHAPTER 36.....	327
EPILOGUE.....	335

AN INTRODUCTION

FROM THE AUTHOR



Dear Readers,

I want to thank you, my loyal readers, for continuing to read the saga of the Anderson family. I have met many of you, and you have become my friends.

You have taken Matthew and Ellen Anderson and their family to be your friends. You have followed the family, with its joys and sorrows, starting with the last of the Depression in 1937 as told in *BEYOND THOSE HILLS*. In *BEYOND THE STORM*, you journeyed through storms they weathered, especially the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940.

The third book, *BEYOND THE DARKNESS*, probably brought you through some of the darkest hours during the final years of World War II and the time following. James and Johnie, as well as Joe, returned home. The prayers of many were answered.

Families grow and change and come apart. Even so, *BEYOND THIS HOME* showed how the Andersons came together. The sixties brought sudden and dramatic and troubling changes, but the strong influence of family and faith and home brought them together. The family weathered those turbulent times.

One of the big changes in life has to do with growing older and facing the last part of life. I felt I wanted to continue the story and also show how members of the family dealt with this part of life. This novel picks

Beyond Tomorrow

up the story in 1985. The story will show Matthew at 85, facing the end of his life. James and the other children are confronted with retirement age and related changes.

It may be helpful to refresh your memories about the characters and where they are as you continue the story of this family.

MATTHEW, now 85, and ELLEN, a year older, face health issues and concerns about the future. They are vigorous and active but realize they are nearing the end of life. They remain involved with and concerned about family. Matthew and Ellen have left the farm and now live in town.

JAMES, the oldest son now 61 and a university professor, experiences a sudden shock. Should he retire from teaching and pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a writer? His wife RUTH still wants to continue teaching. James is estranged from his son RICHARD. The two daughters, COLEEN AND MELISSA, are married and have their own family concerns and family problems. They live close enough so that there are frequent visits and grandchildren around.

JOHNIE or PASTOR JOHN is an active and vigorous pastor who has a dream of doing missionary work. After the death of his first wife, he married CAROLYN. Johnie's three children, JANELLE, JACK, and LEAH, are all married with families. There are frequent visits between parents and children. Should Johnie leave the safety of his present home and pursue missionary work? After all, he is almost 60.

MARGARET, married to JOE NELSON, is on the original home farm. They are both as active as ever, but Joe is getting help from his son-in-law. They suffered the loss of their son, MATT or MATTHEW during the Vietnam War. That loss left deep scars. The other children and their families are nearby: DAVID, DEBORAH, JOEL, JUDITH, and MARLENE.

CAROL is married to HANK STEVENS, and they live in the Chicago area. HANK is a successful businessman. He and Carol are involved with Christian organizations and work. Earlier in her life, Carol was the rebel daughter but now has changed. Her oldest son, JEFFREY GRANT, is in business and the source of family concern and trouble. The other children, NICHOLAS and NICOLE have families and live in Illinois.

MICHAEL, the youngest and only 45, is married to ELISE and lives on the family farm. Elise is a teacher. Michael is trying to branch out and run a greenhouse/nursery and is taking some financial risks. They have four children. The youngest, an afterthought is MATTHEW or called LITTLE MATTHEW.

As often happens, the siblings fade from the scene. The exception is Matthew's older sister, VICTORIA, who is now 95. She is active and

An Introduction

still drives too fast and is involved and interested in her brother's family. The other siblings have all died. That is the sad reality of growing older. At times, Matthew misses his siblings very much.

The parents of Matthew are often mentioned. JOHN and ELIZABETH ANDERSON were a focal part of Matthew's life as well as the lives of the children. PA or JOHN died in 1940 in the first book. MA (ELIZABETH) died in the sixties when she was well into her nineties.

MARTHA, the oldest sister and a favorite, died in the sixties. Her three daughters are in California along with their families. Daughter CORRINE maintains ties with the family.

