HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

David J. Keyser, PhD
This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places, or incidents are the products of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to any event, locale or any person or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.
Dedication

To the millions of unborn human beings that have been killed. May the human race soon see the wrongness of these actions and take steps so that it cannot happen again.
CONTENTS

1  Lincoln Harper        7
2  Marta Harper         13
3  Msgr. Frank O'Dwyer  23
4  Sr. Mary Margaret    33
5  The Chapel           45
6  Rescue              51
7  Zoë                 57
8  A Place To Talk      65
9  Joanna              71
10 Wedding             87
11 Carlos              95
12 Irma               103
13 Renee              115
14 Romance            125
15 Adoption            133
16 Dora               143
17 Ricky              153
18 Panic              163
19 Betrayal           167
20 Trial              175
21 Awakening          185
22 Leisel             195
23 Greta              199
24 Four Kids          207
25 Sarah              217
Foreword

One man loses his beloved wife on the abortion table. He is not a man of faith and does not claim to be. While on one of his frequent drunks he hears a faint cry coming from a nearby alley. He walks toward the sound of the cry and finds a tiny naked baby dying in a garbage can near an abortion clinic. He makes a decision, a decision that will change his life. Later, he is joined by his second wife and with the help of a Priest, they develop a placement system for these children. He follows the lives of the children, some of whom are marred for life, to find out what terrific human beings they are and how each of them is developing in their own abilities.
Lincoln Harper was running late. He had expected to be out of Salzburg by noon and back to his base in Munich before supper. He had only one stop to make on the way and that man usually just repeated his last order by asking Linc what he got last time and telling him to order that again. Why he didn’t put it on auto renewal Linc did not understand, just a control freak he guessed; so Linc just did as he was told. He did get the commissions, so he was happy. Linc sold high tech aeronautical equipment. To the uneducated not only were Linc’s parts unrecognizable but the parts that they went into were just as unrecognizable. Eventually they all made the electronics of an airplane or were used in airport equipment. As a graduate engineer, which was required for the job, Linc made a good living with very little actual work and he liked driving all over Europe to do it.

Linc was born in Cleveland; he worked in the states for twelve years after college and the military then landed this sales job in Germany after his first wife died. He liked selling more than engineering and often thought that he was in the perfect job for him. He went to language school for six months before he came to Germany and he was evidently a natural for languages because now he could get by in German and French and Italian although most all of the engineering world spoke
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

English first, then German. He bought a new car every other year and enjoyed every one of them. Leasing was no good because of the high mileage but he always got a good price for the old one because he kept it well.

The primary thing that made Linc late most of the time was his new job, his divine chore, as he called it. Linc had been selling electrical parts in Europe for sixteen years and at the new job for almost half that time. So on this particular night Linc was making time. He caught the one customer he had to see just before the man left the plant; so he reordered in an instant. Linc shook his hand and was off. It was a clear night and the moon was full. Linc put on some good music and took a swig from his little silver plated flask of whiskey he kept in the glove box of the Audi. Linc considered how amazing it was that the Audi held the road. He liked driving fast. As he traveled, he remembered his first wife and how he still loved her. And even now he still wanted her. But she was gone, and he had never quite accepted that fact. Deep inside he felt that now these feelings were wrong. He pulled the wheel sharply as the car threatened to leave the road but Linc had a lot of confidence in his driving and in the car. He took another swig and went back to his day dreaming. He never knew what hit him.

Linc came to for a short time in a Munich hospital. He realized what he had done but his leg and head hurt more than he thought possible. He shouted for relief and they shot him full of something. Just as he went out, he heard a male voice shouting in German that he must not get that medicine now. Too late. From then on Linc had
no awareness of time. His mind rushed from memory to memory and everything was crystal clear to him.

Linc could hear them talking. It seemed that they were in the distance, but he could make out every word clearly although he could not speak to answer. He knew it was not a dream. He remembered the Audi leaving the road but he couldn’t tell if his consciousness problem was the result of his injuries or the result of some drug that they had given him. No matter. The effect was still the same.

“What do you think?” a woman asked.
“What about what?” a man responded.
“Do you believe that the fact that Linc had a baby brother who was stillborn has motivated him to do this work?”
“I didn’t know he had a baby brother who was stillborn,” the man said.
“I would have thought he would have told you,” she said.
“He never mentioned it.”
“He says his parents talked about it a lot. Sometimes he even felt guilty as a child, as if it was somehow his fault. So, anyway, what do you think?”
There was a silence while the man thought about it. “No. I really don’t think so,” he said.
“I don’t mean to rule God out entirely. I mean, perhaps God used Linc’s memory of that event to inspire him to do this work. It could all work together, you know,” she said.
“I am aware of such things,” the man responded.
There was quiet for a while. Perhaps the woman had overstepped her bounds. The man noticed her nervousness. He was, after all, more Linc’s friend than hers.

“Knowing Linc and something about such things, here is what I believe,” he said. “Even if Linc had never had a baby brother who was stillborn, I believe that he would still be doing this work.”

“Yes, you are probably right,” she said.

The clarity of the whole thing in Linc’s present position was amazing to him. It was like a flawless color film. Every detail from his childhood was as clear as what he had heard in the room, only with the past there were also pictures. The birth took place at home with both a midwife and a doctor in attendance. That was the way his parents were. His father wanted a home birth and they had used this midwife before. But this time his mother had also insisted on a doctor being present as well. Linc was looking on through a crack on the hinge side of the door to the next room. His parents were unaware of this. They thought that Linc was far too young to watch such a thing. It was obvious to him that his mother was in a lot of pain. The doctor picked up the baby and gave it a hearty slap. Linc winced. There was not a sound. The baby hung lifeless. The doctor quickly put the baby on a table nearby and hovered over it for what seemed to be a long time. Then he wrapped it in a blanket covering the head as well.

“I’m so sorry, Mrs. Harper,” the doctor said, “your baby is dead.”
His mother started to cry while the doctor tried to calm her. Soon he gave her an injection for what he called ‘her own good.’ Linc’s father stoically left the room in silence. In Linc’s young mind it just seemed like there shouldn’t ever be such a thing as a dead baby. Linc was still fully aware that he was hearing those around him even though he was unable to respond; he couldn’t talk; he couldn’t seem to wake up. He struggled to communicate.

“Listen,” the woman said, “I thought I heard him speak.”

“Maybe he’s going to come around,” the man said. Then there was silence and Linc slipped into a deep coma.

Linc knew that he wasn’t really awake. He had heard of people’s whole lives passing before them as they were dying. When he started remembering, he thought that he was a goner but then the memories went on and on with perfect clarity.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
Marta Schein was the proverbial small blonde. She stood 5’3” with naturally curly blonde hair and luminous blue eyes. She had what is called a very nice figure, nothing too extreme. She was a matter-of-fact sort of girl. The simple truth of the matter was that she loved Lincoln Harper. She loved him first and before anyone or anything else, and that was the end of it. She had loved him since their two school districts merged and his group joined hers at the beginning of her tenth grade and Linc’s eleventh. She thought that Linc was dreamy. He stood 5’10”, was slim and had dusty blond hair. She made sure that he saw her. She got in his way. He didn’t know what love was and he was having too much fun spreading himself around.

At first he just seemed mildly annoyed but then he started to talk to her. That was all she needed. She stared shamelessly at him in the one class they had together. When her girlfriends confronted her about it, she simply said she didn’t care. If he was at a dance with another girl, Marta made eyes at him. She had no shame where Linc was concerned. Marta was not one to write sonnets or get mushy about it. It was simple to her. She loved Linc and she believed that sooner or later she would have him. She knew that she would probably always love him more than he loved her but that was all right as well. Her aunt had told her that it was always like that in a
marriage; one always loved more than the other. Linc changed girlfriends about every four months in those days. Sometimes he forgot who he had ‘gone’ with. Marta forgot nothing. She was the constant in Linc’s life. Linc wasn’t totally unappreciative of this. He was beginning to catch on. Gradually after they were finally together, Linc even managed to do something romantic from time to time like bringing her flowers unexpectedly. They had a traditional small town wedding and Marta sealed her wedding dress in a drawer where it would stay from then on. Linc was a fairly attentive husband but for him ‘women’s matters’ were best left to the women. Marta consulted her aunt who had raised her and occasionally Linc’s mother. Things were easy.