P.J. or PAUL JOHN left a mark on Matthew for he essentially stole the original farm home from him. When P.J. died, Matthew wasn't sure if he regretted the terrible things he had done. His wife RITA has also died. For a while LARRY played an important role in Matthew's life. Though a nephew he was in some ways more like a younger brother. Larry's children were also involved in the family's life.

LUCILLE, another older sister, is mentioned. She died quite young. Matthew found her death hard to accept.

MARY, Matthew's younger sister, lived on a farm nearby in the earlier novels. She suffered from TB. Her husband ED was a close friend to Matthew. The two families interacted and were close in the earlier novels. Mary and Ed spent time in California. The three children, BETH, JAKE, and IRENE, maintain contact with the family. JAKE and IRENE have their own families.

Matthew's cousin PETER ANDERSON played a small role in the family at an earlier time. GLENN ROBERTSON was Matthew's best friend who died several years ago.

And so life goes on. We see the last of one generation. We see the next generation giving way to a new generation. I am reminded of the Scripture, "The Lord's love endures *From Generation to Generation.*"

Now, my friends, I hope you will enjoy the adventures of the Anderson family as they move forward in life's journey through the late 1900s and into the twenty-first century. May you grow in faith as you see the power of God's love reflected.

May we move forward in faith.

God's richest blessings to you,
—Vernal Lind

PROLOGUE



April 1985

He didn't know what hit him. Suddenly everything went black. The next morning, James Anderson, professor of English at Riverton State University, began to awaken. He moved his head and experienced a throbbing headache.

"James, are you awake?" questioned his wife, Ruth.

He opened his eyes wider. "Where am I? I have a splitting headache."

"You're in the hospital. They found you outside the River View building. Do you remember what happened?"

James looked around at the unfamiliar room, trying to remember. "I was walking outside River View. It was very dark; I think a light was out. I'd been at a meeting and worked later than I had realized. I dropped some books and papers and stooped down to pick them up. Suddenly, something or someone hit me. Everything went blank or black."

"You have a lump on your head.

"My head aches terribly. Someone must have been out to get me."

"Dr. Foster will want to examine you again."

James sat up, straightening himself. "I feel better now, except for my aching head. What about my classes? I have classes to teach."

"Your students will have the day off."

"But, I feel okay—except for the headache. I'll manage just fine."

Beyond Tomorrow

Dr. Eric Foster, friend of the family, entered, obviously having heard James's words. "Oh no, you don't—we'll x-ray you and run a few more tests."

The next hours James was questioned, x-rayed and given a battery of tests. He returned to his room, exhausted. When it became obvious James wanted to take a nap, Ruth went back to her fifth grade classroom.

In mid-afternoon Eric Foster entered his hospital room. James awakened. "I guess I'm more tired out than I thought."

"James, I come to you both as doctor and as friend. You had a close call. If that crazy kid had hit you in a slightly different place, you would have been in the morgue rather than the hospital. You are very fortunate."

"Who was the kid?"

"I think the name was Mac or Mackenzie—something like that."

"Oh, it sounds like a student who simply quit coming to class. He seemed to have aspirations to be a great writer and teacher. He was obviously not ready for advanced English work."

"Apparently, he snapped—had some sort of breakdown. He's in custody. The person who called the police saw him running after he attacked you."

"I feel bad about the kid."

"Don't. I'm glad they caught him."

"Can I go home? Or I should say may I go home?"

"Just to be on the safe side, we're keeping you one more night for observation. I don't see any problems. But as I said, I'm coming to you as both doctor and friend. We don't want to take any chances."

James wondered what was coming.

"This little incident may have saved your life. Your blood pressure is on the high side. The blood tests reveal you may have some other problems. However, I would say you are exhausted and run down—perhaps you are actually sleep deprived. You were unconscious longer because you simply needed more sleep."

"I have been working hard."

"Being hit on the head may have been a sign—even a warning. You have not been taking care of yourself. You have to slow down. You're stressed out."

"Thank you, I'm afraid you're right."

When his friend and doctor left, James reflected; life has been downright hectic. Full load of classes. Chairman duties. Busy with friends. Involved with church. Not enough time for family . . .