It wasn’t too difficult for a man like Linc Harper to do his rounds and sell the stuff and still have enough energy left to drink and carouse heavily. After Marta died, the hollow place inside seemed so big that he desperately wanted to fill it with something. Alcohol and women seemed to fill the bill. It was not exactly that they filled that enormous dark empty place inside him, most of the time that place seemed to be much bigger than Linc himself. But they did distract him enough that he could go on. He remembered wondering one day how something so big could fit inside of a mere human being. It seemed that this dark hole would swallow him up. Linc thought that would be fine, then he would feel like he did not really exist anymore. But the real pain of it all was that it did not swallow him up. People told him that time would help. He guessed that he believed that but it was still no comfort for him where he found himself now.
She was gone. She no longer existed. She had been his life and it had all come upon him so quickly. Why it wasn’t even something ‘normal’ that got her; not even a respectable case of cancer. She merely bled to death at the hands of a careless medic.

When Marta first told Linc that she was pregnant, it didn’t rock him very hard.

“I thought you were still on the pill?” he remembered asking.

“Well, I was. I am, I mean. But I was just a few short the last cycle and since I’ve been on them so long, I didn’t think it would make any difference. I guess it did.”

They had been married nine years and they had slept together for two years before that. Eleven years and the pill had never let them down.

Marta didn’t pull the typical stuff that most women pull when they find themselves unexpectedly pregnant. She didn’t ask Linc repeatedly if he was excited about the baby or even if it was all right. Linc noticed this. That was his girl. No drama queen there. So it just sort of went on. They both realized that when the time came, there would be a baby in the house but neither of them got busy preparing a nursery or anything.

One morning at breakfast when Linc was to leave for about four days on a selling trip, Marta asked him, “Linc?”

“Humm.” He barely looked up from his paper and took another sip of coffee.

“Would you. . . would you, I mean,” Marta stumbled.
“Spit it out, Babe,” Linc insisted. This time he did put down the paper.

“This baby. If I, well, got rid of it while you’re gone, would that upset you much?” she asked.

Linc stared at her for a few seconds. Her expression was sincere and did not look pained in any way. “No. It’s really up to you, honey,” he said.

She nodded and picked up her coffee. He went back to his paper.

Linc left that Monday morning. He called her on Tuesday and Wednesday. Her appointment was on Thursday. When he called her on Thursday, no one answered. That was a very busy day for Linc, firming up orders and such. So he let it slide since he was going to leave early in the morning, Friday, for home.

When he first arrived at the apartment, he still was not concerned. Marta had her work and even though she usually knocked off early on Friday, sometimes she stayed to finish a project.

By seven he was hungry and getting grouchier by the minute. He called her office and got the recording. He started pacing. Then there was a knock on the door. She must have forgotten her key; she had done that before.

“Lincoln, oh Lincoln,” were the only words out of Peggy Carter’s mouth when he opened the door. Then she hugged him. Peggy, if not Marta’s very best friend, was one of three that Marta held very high. After the hug she pulled back to look Linc in the eye. Then he started to panic. His face showed it.

“Oh, my god, you didn’t know,” Peggy said softly. Linc was still silent. “Linc, it was so fast; it surprised us all so.”
Linc started to feel faint as he backed into the sofa and sat down. Peggy came right along side and sat next to him.

“How?” he managed to ask.

“The abortion. Jonnie went with her and waited in the waiting room. After a while she heard a flurry of activity in the back. With the words she managed to hear, things like, ‘hurry’, or ‘we’re losing her’, she pushed her way to the back. There was blood, lots of blood and they were frantically looking for a vein in her arm to insert an I.V. Too late. There was no pulse. They shocked her but she didn’t come back. The whole staff was surprised and panicky. The doctor left the clinic. Jonnie heard his car start in the alley and went to the nearest window to see him rush off. The nurses gave instructions to the aides to clean up the blood and the, er, baby and get Marta’s body ready for transport. They told Jonnie, sometimes this happens.”

“Sometimes this happens,” Linc shouted. His anger was really rising now. “Sometimes? Why, they should have had an I.V. in place before they started.”

“That’s what Jonnie thought. But they didn’t.”

“I’ll sue them for everything they have,” Linc shouted as he started to pace.

“I think you should,” Peggy agreed. She stayed for a while, tried to get Linc to eat. He wouldn’t. Then she left.

Linc was tormented. ‘How?’ He asked himself so many times. ‘Why?’ These things are routine. They do them all the time. Then the self incrimination began. If only he had shown some interest in the baby, she wouldn’t have done this. Having a kid wouldn’t have
been all that bad. At least he would still have Marta. He took all the guilt upon himself. He even wondered if the baby would have been a boy or a girl. At the funeral he asked Jonnie if she knew.

“I saw it,” Jonnie said. “It was a girl.” She probably would have been as pretty as your Marta.

“You saw it, …her?” Linc asked. Jonnie nodded.

“You could tell that much that far along?” Linc asked.

“It had been 14 weeks,” Jonnie said.

Linc thought that there must be a lot about this that he didn’t know. He made a mental note to follow up on it, read something maybe. But after the funeral he just lost himself in booze and women, faceless often even nameless women, anyone who could satisfy him although he never was. None of them was Marta. Marta. Marta.

Linc jumped at the chance for the transfer to Europe. He thought that the new environment might help him start again in life. There were several drunken parties put on by his buddies to say goodbye but Linc knew that these men would hold a party if the moon came up. One woman named Carole seemed particularly disappointed but Linc ran from her just as fast as he could. One of his buddies wrote him later that she was heart-broken. Linc didn’t remember promising her anything.

When Linc went on a weekend binge, there was lots that he couldn’t remember. He got used to this. But there was one weekend that he never forgot. He was making his rounds of the bars and pubs in Stuttgart,
Germany. He had sense enough to park his car and walk. Somehow he always ended up back at his favorite hotel sometime before dawn. The night clerk had told him in the morning more than once that he had helped him to his room and even took his shoes off on more than one occasion. On this particular night as he was moving from one of his favorite haunts to another, he passed a familiar place. He had driven by the place several times wanting to go in and give those people a ‘piece of his mind’ but he had never followed through. It was a clinic like the one in the States where Marta had died. In his stupor he looked in a few of the front windows. He even gave the front door a try. Everything was closed up tight. He glanced at his watch and thought it said two A.M. Linc noticed the alley that ran down beside the clinic and followed it to the back. Sober he would not have done this but in his present condition it didn’t have to make sense. In the back there was a solitary light protruding from the rear of the building casting a dim yellow glow over the area. The clinic was back to back with another business building and the other side of the alley was a solid continuous wall. There were a half dozen garbage cans sitting there. Four of them had lids perched on top of the contents. The other two lids were on the ground.

Linc just stood there for a while leaning against the wall. He became aware that his shirt was out again and proceeded to tuck it in, who knows why. Then he stopped. He thought he heard something. A muffled cry. He opened the first can he came to and was horrified. It was full of the tiny bodies of babies, some of them dismembered and some of them perfectly whole with tiny fingers and toes. They were all covered with blood. Their
own blood, each other’s blood, some mother’s blood, who knew. Linc felt his stomach wretch and most of the peanuts and pretzels that he had consumed that night came up in a hurry. He did not throw up in the can but rather on the ground. Somehow it did not seem right to him to throw up in the can. Again that noise. That muffled whimpering. It dawned on him that one of them was still alive. Linc moved from can to can. He knocked off the lid that was perched on one can. It was the same gory and horrible sight. But something moved. He saw a tiny arm on the second layer down move and then he heard the whimpering again. Gingerly he moved the two bodies on top aside. He shook the blood off his fingers. When he saw the little girl plainly, he could do nothing else but pick her up. He struggled out of his coat passing the infant from hand to hand and wrapped her in the coat. He was now stone cold sober. What to do now? He thought that a few months ago this could have been his daughter. No, this one was practically ready to be born. Never mind, it was still a tiny baby and he had to find someone to take her.