Prologue

“But,” he said aloud, “I’ve often neglected my family. My own son has nothing to do with me. Mom and Dad are old, and I need to take time for them.”

He continued to muse. What about my dreams? Before I die, I have to see whether I can really write. Could I write that novel I’ve always wanted to write?

A disturbing thought entered his mind and he spoke the thought. “The end of my life could come sooner than I think. I’m almost sixty-one, but I’ve been to funerals of a number of younger people.”

The next morning, on the way home, he announced to Ruth, “Being hit on the head made me do some thinking. I may need to make some big changes.”

Ruth smiled, knowingly. “I think it’s about time.”



Matthew Anderson turned off the garden tiller. He surveyed the freshly tilled rich soil that would become his daughter’s garden. He felt the same satisfaction as he experienced each year when he had plowed the fields of his farm. The black rich soil held so much promise.

For a moment a shadow darkened Matthew’s thoughts. His son James appeared in his mind. Was something wrong?

As suddenly as the darkness appeared, it disappeared.

He walked over to the familiar oak tree, where he loved to stop and think. The green buds had not yet turned into leaves. Nature all around was coming to life. The green-gold leaves of the ash trees reminded him of beginnings everywhere. Soon, plants and small grain would usher in another season. The whole earth seemed alive with music that honored its Creator.

All of a sudden, Matthew felt a strange sensation—as if he were swept back in time. People who had died long ago were around him.

Pa appeared as he had during his prime years. “Son, you’ve worked hard. You’ve done a good job plowing.”

Ma stood beside him. “You’ve always been a good son, the one child we could always depend on.”

Matthew mentally shed his eighty-five years and felt young again. Martha, his oldest sister, walked into the scene along with three little girls. Victoria, tall and dark and business-like, followed, carrying a brief case. Lucille, a younger gentler version of Martha, greeted him, and then, of course, Mary, his younger sister.

Beyond Tomorrow

It was strange but P.J., the brother who almost destroyed him, was not present. P.J. had cast that dark shadow over so much of his life. Then, P.J. appeared in the distance but soon disappeared. An indescribable warmth filled his whole being. The physical aches and pains dissolved. Matthew became a young man once more. All the world was filled with beauty and hope and dreams of a better life.

The pastor's words filled his mind. "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." "I wonder if I'm not surrounded by these witnesses, encouraging me to go on. To be strong. To keep on believing and moving on."

A gentle breeze and some stiff muscles brought him back to the present. Matthew had the habit of talking aloud when he prayed or thought about life. "Pa, you've been gone so many years, yet I think of you every time I face a crisis. And, Ma, you enriched our family life for so many years. It still seems you should walk out of this little house.

"Martha, I miss you more than I can say. You were like a second mother. In a sense, you were my favorite though each sister played a different role. Oh, Victoria, I'm so glad you're still around. Even at ninety-five, you are active. Not even your driving has slowed down. I think maybe you shouldn't be driving.

"P.J., you were good to me at times, but you stole the home farm. I've forgiven you, and I've tried to understand. But how could you do this to your family? Lucille, you've been gone so many years. I have questions to ask God. 'Why did you create such a wonderful girl and let her have that heart condition? Why did you take her from us when she was so young?' It wasn't fair.

"And, Mary, we were so close together we could have been twins. Why did you have to suffer with TB and then cancer? Why am I still here, and you have been taken?"

Next, Ellen walked into his life. The two had shared more than sixty-two years of married life. What would he have done without this woman? She was more precious than life itself.

Time seemed to stand still. Then, his five children walked before him. He wished he could bring back the time when they were all together. How simple life was. He saw each of the five as they were in their youth.

A voice broke into his awareness. "Dad, thanks for tilling the garden. It looks great." Matthew heard the words but hesitated to leave his reverie.

"Dad," his daughter Margaret said, "you're miles away. What's so interesting?"

Prologue

"I was just thinking back to earlier times. Your grandparents. Your Aunt Martha. And I thought back to when you kids were young."