He cleaned up the baby with some drinking water. He noticed an hour glass shaped birthmark just above the child’s right knee on the outside. He saw an older woman waiting for a bus on a sidewalk bench. He sat down next to the woman and the baby was crying softly. This got the old woman’s attention. Linc asked her if she wanted to hold it. She did. She took the child very lovingly and held it for several minutes. She commented that the child was hungry and too young to be away from her mother. Linc agreed. The old woman looked up as the bus
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

approached and started to hand the child back to Linc. In a sudden decision Linc waved the bus past. The woman looked at him questioningly. Linc explained quickly where he had gotten the child and told her that the child had not eaten since she was ‘born.’ The old woman looked shocked and overcome with pity for the child. Linc asked her if she would keep it or find someone who would. Linc suggested that they exchange addresses and phone numbers. She was agreeable. Her name was Gilda. Linc called her the next week with another baby. She had a friend that wanted it. This went on through several children. Looking back Linc wondered at how naïve they both had been. It could have gone wrong in any number of ways, but it didn’t. This made Linc suspect the involvement of a higher power but he didn’t want to pursue that line of thought.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
Before long Linc started going with a feeling of purpose. One night he was in a comparatively strange city; so he didn’t even know where the clinics were located. He looked them up in the phone book and picked the three biggest ads. He wrote down the name of the clinics and the addresses. He dressed casually and packed a small valise. He put an oversize hotel bath towel and a small towel in the valise after first checking that there were no identifying marks on the towels. The small one had a small stamp with a number in indelible ink so he cut that off with his pen knife. He took a cab to the nearest restaurant. He went in and had a few drinks to get his nerve up. He wasn’t interested in food; he might lose it all anyway. Then he strolled to the door and went just down the street to the closer clinic. He worked his way along to a narrow pedestrian alley way to the back. Sure enough there were three garbage cans with a lot of blood on the lid handles. He found what he expected inside. Since he had not eaten supper, he was able to suppress the urge to throw up. He took off all three of the lids and listened. No whimpering or crying; no sounds at all. Finally, he began to remove small bodies from the cans and place them carefully on the ledge of the wall behind them. He lined them all up carefully. They were all quite dead and some were already very smelly.
It hadn’t occurred to Linc that there might not be a baby to save. He was a little relieved because he would still have to trust to chance in this town to find someone to leave the child with. This, however, had not bothered him much so his relief was also very slight. He wondered for a few seconds why he hadn’t been bothered by this since it would seem like a considerable problem. Was he becoming a man of faith? He doubted that. Maybe deep inside he didn’t really think he would find another live one. He replaced all the tiny bodies back in the cans and reverently replaced the lids. He knew that the garbage men would not be so careful. He cleaned his hands with the smaller towel and a few disinfectant wipes that he had with him and left the wipes and the towel in the last can. He went out to the street and waited to hail another cab to take him to the second location.

The second location was an even bigger surprise. After the cab disappeared, he moved deliberately towards the clinic which he could see clearly from the street. There was a narrow motor alley just before the building next to the clinic. So he went there and sure enough found a back alley that led up behind the clinic. There were five cans here and they appeared to be kept by much neater people. They were arranged neatly, the lids were on securely and there was practically no blood on the outsides of the cans or the lids. Again, he was methodical. The clinic had wide back steps leading up to the back door so Linc lined up the little bodies there. Many of these seemed to be much more torn up than he had seen before. He thought to himself that this bunch must use different methods which involved removing the baby in sections. Linc was beginning to despair by the
end of the fourth can when he heard a whimper. He cleared away the others and picked up a baby girl who was moving. The child screamed violently. Linc laid her down on the towel on the steps and examined her. He wished that he was a doctor.

This baby was hurt badly. There was a lot of clotted blood and her little right arm was almost entirely severed at the shoulder. She had several other severe cuts on her back and legs. Linc tried to clean her up a little with some disinfectant wipes but it didn’t do much good and it just caused the little one to scream louder. Linc hovered over the child for what seemed to be a long time. He noticed some more blood from the head and gently lifted the baby to see the back of the head. There was a nasty gash and a hole as big as a quarter. He thought he could actually see the brain. Then he stood up. He leaned over again. What to do? Finally, he just waited. He wasn’t really thinking. He couldn’t leave. He would not leave her to die alone. It seemed like a long time but it probably wasn’t more than twenty or twenty five minutes. He never wanted to go through that again. Finally she was gone. He placed the little one in the towel on the top of the last can and closed the lids. He took out the wipes and started to clean his hands. Then he began to shake and cry uncontrollably. He sat on the steps and cried until he was dry. He went back to a bar and went straight to the men’s room to clean up. Then he got stinking drunk.

Linc went back to the hotel late and slept till almost noon. He got up and showered and called ahead to his next appointment. He felt surprisingly good. He made four sales visits that day and drove to the next town and
checked in to an unusually nice hotel. He told himself that he deserved the reward. Before he went down to supper, he noticed the phone book on the bedside table. He thought, ‘no, not now, maybe not ever again.’ He went to bed early after a nice meal and in a mellow red wine glow. He dreamed a lot about the tiny babies. He woke up very tired.

Linc was about three sheets to the wind when he went down the next alley five days later and stone cold sober again twenty minutes later when he came out. He had not planned to look for a child. The trauma of the last one made him want to forget about it completely. He did not even know that there was a clinic near this particular bar. He stopped because it was the first one that he came to. At first he thought it was a kitten that he heard. But in his present state he didn’t have to have a reason to go and investigate. About forty paces into the alley it turned almost pitch dark. Linc simply walked towards the sound. Then he thought that doesn’t sound like a cat, not really. He desperately tried to think of something else that would make that kind of a noise but he knew that it was a baby. Were the gods angry at him? Was it because of Marta? He didn’t like any of these questions and he didn’t really want any answers.

Another few paces and there was a break in the wall of the alley. It was the place where two buildings backed into each other that fronted on parallel streets. There was about a twenty foot clearing and the light from a street light down the way and a little light from the moon managed to shine through. Still Linc moved towards the sound. He could make out a row of garbage
cans, one of them had the lid off. It was happening again. One of the babies on the second level down moved and Linc heard that sound again, that tiny cry. He grasped the little body on top and pulled it aside. There she was, a little girl with blood all over her but Linc couldn’t tell if it was her blood or the blood from some of the others in the can. He stared for a minute.

“Well, good for you, you little blighter. It was one like you that killed my Marta. My little Marta doll. My wife, how I loved her.” He sobbed for a few seconds. Then he stretched forth his hand as if to grasp the child but stopped in mid-action. A scowl came to his face again and he turned on his heels to leave almost slipping in the gore that surrounded the cans in the alley.

“Damn!” he grumbled. “I don’t want to fall in this goop. Careful there, Linc, old man.”

The child let out two more little cries. Linc stopped in his tracks and just stood there. He turned slowly so that he wouldn’t slip again and walked back towards the child mumbling about why he had to be the one. He picked up the baby with both hands getting his hands all bloody. Then he pulled off his coat and wrapped the child in it. He held it up and studied the baby’s face. Her little forehead was wrinkled with anxiety.

“I guess you can’t be blamed personally for Marta’s death. After all, we were the adults. Oh, if only I had told her not to go.” The baby answered with a tiny gurgle. They were both consummately unhappy.

“You don’t seem to be hurt,” Linc said. “I know you’re hungry. You’ve probably never eaten. But first let’s get out of here.”
He put the baby in his car and drove to an all night market. He bought some canned infant formula that said ‘new born’ on it. It was in a can that took a nipple that was included and it was room temperature. He took it to the car and somehow had the good sense to feed it to the child slowly. Then he drove around while he tried to figure out what to do. Since he was in a different town, he couldn’t go back to Gilda and her friends. Finally, he put the child in an old cardboard box that had formerly been the home of six bottles of whiskey and left it on the steps of a Catholic church. Then he called the emergency number that he got from the church sign and told them there was a baby in a box just outside the side door.

Father Frank O’Dwyer met Lincoln Harper while serving as a U. S. Army Chaplain at Ft. Dix just after Desert Storm was over. O’Dwyer was 6’4” tall and muscular with lots of jet black hair graying at the temples. Harper was an infantry lieutenant who had just earned his silver bar and was happy to no longer be a ‘shave tail.’ Linc and Marta lived in base housing there and so did O'Dwyer. O’Dwyer had served as a counselor at Loyola in Chicago for almost nine years after seminary. Gradually, he became aware that he was no longer growing in this job. So after considerable research and networking he petitioned his Superior for a specialist’s position as military liaison at the Vatican. To his own surprise this request was granted.