"Those were good times. We've had a good life."

"God is good."

"And, Dad, we're going to celebrate that life. Your birthday may be in a few days, but we'll celebrate in June when the whole family can come home."

"I don't want you to fuss. I really don't want any big birthday bash."

"You're outvoted."

"I like people, but I don't like big crowds."

"It'll be family. James is planning to be around this summer, and Johnie's taking a whole month off. And Carol and Hank are coming from Chicago for several weeks. And, of course, you have Michael and me around all the time."

"Just keep it to family."

"You do have cousins and nieces and nephews and all the grandchildren. And don't forget all our church friends and community friends."

Matthew grunted. "At least you didn't try to surprise me."

"Dad, what were you really thinking about?"

Matthew hesitated as he looked down tenderly at his daughter. Next to his wife Ellen, she was the ideal woman.

"I've been thinking of that 'cloud of witnesses' the pastor mentioned on Sunday. For a moment as I stood by the oak tree, I couldn't help thinking that I was surrounded by Pa and Ma and many others. They were standing there in front of me."

"It must have been wonderful to have them close to you."

"I think the Lord gave me a foretaste of Heaven."

"Just as the song says, 'a foretaste of glory divine.'"

Matthew stooped down and kissed his daughter.

Margaret looked up and smiled. "Dad, we've lost loved ones, but think of all the family members we have right here on earth. We must be thankful for our past blessings, but we can enjoy one another while we are together. We must appreciate one another right now."

"That's something your mother could have said."

"Or you, Dad. Let's plan and look forward to a great homecoming."

"Yes, my dear."

Matthew thought of the June homecoming, but at the same time he couldn't help thinking of an entirely different kind of homecoming.

CHAPTER 1



May 1985

Matthew set down his cup of coffee and gazed out the window of their recently-built home in town. It was James who occupied his thoughts—especially after last month’s episode. He had a sense that something might be wrong—or perhaps his son was facing some big challenge.

“More coffee?” asked Ellen, his wife of more than sixty years. “You’re looking out the window, but you’re miles away.”

“You know, Dear, I miss living on the farm. There was room to walk in the woods or do something. But I’m thinking about James.”

“I think Michael might be a bigger concern. He’s spending too much on machinery and getting that garden and nursery going.”

Matthew sighed. “I’m afraid he’s gone into debt a little too deep, but what happens will happen. But I have this feeling that James is facing a difficult decision.”

“I was thinking that, too. Last time he was home, he talked about being fed up with some of the university politics. He talked about quitting. That’s not like him.”

“At least in farming, you don’t have to deal with difficult people—not usually.”

Beyond Tomorrow

“I think they’ll be home this weekend. James and Ruth have certainly built an extravagant lake home.”

“That’s the new generation. They want plenty of room for their kids and grandkids. And Johnie and Carolyn will be with James for a while this summer.”

Ellen interrupted the conversation. “Matthew, let’s have our morning devotions. I’ll read Scripture, and you pray.”

Ellen read the words, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me”

Matthew prayed for each of the children—especially James.



Dr. James Anderson awakened abruptly. What had happened could best be described as a nightmare. However, the images did not fade as nightmares usually do. He kept remembering and replaying those dreadful scenes.

First, he re-experienced that blow on the head outside the River View building. He felt the blackness come over him as if he were surrounded by evil forces.

The darkness around him dissipated and Mark Goodman, his friend from the history department, kept calling. “James, help me. I’m slipping—I’m going down. I can’t breathe. I’m sinking fast.”

Hundreds of people moved through the nightmare. People from his distant past, his childhood, and other times in his life kept walking into his presence. There was Grandma, who died twenty years ago, and then Grandpa, who must have died over forty years ago. The people had all seemed so very real. Everyone was so very troubled. In the background Ruth’s voice called.

James sat up, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

Ruth appeared, fully dressed for a day of teaching fifth graders. “James, it’s later than you think.”

James slowly got out of bed. “I had one of those dreams—a nightmare.”

“It’s probably the result of that hit on the head.” She paused and added, “Coffee’s all set. And I have French toast almost ready.”

“I’m hurrying.”

James couldn’t help wondering about the nightmare. Could it be a sign or warning of things to come?

“I laid out your shirt on the dresser. Don’t be too long, I have to get to school.”

Chapter 1

James quickly shaved and washed up. Rarely did he sleep beyond the alarm. In minutes he was in the kitchen ready to eat his breakfast.

Ruth placed the French toast before him. "I have to get going. When will you be home tonight?"

"I plan to leave the university early and visit Mark. I'll give you a call."

Ruth kissed him on the cheek and hurried out.

James finished his French toast and took his cup of coffee, and walked out on the deck. The sweet smells of the apple blossoms and the sounds of birds singing seemed to welcome him to the newness of spring. The world beckoned him to leave the ordinary and go somewhere. But at the same time he loved his teaching—and he had his obligations.

"The mind and spirit are fragile things," he said aloud. "They must be nourished or they wither away and die."



Last fall James Anderson's job at the university changed . . . After many years as chairman of the English department, he decided to delegate more of the responsibilities to the assistant department head. At the same time he heard rumors of eliminating or downgrading department heads and having division chairpersons. He continued to teach his favorite advanced writing classes along with the survey series of American literature courses. Freshman English became part of his teaching load, and that gave him a taste of the more average university student. This experience was his touch with reality.

The Friday afternoon English 132 class did indeed bring James back to reality. The assigned compositions he returned to his students showed little improvement from the woefully inadequate writing that had come in a month ago.

For the first time in more than thirty-five years of teaching, he thought seriously about ending his career as teacher and professor. These years had been good years. He loved his advanced writing classes and his survey of American literature. However, the freshman English class made him wonder about his purpose in teaching.

His mind traveled back to days on the farm. How simple that life was! Good, honest, hard-working people who lived by the Golden Rule and brought up their children "in the fear and admonition of the Lord." The world and the university had somehow gone astray.

"I'm sounding like an old grouch," he said to himself as he got out of the hospital elevator. He walked down the hall to Mark's room.

Beyond Tomorrow

He knocked on the half-open door and entered. Marcia Goodman, who had been sitting beside Mark's bed, stood up. "Come in, James. I'm going to step out and let you two men visit. I'm sure you have much to talk about."

"I guess you're used to the way we talk on and on."

Marcia Goodman gave James a warm hug. "Try to keep him calm," she said as she left.

James greeted his friend. "I see, Mark, you're looking much better today."

"I'm not ready to check out yet. I have some more classes to teach." Mark clenched his fist, showing some grim determination.

"Perhaps I do, too. Though on a Friday afternoon after freshman English, I sometimes wonder."

Mark sat up in his hospital bed. "You haven't heard what they did to me."

James sensed anger behind those words. Mark, a year older than James, had long held strong political opinions and had some definite biases about history. This colleague could often become quite agitated about a rather ordinary situation. It may have been this liveliness that attracted James to this man—and what helped cement their friendship. James, by nature more quiet and reserved, had a way of calming down his friend.

James hated the indefinite *they*. "Who are they?"

"The administration. The new head of the history and social studies department."

James wasn't sure he wanted to hear what was coming next. "Stay calm. Getting excited can't be good for you."

Mark clenched his fist even more tightly. "Yesterday was an eye-opener. The history department schedule for next year came out."

"I haven't seen the one for the English department. The administration and I usually work things out. I guess I assume I'll be having the same load. However, I could decide to retire."

"Don't be too sure about your same classes." Mark's voice rose in pitch and intensity. "Those jerks took away all my upper level classes. All I'm left with freshman-sophomore level courses."

"How could they do that? You've been department head for years—until you stepped down last year. You deserve some special consideration."

"Don't fool yourself. Those administration guys are out to get rid of us old guys. The young ones come a lot cheaper."

Chapter 1

“You’re older than I. You can resign. You can retire.”