O’Dwyer and Harper had a long standing custom when they knew each other in the service of meeting at a local pub steakhouse every third Friday night. Here they would talk about most anything. Harper was not even a
Catholic. It was hard to say just why they enjoyed each other’s company like they did. Maybe Harper liked the easy going approach of the Priest. Harper had been raised a casual Catholic but had not attended church since he left home for college at eighteen. O’Dwyer was obviously committed to his vocation, but he had a certain aversion to the pastorate and he didn’t push his beliefs down anyone’s throat. They had some common interests. They were both history buffs and they both liked to hunt large game with a rifle and scope. Rabbits were definitely not their game of choice and they liked to drop the target with one very well placed shot. They had hunted together a good bit back then. They preferred deer or even moose or elk if they could get away to hunt.

O’Dwyer knew why he liked Harper; he reminded him of his brother that he had lost in Nam. Linc looked enough like Jeff to be a member of the O’Dwyer family but it was his mannerisms and even the tone of his voice that really reminded Frank about his brother that he still loved fervently. He wasn’t bashful about telling Harper or anyone else, as a matter of fact, about that but Harper knew that the priest also had a personal liking for him as himself and not just because he was so much like Jeff.

Frank and Linc had allowed their correspondence to diminish to three or four short notes a year. After Frank had arrived in Rome and become established in his apartment only three blocks from the Vatican, he dug into learning his new job as the head of staff to a very powerful American Cardinal.

Because of his experience in the military and a certain self-assured manner which he had, he was there to
be military liaison for the Holy See. It didn’t hurt that he was also from a very powerful Irish Catholic family. Uncle Liam had been an archbishop and would probably have made Cardinal if he had not died unexpectedly at the relatively young age for an archbishop of 71. The somewhat misunderstood title of Monsignor went with O'Dwyer’s job as it helped in getting the job done. Outwardly, this job would simply involve how the Church could best serve the military personnel of all countries. Inwardly, it was beginning to look like it might involve some other work which was, shall we call it, of a more sensitive nature. As Frank O’Dwyer became more and more aware of these areas, it suited him just fine. He was a man who became bored easily and it seemed to him that this job might just avoid such a fate.

As a result of his appointment O’Dwyer was the subject of a very small article deep inside the Rome paper. O’Dwyer had learned Italian in seminary but he did not know that Harper had passed the advanced Berlitz course some time ago in order to help him in his job.

O'Dwyer was looking for a place to display his favorite statue, a ten inch high model of ‘The Thinker,’ in his new office. Brother Giuseppe had been in sixteen times with questions. Although the monk was trying very hard to serve his new boss, O'Dwyer was not an easy man to work for. When there was yet another tap on the door, O'Dwyer responded rather brusquely.

“What now?” he said.

“Not what, who,” Linc answered.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

O'Dwyer stopped and put the statue hastily on a shelf. He knew he recognized that voice. As he moved towards the door, Linc came on in.

“You old sky pilot,” Linc said.

“You old heathen,” O'Dwyer responded. The two men embraced briefly.

“Monsignor, it is now?” Linc said.

“Just a formality,” O'Dwyer answered.

“What does it mean?” Linc asked.

“Nobody really knows,” O'Dwyer answered laughing.

They sat down and caught up on how Linc had found him. O'Dwyer had some good Irish whiskey in his desk already and he offered some to Linc. He was surprised when Linc turned it down.

“Haven’t gotten religion have you?”  O'Dwyer asked.

“Look who’s asking who,” Linc shot back.

“Whom?”

“What whom?”

“The word there is whom, the second time there, ‘asking whom.’ ”

“Oh.”

O'Dwyer politely banished Brother Giuseppe from the office and they talked for a long time.

“I’m not often in Rome,” Linc said as he was leaving, “but when I am, I’ll be sure to call ahead.”

“Sometimes, I am in Milan,” O'Dwyer said. “I’ll keep you posted.”

The friendship was renewed and would be strengthened and tried in the days to come. Linc was back in Rome much sooner than he had expected.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
“My God, man, you look like you’ve seen a ghost,” O'Dwyer said.

Linc looked nervously around the little bar.

O'Dwyer followed his lead on that. In a minute O'Dwyer spoke again, softly this time, “Lincoln, what is it? Do you want to go to my office or some place else to talk about it?”

Linc didn’t want to hurt the priest’s feelings, but he hadn’t felt safe or confidential in O'Dwyer’s office. He was sure that the walls had ears, either the modern electronic kind or some less mechanical type developed over centuries by the Vatican. Linc didn’t know but there would have to be another option if Linc was going to share his heart with his priest friend.

“C’mon,” O'Dwyer said. He started for the door. The streets were wet after a sudden down pour and the air smelled sweet. O'Dwyer led Linc to a bistro just down the street and they went in. It was about half full and had a lot of booths unlike the tiny tables in the crowded bar. The priest headed for a booth near the back but not all the way. Linc felt a lot more confidential here. God only knew what things must have passed in this establishment over the centuries. They sat down and each ordered a
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

glass of wine as booth rent. O'Dwyer waited. Linc took his time and finally decided how to tell it.

“It’s all been too much. And I didn’t volunteer for it, you know. I was drafted. I guess by Him.”

Linc glanced up. O'Dwyer was still silent. He wasn’t going to let Linc off easy.

Linc continued, “The first time I was really out of it, stone drunk as a matter of fact.” Then he too took a sip of wine and leaned back. Now he was ready to tell all. O'Dwyer’s eyes never left Linc. It started slowly and then it seemed to pour out of him.

“You see, I’m walking down the street finishing off a flask of whiskey. I lean against a building right in front of an alley. Then I hear crying, like a baby crying. It’s sort of muffled and at first I figured that I was hearing things, the whiskey you know. Then it quit. I took another swig and it started up again. It got a little louder. I realized that it was coming from down the alley. My bottle was empty by now, so I dropped it in a nearby can and went on down the alley. There behind a building I see half a dozen garbage cans, all full with the lids just sort of balancing on top. I went towards the one where the crying was coming from and lifted the lid. I almost ‘hurled’ in the can but managed to move it aside. I have been in combat and I have a pretty strong stomach, but Frank, the can was full of dead babies. There was blood everywhere. The crying one was just under the top layer so I pulled it out by the feet. Then it really bawled. I knew that it was all right.”

“You were behind an abortion clinic,” O'Dwyer said.
“Yes,” Linc answered.
Frank shook his head in sadness.
“Well, anyway,” Linc continued, “I took off my coat and wrapped the little thing in it, it was a girl, and I leave the alley. I noticed the sign on the front of the building and knew what it was, an abortion clinic. By this time I’m totally sober and my own sorrows don’t seem like much compared to this little tyke’s. Somehow, it was a miracle, I find a woman who will take the child as her own and I go back to my hotel and fall asleep. I never intended to do anything like it again.”

“Then about a month later I’m sitting in another hotel room in the midst of my weekly route and I’m bored. The radio and TV is boring, the paper is boring, and the book I brought is boring. So I open a phone book and actually look for another clinic. It wasn’t too hard to find and I go by, sneak around back and check. There were lots of dead ones but not one alive. Then I start to get angry, real angry. How can people do this? I mean people who are educated and sworn to ‘do not harm’? Before long I’m checking behind these places two or maybe three times a week. I find a few who can survive. I buy a supply of cheap blankets and some bottled newborn infant formula, you know, the travel kind with a built in nipple and all, and I wrap the little boy or girl in a blanket, give it a bottle and look for a place to leave it where it will have a chance. I found a few women. The first one I kept in contact with and she knew others. The whole thing was like a miracle. It didn’t work perfectly. In other towns I left more than one outside, well, one of your churches.”

“They’ll do the right thing,” Frank said.
Linc was quiet again. Frank waited.

“Then there are others, Frank. Ones who don’t make it. I have to wait with them. I can’t let them suffer and die alone. I don’t know how much more of this I can take. I mean, the whole thing is so ugly and depressing but the waiting, because I know that the pain of moving them will just be useless pain before they die, … the waiting is hard, Frank, really hard.”

“Linc, I can’t imagine,” O'Dwyer said.

Again silence for a long while.

“I’ve got to tell you, Frank, it’s a relief just getting this off of my chest. I really need to be able to talk it out once in a while.”