“I’ll decide when I’m ready to retire. I don’t want someone telling me what to do. When I’m ready, I’ll quit. I’m staying at the university, and I’ll show both the students and the administration a thing or two.”

James couldn’t help smiling. “I can see you still have that fight in you. They have a formidable opponent. You should keep life interesting.”

During the next hour, the two men talked about the university politics and administration politics. They both shared that passion for teaching, a passion that had cemented their friendship years ago.

James began to notice tiredness in Mark.

A nurse entered with his medication. As he finished taking the medication, the nurse added, “Mr. Goodman, I think you need to rest.”

Mark grunted. “I’ll decide that. I’m not used to being ordered around by nurses or my wife or anybody else.”

The nurse smiled and left.

“Mark, I think she’s right.”

Mark seemed to relax as he lay back. “You know there are some things I’d like to do. You’ve traveled a bit, but I haven’t.”

“I’m going to Sweden this summer, and my father’s coming with me. I’ve made some connections with some distant cousins. I’m excited about the trip.”

“I’ve been so busy teaching. And I’ve been picking up those extra summer classes. That should be good for the retirement check.”

“I’ve avoided those summer duties the last five years. I’ve been trying to move along with my writing. I’ve always come away not quite accomplishing what I hoped.”

Mark had that far-away look in his eyes. “You know, James, you have writing and gardening and music as hobbies. Teaching has been my whole life.”

“Most retirees say there’s life after teaching.”

“I’m scared of what’s ahead. I don’t know what I’ll do.”

“What have you always wanted to do?”

Mark thought a moment. “As a boy and young man, I loved to fish. And I’d go hiking in the woods. I used to sit on a tree stump or lie in a hammock and dream for hours.”

“Now’s your chance.”

Mark’s facial features seemed to tighten. “But I’m not going to let them do what they’re doing to me. Not without a fight!”

“Are you sure you want to get into a fight with the administration?”

Beyond Tomorrow

“I will if I have to.” Mark’s statement put a closing punctuation mark on that part of the discussion.

“Let’s talk about something more pleasant. You still like to golf, don’t you?”

“I haven’t done much, but I’d like that.”

“I’ll get out my old clubs, and we’ll go out on the course together.”

Mark smiled. “We used to golf quite frequently in our younger days. And we’d have such good discussions.”

The talk of the two men moved on to those earlier pleasant times. They reminisced about the days when the university had fewer students enrolled. Somehow with bigness, the place had become more impersonal—people became numbers. Both professor and other staff and students seemed less important—except as a number or fulfilling a role.

Their talk continued, except for a few interruptions. James realized how late it was when the evening meal was brought in.

“I didn’t realize how long we had talked,” said James. “I need to get home for dinner.”

“Thanks, my old friend. I don’t know when I’ve enjoyed a visit as much.”

“We’ll have to make time for more of this.”

“I’m surprised Marcia isn’t back. She’s been hovering over me like a mother hen. I’m not giving up like some weak chicken. No one’s going to call me some weak old man.”

James laughed. “I hardly think that applies to Mark Goodman.”

With those words he left, basking in the warmth of a friendship that had spanned most of his professional life. It was hard to think of his university life without Mark Goodman.



Ruth breathed a sigh of relief as the last of the lively fifth graders cleared the hallway. Friday was always welcome, but this Friday seemed more than welcome. The school year was winding down, and she was ready for summer vacation.

Ruth began to straighten her desk. Her lesson plans were all set for next week. This weekend she would not take home any papers. Hopefully, she and James would drive to the new lake home that they had built a few miles from Lake View. She looked forward to the times she could get away from the city.

Chapter 1

“Ruth, do you have time for a cup of coffee?” The voice belonged to Marcia Goodman.

“Let’s make time.” Ruth couldn’t disguise her surprise, for Marcia was not one of the university wives who had sought her friendship. Marcia Goodman might be described as one of the stay-at-home university wives who was intent on climbing the social ladder. She was busy in volunteer work and entertained the elite of the university and of the city of Riverton.