“I’m always glad to hear you out, Linc, but as you know, sometimes I am not available. There is another place where you could talk, I mean, just to get it off your chest,” Frank said.

“A place?” Linc asked.

“Yes, a little chapel. Really quite a lovely place. You could consider it a place to talk to God, or just a place to talk. I believe it’s right on your route, too.” Frank stopped and watched for Linc’s reaction.

“Well, you know I’m not much on the religion stuff,” Linc said.

“That’s the great thing about this kind of place, Linc. It just has the right ‘vibrations’ so to speak. You don’t have to have any certain beliefs. Just try it once. Here, I’ll draw you a map on this napkin,” Frank finished.

Linc took the napkin after Frank was finished and stuck it in his back pocket. “And Frank, there’s some
legal haziness here. It seems that it’s legal to kill them but not legal to rescue them,” Linc said. “And you, Frank, can you keep me covered? I mean not tell. I realize that this is hardly a real confession. I haven’t been to confession in years.” Linc said.

“As far as I’m concerned you are, Linc, and you said that your mother was a Catholic as well.”

“Yes, does that count?”

“I can make it count, don’t worry. But more important, I can help with the placements.”

“Placements?”

“Yes, of the babies. You are still going to do this, aren’t you?”

“Yes. I suppose. I’m what you might call ‘hooked.’ What can you do?”

“Oh, you’d be surprised. I have a secret weapon.”

“A secret weapon?”

“Yes, and her name is Sister Mary Margaret.”

“Aren’t there a million Sister Mary Margarets, Frank?” Linc asked.

“Nearly, but this one is unique. Give me a few days, a week, and I’ll have something set up. We can probably handle as many of them as you can come up with,” Frank said.

Linc smiled a very large grin.

Linc requested supper with O'Dwyer the next night and it was obvious that he wanted to talk.

“Any progress?” were the first words out of Linc’s mouth.
“Hear their tiny cries

“I’ve made a few calls and it’s looking promising. But I still have a visit to make,” O'Dwyer answered. Linc nodded.

“What is it, Linc?” O'Dwyer asked. He knew there was something else.

Linc told O'Dwyer how he was compelled to go on by the dreams.

Monsignor O'Dwyer was quiet after Linc said this. Then he asked, “Tell me more about the dreams, the specifics.”

“Mostly, they are all the same or similar. They start with me going down a dark alley, rather true to life. I see the garbage cans and I don’t want to take off the covers. But I do and they all have living faces although their little bodies rarely seem able to support life. At first they just look at me. Their eyes are very big and begging. Then one of them actually talks even though I know they can’t really talk at that age. They ask me to help them. Tears come to their big eyes. It sounds like a whole chorus of voices. I tell them I will and start pulling them out and wrapping them up. Then most of the time I hear the sound of the garbage truck backing in. They all shout that I need to hurry. ‘Hurry. Hurry for the time is short!’ Usually I keep working until the back of the truck hits me and then I wake up in tears.”

Linc was sure that the priest would not help him after that account of the dreams. Again it was quiet. It seemed like ten minutes but it was probably actually less than ten seconds.

Then O'Dwyer spoke. “It’s the dreams that drive the point home to me, Lincoln.”

Linc was surprised.
“Did you think I wouldn’t help?” O'Dwyer asked. “I am a priest. The church deplores these killings.”

Frank O'Dwyer knew what was being asked of him. And he knew that he had the connections and the backing of the church to accomplish it.

“Just a few more days to make some contacts,” O'Dwyer finally said.

O'Dwyer finished a late meeting that very night and told his driver to make the best time possible. The big Mercedes pulled away in a hurry and went straight to the priory where Sister Mary Margaret lived. Mary Margaret was not the Prioress, but she was one of her assistants and could accomplish quite a lot if she put her mind to it.

“Monsignor, you don’t usually call this late,” Mary Margaret said as she hurried into the room. She kissed his hand perfunctorily and offered him a seat. “Do you need for me to wake the Prioress?”

“No, let her have her sleep,” O'Dwyer answered. Before they could sit down, he said, “Now that we have the protocol out of the way give me a hug, Sister.”

Mary Margaret responded with vigor, “Oh hello, Frankie. I do miss you when I don’t see you often. But when you have a birth brother who is a Monsignor, you have to behave like a good nun.”

“And indeed you do, sis. But I’ve got a real one for you this time, bigger than when I helped you and Katie Patrick hide those Pekinese puppies for almost three months. You had better sit down for this one,” O'Dwyer said. “You remember my friend Linc Harper, don’t you?”
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

“Sure, your old army buddy. He started drinking a lot after the death of his wife. Died on an abortionist’s table as I remember.”

There was just the slightest pitch in her voice that seemed to imply that any woman who would expose herself to that might deserve what she gets. It was so subtle that only someone very close to her could tell. Sure enough, Frank caught it. It only took a look. “I’m sorry Frank. God, please forgive me,” she said. “Absolve me, Monsignor?” she asked.

“I absolve you, Sister,” O’Dwyer said. It was intentionally unclear in just which way the title ‘Sister’ applied here. “But here is one for the books, obviously the mysterious working of our wonderful God.”

“I’m all ears, brother.”

“You always have been. Why, before you took the habit we had to do all sorts of things to hide them. I remember when Mom…”

“The issue at hand, Frank!”

“Yes, well. You won’t want to believe this. Old Lincoln Harper has started rescuing living babies from the garbage cans behind abortion clinics.”

Sister Mary Margaret’s jaw dropped.

“Close your mouth. A fly might fly through,” Frank said.

“Why Frank, that is wonderful! Do they live? Are they injured? About how many? Two a week? Three?”

Frank held up his hand and she stopped. “As near as I can tell about two a week that make it. But he also has to get rid of the ones that die. It all started by accident and now he does it on purpose all along his sales route in four or five countries.”
“I’ll wake the Prioress for this,” Mary Margaret said. “We want them, Frank. We’ll take care of them and doctor them and find them homes. Please just help yourself to the Port and wait here in this room no matter how long I am gone.” She rushed from the room. Frank poured himself a glass of Port made by the monks just up the road and settled in to wait. He didn’t have to wait long.

Prioress Angelica was getting pretty old but she had not yet decided to retire. When she did, Mary Margaret was near the head of the line to succeed her. Frank knew her to be a wise and gentle woman who never backed down once she made up her mind. Frank also knew that she had almost absolute authority over her house and that only the Mother Superior of the order or the Pope himself could reverse her. She had started out as a novice with the Mother Superior fifty years ago and this Pope never interfered with such things. Frank knew the Pope well enough himself to know that.

Mary Margaret helped Angelica to a seat and the Prioress asked if the Monsignor could kindly explain some more. In the rush she skipped all protocol, but technically, she outranked him anyway.

After he finished, Angelica spoke firmly and clearly. “We have four of our own houses within a day’s drive from here,” she said, “and at least five houses from other orders where I know the Prioress personally. All of our facilities are open to help this blessed man and I will contact the other houses in the morning. Abbess Majorica and I go way back. She will help.”

The only thing Frank O’Dwyer had a hard time swallowing was the reference to Linc Harper as a
‘blessed man.’ He left that for the nuns to discover for themselves. Frank knew that they would have a smoothly functioning organization by Wednesday.

“Monsignor, we will need a priest to baptize them, alive or not,” the Prioress said.

Frank nodded. “If necessary, Mother, I will do it myself,” he said.

“Good,” Angelica said and she leaned back to rest.

O'Dwyer arranged a hotel room in Rome for Linc. Linc drove and arrived early in Rome. It was amazing how much O'Dwyer had done by the time Linc got there. He told Linc everything he could remember. Linc’s surprise showed on his face.

“This may be the reason that I got this job,” O'Dwyer said. He seemed invigorated. “Not many people question my calls or requests. And it wouldn’t even matter if they did, my Superior, . . . well, never mind that.”

Linc didn’t ask but he was convinced that O'Dwyer had support from high up. He was beginning to like these church people. Linc would soon find out that Monsignor Frank O'Dwyer had massive resources and influence. They supplied doctors close to everyplace Linc could find the children. They usually placed the little ones faster than Linc could supply them. And unknown to Linc at the time they kept meticulous records of where the children were placed.