“You’re surprised to see me.”

“Yes, I guess so. How’s Mark doing?”

Marcia sat down in a front desk. “He’s better today. But the doctor said there may have been serious heart damage. I’m afraid what that might mean.”

Ruth walked over to the desk and placed her hand on Marcia’s shoulder. “Both James and I are praying for him.”

Marcia looked away. “I knew you would. I haven’t been much of a praying woman—and my husband hasn’t been either. I’ve been surprised our husbands are such good friends. Your husband is serious about his Christian faith. Mark makes it to church on Christmas and Easter and only a few other times.”

“The men are both dedicated professors and scholars. They love growing in knowledge.”

Ruth could tell that Marcia was on the verge of tears.

Marcia wiped her eyes. “I’m so afraid. I don’t know what I’d do if something happens to Mark. My whole life is bound to him and to the university.”

“You know, Marcia, there is life beyond this place. Both our husbands will retire soon—at least in a few years.”

“Mark has all this energy. He puts that energy into his teaching. And he becomes angry at people and situations that aren’t right or fair. Now he’s been saddled with lower level history courses, and he is very angry.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know about that.”

“Mark just found out. That realization might have been what brought on his heart attack. He’s determined to go back to the university as soon as possible. He thinks he can finish out the year, and he’s determined to fight.”

Ruth could see the problems ahead. “Let’s go over to my place. We can have coffee, and I made some chocolate chip cookies yesterday.”

The two women drove the few blocks to the James Anderson home. During the next hour Ruth learned more about Marcia than she had known in all the years their husbands had been friends and colleagues.

Beyond Tomorrow

After a break in coffee and conversation, Ruth commented. "It's strange I haven't heard from James. He's usually home at this time, or otherwise he calls."

"The two men are probably still talking away. I should be getting back to the hospital."

"Why don't you have supper with us?"

"Thank you, I shouldn't have been away this long, but I knew James was with him. I guess I needed to talk. It's been very kind of you to listen."

"Glad to. We have so much in common at this stage of our lives. Stop by or call me whenever you want to talk."

"Thank you. That means more than I can say."

With those words Marcia hurried away. Ruth realized she had received a private glimpse into another woman's fears. She couldn't help wondering about James and about their plans for the future.

As James and Ruth finished supper a few hours later, James appeared to be in a more reflective state of mind. Though James was often reflective, this time he seemed more serious.

"Is something wrong?" asked Ruth. "You haven't seemed to be yourself."

"I can't help thinking about Mark. And I can't help thinking about me and retirement."

"Are you ready?" Ruth paused and went on. "Marcia talked at length with me. I think she and Mark are both afraid of his retirement. Or she's afraid if something should happen to Mark."

"I'm concerned about Mark. He's angry about his teaching assignment. He can handle hard work and decision making, but I don't think he's up to a fight with his department head and the administration of the university. I'm afraid it could kill him."

"I understand."

"In a way, I've always looked up to Mark as someone strong and dynamic. I haven't realized that underneath that bravado, he's like a frightened kid. People often hide their fears very effectively—even from their best friends."

Ruth looked into her husband's eyes. "James, are you afraid of change? Of retiring? I wonder if you aren't ready to retire."

James avoided her gaze. "Yes, I believe you're right. I am somewhat fearful of leaving my job—of facing the unknown. On the other hand, I want to quit while I'm ahead. Today after that freshman English class, I thought more seriously than ever about throwing in the towel, as they say. I think I may be ready."

Chapter 1

“I’d like to teach one more year since I don’t have quite as many years as you do. But you could quit, and I could keep going another year.”

“If I’m ever going to take this writing business seriously—my dream, I’m going to have to act soon.”

“I know you, darling, you can’t give up your dream.”

“I’ve been thinking about a line from Tennyson. ‘To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.’ I need to move ahead in new ways.”

“It’s almost time, isn’t it?”

As James gathered the dishes and she began to wash them, Ruth knew that changes lay ahead. Life would lead her and James down some new paths. Where those paths would lead, she did not know.