Sister Mary Margaret is one of a kind. She is probably a redhead. Her house in the order still wears the full ‘Holy Habit’ which provides a great deal of privacy.
Her complexion tells the tale to most people. She has a normal red headed face and hands which is all that shows. She is probably somewhere between 35 and 55 years of age; who can really tell? It is obvious that she has a great capacity to love, but she is never mushy. But Sister is too angular for a female. She has large bony hands and they work hard and long and well. She has a large nose and, of course, no makeup. But her green eyes can drill a hole in a person. She is direct but kind, a seemingly impossible combination. She is never discouraged as far as anyone has been able to tell including the other nuns. She is not the Prioress of the house; she is not the boss. But she is a leader and she is put in charge of projects by the Prioress that need to be done in a timely and efficient manner. Sister Mary Margaret is a bundle of delightful contradictions. She adores the children and would unhesitatingly defend them with her life if necessary. As every Catholic knows, there are many nuns named Mary Margaret. But this one breaks the mold. She affirms her relatedness to the others by just being a nun. However, no one will ever confuse her with another of the same name. She is an individual.

The nuns of Sister Mary Margaret’s house needed a special project. Put simply, their energy is boundless and they did not have enough to do. O'Dwyer made a wise move when he asked them to help. The vastness of their order and modern communication devices make them the perfect clearing house for the children. O'Dwyer had to help a little to establish the network of physicians, but that didn’t take very long. Within two months the whole thing was working with military-like efficiency.
And the Sisters adored the babies. There has been much discussion about the sacrifices of the celibate lives of monks and priests, but the female side has been largely ignored. Probably the most difficult thing about celibacy for the women is the absence of children. They retain their maternal instincts and needs in a largely childless society. Linc secretly believed that when he rescued a child too mangled to place with adopted parents, the nuns were especially glad to keep and care for the child themselves. Then there was a baby in the Priory, a baby with more than fifty mothers.

Linc had phone numbers for any number of doctors and priories that he could call on any time of the day or night. Sometimes he could not get an answer. But his one sure number was Sister Mary Margaret’s private line which O'Dwyer had established just for Linc. If Sister herself was not available for some reason, then Sister Blanche was. Blanche was Mary Margaret’s right arm. Rarely did Linc have to drive past a priory to find a doctor. If one was not available at a local meeting place, one could always be found at the next priory.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

CHAPTER 5

The Chapel

Linc had been so excited about the new plans that he had put off visiting the little chapel that O'Dwyer had told him about. But he did remember stowing the map on the napkin in the glove box of his car. O'Dwyer went away on a three week trip to the orient right after everything was set up. Linc enjoyed the luxury of just turning the children over to the nuns for a while. Then he missed Frank and retrieved the map from the glove box.

The monastery was on a winding country road outside of Munich. Linc was fascinated by Frank’s description of the place. He told himself that it was just a restful sightseeing trip. God knows he needed one but somehow deep inside he hoped that it would offer him something else that might make his burden lighter. He passed through the village that Frank had told him about. Yes, there was the little pub with the hound on the sign. Another mile and he could see the ancient stone buildings of the monastery on the right. The drive looked so private he stopped for a few seconds before entering. He could hear the sound of two different birds singing and the quiet tapety-tap of the engine in the BMW. He noticed an old sign to the right of the drive and could read the “Willkommen!” and a few other words in German that assured him that he was welcome to proceed down the drive. The gravel ground under the tires. He drove very slowly. He parked in the obvious place to park and the
door to the chapel was right there. As he walked towards the door, he saw no one. Frank had told him to just go on in. He was wondering what he would see as he had never been religious. His mother had been an occasional Catholic but this was a long way from a Catholic order of nuns. His father was a self-proclaimed atheist who had read enough philosophy to convince his fellow factory workers that he understood what he believed.

Linc was immediately taken in by the little chapel. It was very little but it drew him in right away. There were only four short rows of chairs before the raised altar area. The little altar was covered with freshly ironed white cloths, one set the long way and another set at an angle so that a point faced the front. There was a gold plate and a gold cup on the altar but they were empty right now. Frank had told him excitedly that sometimes there would be ‘host’ left there and the plate would be covered with a golden cover and the cup with a transparent glass circle. Behind the altar was a large well lit needlework of Jesus praying in the garden with his elbows resting on a large rock. Linc had the feeling that he had seen that picture before. In front of the picture hung a large golden crucifix from two slender gold chains that went clear to the open beamed roof of the chapel. To the left of the crucifix was hanging a red glass ball with a candle burning in it. It was supported by a chain net which merged into a single chain that also went clear to the roof. Frank had told him that this candle was the light of the Presence. Somehow, it was reassuring to Linc. On either side of the raised area where the altar table stood, there was a wooden lattice that was about six feet wide and eight feet high. There were so many slats
crisscrossing on the lattice that it was difficult to see through it. Upon further staring Linc discovered a brown curtain behind the lattice. There were too small windows, one on each side of the room opposite the rows of chairs. Either they were intentionally glazed over or the years had covered them so that only a little light could get through. Those two windows along with the light shining up onto the picture and the light of the Presence candle and some prayer candles over on the left was all the light that was in the room.

Linc sat down in the middle of the second row. He noticed a kneeler in front of him. He decided that he would not be comfortable using it. He leaned on the back of the chair in front of him and interlaced his fingers and took a deep breath. He began to feel peaceful. Suddenly the door opened with a click of the latch and a swoosh. Linc was startled out of his peace. A woman in stylish clothes went directly to the large group of candles on the left side of the chapel and knelt before them. Linc had only noticed them in passing. He was uncomfortable with this stranger in the chapel. He was thinking about leaving but he waited a little longer. The woman muttered a prayer, dropped some coins into a small wooden bowl, lit two candles, crossed herself and left as quickly as she came. Linc was relieved. Frank had told him that there was not much activity in the early afternoon at the chapel. He quieted down again. He craved the quiet. Time seemed to slow down. No one else came in. Linc’s breathing slowed and he almost fell asleep but caught himself with a start. He craved sleep as much as peace because he had not been sleeping well.
At first he just thought of what he would like to say and then, very slowly and softly, he began to speak.

“I’m not too sure of you. I can only guess that you might be listening. But I have had no one to talk to about this except Frank. You probably know him. If you are there, if you are listening, if you even exist, you probably would know how I got into this. The first one that didn’t make it, she cried so much and her little body was so broken and bleeding. I was desperate to know what to do. I cried out to you, but not being a very religious person I don’t know what I expected you to do. But then she cried and cried some more until she didn’t have any energy left. Some of her wounds were still bleeding. I’m no doctor. I wasn’t even sure if a doctor could help her at that point. Then, as she started to weaken, I just held her for a while. She gradually stopped breathing and a peaceful look came over her face. She gave into it and I did the crying. I didn’t name her and I didn’t say any words. I just wrapped her in a towel and left her there.”

Linc cried for a while. He almost thought he could hear someone else crying too.

“But since then there have been so many more. I am thankful that some of these have been in better shape when I found them. It’s been easier for me to figure out what to do. I either grab them and run to get them some help or I wait with them till they die.”

Linc lingered in the silence and allowed the peace of the chapel to soak into him. When he left, he glanced at his watch. He had been there for an hour and a half. He knew he would return.
The next few weeks were busy. Linc had orders to work in several cities in different countries. But he knew where to look wherever he went.

The next visit he was not as happy. He had to wait a long time for the chapel to clear out. It was some kind of holy day and he, being unaware of these things, had stumbled right in. He wanted to leave several times but he told himself that there was no other place to go. This was his talking place. Finally, about two thirty local time it quieted down. Almost every candle holder over in the candle section was ablaze. Linc actually thought that made it warmer in the room. After a few minutes he felt the peace come upon him, the blessed peace, and started to unload. But it didn’t seem to help so much this time.

On the following Wednesday he made it a point to meet with O'Dwyer. Since O'Dwyer was on a trip away from Rome, they managed to meet in a fairly convenient place for both of them. After they greeted each other, they got into Linc’s car to talk since it wasn’t mealtime.

“This O.K.?” Linc asked.

“Sure,” O'Dwyer answered.

“Thought it best that we leave your driver out of the loop,” Linc added.

“Probably for the best, although Brother Sebastian is totally loyal to me,” Frank said.

“It’s taking me so long to wait for the really cut up ones to die,” Linc said. “I don’t know if I can stand it any longer. If I take them with me, then I just have to get rid of the body. And there are live ones waiting sometimes, ones who can make it.”
O'Dwyer was silent for a moment. Then finally he spoke. “Just take every living child to the nuns,” Frank said. “That will free you to move along and they will be glad to have the dead ones baptized as well and bury them with the ones that don’t make it that you thought would.”

“Really?” Linc asked in unbelief. “Frank, that would be so much of a relief to me. And it might make it easier for me to get some help. Are you sure?”

“Yes, they’ll do it.”

“Oh, Frank, there will still be a few that I will have to wait with,” Linc said.

“Why?” O'Dwyer asked.

“A few are so mangled that it causes them terrible pain to move them. I’ll have to wait with them,” Linc answered.

O'Dwyer shivered. “I don’t see how you do it, Linc,” he said.

“And now some new ones are showing up,” Linc said.

“New?”

“There is a new, uh, method. None of them make it. They are all burned. Some kind of chemical burn, maybe even salt.”

A sad and then an angry look crossed Frank O'Dwyer’s face. “My God,” was all that the priest could say.

After a while O'Dwyer asked, “How are things going at the chapel?”

“Good. It’s a help. I should go more often.”
CHAPTER 6

Rescue

Linc took every living baby to the doctors that were provided by the organization set up by Sister Mary Margaret unless he judged that the baby was dying for sure and that the pain would be too much. Otherwise, he gave practically no thought to whether a particular one would live or not. That was a decision that was out of his hands now. He was so thankful to have the system and the doctors that went with it. No matter where he went on his route in the different countries, he could either find a doctor directly or a contact that would take the child on to a doctor. Sometimes they died before he could get them there because of how lacerated they were or from exposure before Linc could get to them with one of his blankets. But Linc still took them; no matter how small the noise, no matter how weak the heartbeat or how shallow the breathing. He did not grieve for those who died en route any more than he grieved for those who were already dead when he found them. The object was to save those he could save and no one in Sister’s system ever objected to anything that Linc did. They would baptize the dead and give them a descent burial in their own cemeteries at a priory or a monastery. Linc developed a great appreciation for all the nuns and brothers and priests and doctors that helped.
One night at a familiar stop that looked like any dark and smelly alley that Linc frequented, he found only one small squealer, actually it was barely an infantile moan but Linc heard it and dug the little guy out from under four other tiny bloody bodies. By the time he got the baby into the light of the dim moon and the tiny flashlight that Linc held in his mouth, he could see that the child’s intestines were coming out. He quickly wrapped him in a blanket and it hurt Linc to hear that pathetic tiny cry of pain. Linc wasn’t sure just how things were under the blanket but he left things like they were in fear of hurting the child even more. He was afraid to move him. One little hand protruded from the fold in the blanket. Linc could see the tiny face all contorted in pain. Linc reached out and took that tiny perfect hand in his and just held it. He expected the child to die any minute. But after about five minutes the whimpering and shallow breathing still continued. Linc let go for a minute to check for other living children. There were none. It seemed to Linc that the little fellow’s cries were stronger after Linc let go so he went back and took the little hand in his again. Ten minutes passed and still no change. Linc asked himself out loud, “O.K. now, Harper, what next?”

Still nothing but the tiny whimpering. He knew that this would be an exception to the rule of transporting the child, and he had hoped that he wouldn’t ever have to stand deathwatch again. But he was sure that he would hurt this boy too much just in moving him. He would stand vigil with this child now until he died.

Linc answered himself, “O.K., yes, little fellow, you won’t die alone. I’ll be here until you go. … there
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

now, little man, how brave you are. Uncle Linc is here.... Sshhh... that’s all right.” Linc put his hands on either side of the child just enough to keep him from falling off of the can lid. His little arms were free, but they were not moving. In an effort to temporarily escape from this painful situation Linc let his eyes wander to the top of the surrounding wall. He spied a cat walking across the top of the wall and thought of how this alley cat was better off than this little boy. Then Linc felt the grasp on the end of his finger. He looked down and there was a perfect little hand grasping the end of his finger. The little boy’s face was still contorted in pain. All Linc could do was let the tears stream from his eyes and drip off of his chin. He was prisoner to this dying baby and his tough old alcoholic heart was breaking.

It took almost 30 minutes for the little boy to die. When he was dead, Linc didn’t want to let go. Then he started sobbing uncontrollably.

“Why, I ask you, why in God’s name do they do this,” he almost shouted.

Lincoln Harper had never admitted to the reality of God. But he didn’t know who else to address the question to. Silence prevailed except for the occasional engine noise on the street out front and the bump as the vehicle ran over the sewer cover at the corner. He decided that he had some tough questions for Father Frank O'Dwyer the next time he saw him.

“O.K., Priest,” Linc fairly shouted across the dinner table. “You tell me why. Why would any kind of
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

personal loving God like you represent allow such suffering to go on?”

O’Dwyer motioned for Linc to calm down which he did a little. “God doesn’t interfere much now,” O'Dwyer said.

“Now?” Linc asked. “Yes, there is a day of reckoning coming. All will be made right then.”

“You mean like, the ‘last judgment?’” Linc asked. “Yes, that’s it.”

“And these kids?” Linc asked with a sweeping movement of his arm as if every dead child he had ever seen was laying out before them.

“They are already with God,” O'Dwyer answered. “Out of the body, but even that isn’t permanent.”

“I see,” Linc said. “And the people who do this to them?”

“Will have to settle up with God,” O'Dwyer said. “Well, at least there’s some comfort in that,” Linc said.

O'Dwyer’s demeanor was so calm and authoritative that Linc was inclined to just believe what the priest told him. They were quiet for a while and then the food came. Linc was becoming more and more a vegetarian. O'Dwyer had always been one since Linc knew him.

This particular night was cold and wet. Linc was really not in the mood to do this, but he couldn’t skip it. He never liked these dinners with Wilhelm Berger. The corpulent German believed in long dinners of many courses and even more conversation. None of which was
of much interest to Linc. But his business accounted for almost twenty percent of Linc’s entire income so he had to be endured.

Linc knew that one of his most productive stops was directly between where he was and home. So he had to stop. He almost wished that he would not find a live child this night but only almost. When he got out of the car, the cold wet wind blasted him in the face almost as if to say ‘go home to your warm bed tonight big man,’ but he pushed on. There was one little boy waiting for him. He was badly cut up. Linc thought that his experience was serving him well by now. He was sure that this child would not live long. But it was miserable out here and the nuns always seemed to welcome any baby he brought them regardless of condition. So he wrapped the blanket extra tight and took the child to the car. The baby cried and tried to thrash around in his blanket.

“There, little fellow, don’t struggle,” Linc said. “It will do you no good.”

He tapped the horn just once as he drove into the compound at the Priory. Two Sisters emerged from a door and headed straight for the front passenger window of the car.

“Evening, Sisters,” Linc said as the window hummed to the bottom.

“Gute nacht,” they chimed in unison.

He handed them the baby who was still moving. One of the Sisters, the big one, held it close and they hurried back inside with their treasure. They told Linc later that the baby had made it. Well, so much for his judgment.
Linc lost track of many of his rescues. He did ask Sister Mary Margaret about how many of the worst cases lived.

“About half, Lincoln Harper,” she responded. “We hold them until they show us that they will live or until they die. We bury their little dead bodies with honor and pass the living ones to good homes.”

“You and your Sisters do the best part of the work,” Linc said.

“No, Lincoln Harper, you are the father of the work and you are the rescuer,” she replied. “We just help you finish.”

Linc had never thought of himself as the father of anything. That felt good.

Now he always wrapped any living child tight and took it with him unless it was too painful for the child to move him. One out of five died before he could drop it off with the nuns. Then they take the tiny body and have it baptized and bury it.

At one point Sister asked Linc if he could bring all the bodies to them, alive or dead. Linc talked to O'Dwyer and they decided that would endanger the help he could bring to the living ones not to mention the fact that he would need a truck to accomplish it. Most of the children are too small to save. Usually only the 3rd trimester ones survive and they are comparatively few compared to the total number aborted. There are more in some countries than in others depending on the laws of that country and the abortionists’ willingness to obey the laws.
By this time Linc was doing his work as a pure matter of habit, or perhaps, even duty. There was no longer anything about the work that was a healthy challenge and certainly no thrills involved. Sometimes he would forget exactly what town he was in. He would just go from client to client by day and from one stinking alley to another at night. Ever since two guys had tried to jump him last year he kept his taser handy. But there weren’t even any takers for that anymore.

As Mary Margaret’s network found willing parents to take on their own little non-person, Father O’Dwyer had even managed to get some people who would supply birth papers to the little tykes so that they could lead normal lives as members of their new families. O’Dwyer had tried to talk Linc into training two or three people that could do what he did. Linc knew that this was a good idea and promised to get started on it every time he saw O’Dwyer. Linc had asked himself why he was dragging his feet in training a few protégés. He couldn’t really answer himself. He admitted that the work was now mostly a drudge and a duty. O’Dwyer even mentioned that he had two men who would be willing to make the rounds with him and start learning.
On this particular night Linc was going about his duties rather mechanically. There had been no survivors at his first two stops and he wasn’t expecting any at the third stop. When he got to the back of the clinic, he heard two little voices right away. He began his usual method of removing the little bodies from the cans and lining them up on the steps. It was unusually dark in this alley so he had put on the headlamp that he had bought in the nearly mining town. This left both hands free to work.

He found the first one near the top; a little boy, and he looked fine. The second one was near the top of the can next to it. This was a female and she looked fine as well. He put them together on the steps and listened. They needed their bottles real bad.

“Just be patient a little longer,” Linc said to them. If there was a third one, he needed to find it. He didn’t hear anything so he got two bottles out of his backpack and held one for each of them. At first the little girl didn’t seem to have enough strength to eat but the boy went right after it. Linc rubbed the nipple on the little girl’s lips but no response. This was the special high energy version that one of O’Dwyer’s doctors had whipped up. Linc heard one more near the bottom of the second can. As soon as the little bottle was finished, he moved quickly. He laid them all out on the steps until he got to the live one. The third one was also a boy and he was covered with blood but it was not his own. He held a bottle for the new one. O’Dwyer was right. This was not a job for only two hands. He really needed help tonight.

Finally, Linc got all the babies out. He was surprised that his heart was beating fast in anticipation. It would be a great help if some of the excitement would
return. The little girl was still breathing. She was larger than the rest, but she still wasn’t hungry. Linc decided to just take her in and hope that Mary Margaret’s people could bring her around. Maybe she was just stronger. He noticed a lot of blood around her mouth and came to the startled conclusion that she had been sucking the blood out of the dead baby next to her. This, even Linc had not seen before. How much we all desire to live! He started to tear up but got control because his work was building up.

He found one more little boy who would take a bottle. Four live babies, some abortionist wasn’t doing his job very well. It occurred to Linc that this clinic was a regular stop of his and that he had gotten a lot of babies here over the last two years. Perhaps someone was doing this on purpose. Perhaps there was someone who didn’t want to kill. If someone knew that he was rescuing the live babies, maybe they were passing them to him. Well, maybe, but too much to do now.

This was a particularly bad alley so he had never brought the car in. The only thing to do was to replace the dead ones and go get the car from out front to load the survivors. Otherwise, it might take two trips to get them all out and that doubled his chances of getting caught. Linc started working as fast as he could to return all the little bodies to the cans. Then suddenly it occurred to him, why not leave them out. At least it would make a statement and perhaps it would encourage the reluctant abortionist or even his assistant, if there really was one. On the other hand, it could have the opposite effect. But he didn’t have time for debate tonight; so he simply scooped up his four treasures and made a run for the car.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

Back at the car he lined the back seat with them. On the way to the meeting place he decided once again that he would heed O'Dwyer's urgings and take on some assistants. When he arrived, his contact was surprised and happy with the children. They had more bottles and they rushed them to the doctor. From there they would go on to Mary Margaret's placement people. Linc was fully emotionally involved again.

O'Dwyer's first candidate for a helper was a surprise to Linc. O'Dwyer had said that he was twenty-six years old and considering the priesthood. Since none of the priests were allowed to do the direct rescues, it seemed a little strange to Linc that a candidate for priest would be recommended. But this was not the surprise; the boy looked to be about sixteen. He had dark features and was slightly built. His name was Maurice. Linc explained about the risks but it didn't seem to phase him.

"I have been ready to start for sometime, sir," Maurice said.

Linc nodded. He had decided to show each new candidate only part of his route. He would take them places local to them so that they could carry on without him as soon as possible. Both O'Dwyer and Mary Margaret had assured him that their support operations were ready to grow.

By this time Linc was sober almost all the time, especially when he was working on what he had started to call his 'project.' Sometimes, he would drink a little before he tried to fall asleep, but he didn't take it back up in the morning. He was still rather nervous about the
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

crazy legalities of the whole thing. For the life of him he
could not understand why, if these little beings are throw
away, people thought it was wrong for him rescuing a
few of them and giving them a descent life. How could it
be illegal for him to help them? He understood the
technicalities about the necessary ‘papers.’ Since they
were non-persons, they did not exist legally even if they
were thriving and growing. It was almost as if the law, or
at least those administering the law, resented the fact that
the little ones had escaped death. So Linc kept his mouth
shut and was thankful that he no longer had to come up
with a home for each of them on his own. O'Dwyer’s
organization was managing to place each child he found
and before long it would be running even better by all the
authority that Monsignor Frank O'Dwyer could muster,
which seemed to be a good bit these days within the
Roman Catholic Church. Linc was developing a greater
and greater appreciation for them doing the right thing.
He thought that if he ever became a man of faith, he
would like to be a Catholic.

This night was little different than many others.
The alley was dark and the work was disgusting. But
Linc had heard a whimper as soon as he walked up
behind the clinic.

“Keep talkin’, little guy,” Linc said. He almost
believed that the infant knew that he or someone was
there. “I’ll find you as soon as I can.” Linc worked
methodically and laid every baby out carefully on the
little ledge that ran along the bottom of the ancient wood
fence between the clinic and the business next door. Only
a weak shaft of light from next door illuminated the area.
Linc relied a lot on the light he brought with him. First he found a little boy that seemed to be alive, but he wasn’t strong enough to be making the sounds. As he examined him, he found a terrible gash on the back of his neck. It was solidly clotted but he wondered how he was still alive. Then he heard the whimper again.

“Ah – ha, you’re still here,” he mumbled. The child whimpered again and he found her in a hurry. She was a beautiful little girl and she still had the energy to wiggle her arms and legs. Linc wrapped her in a blanket and laid her aside. While he was at it, he picked up another blanket and was on his way to wrap the other one when he heard another sob. This time it was not from an infant. He threw the other blanket on top of the other baby and turned his light in the direction of the sound. He caught a young woman in simple clothing in the light. She squinted but she did not move. Linc spoke to her first in English and then in German asking her what she wanted. Linc looked carefully to see if she was alone and was satisfied that she was. She answered in German that she was there for her baby.

‘Her’ baby? Linc was curious. The strong little girl cried and the young woman started in that direction. Linc moved to intercept her and scooped up the child. The woman reached for the child but Linc withheld it. He questioned her further.

The young woman explained that she had had a very late term abortion just a few hours ago before that clinic had closed. She had changed her mind and returned on the chance that the child was still alive. Linc had just finished laying them all out so he shined his light on all of the little bodies, eleven in all. The woman’s eyes got
real big and then she vomited. When she was done, she asked Linc if the baby he was holding was a boy or a girl.

“What was your baby?” he asked.

She answered in German that it was a girl.

“This is a girl,” Linc responded.

She asked him if he could tell if it was her baby. He told her there was no way to know and what did it matter. This one was the live one and the strong one. All the rest were dead except one and it would probably die soon of its injuries.

The girl looked again at the babies. There were six females and five males. There was no way to tell. She told Linc that she had only seen her little girl briefly. Linc thought to himself how sloppy these people were getting. They weren’t supposed to let the women see their babies at all. They became too human looking when the mother saw them. Then they could not be passed off as a mass of unhuman tissue. The woman told Linc that her little girl had blue eyes. Linc thought how naïve this young woman was. Everybody knew that all newborns had blue eyes. Everyone but her. He studied her face in the dim light. She couldn’t have been more than sixteen. Linc merely told her that this little girl had blue eyes, he didn’t have to look to see, and that she was strong and healthy.

Linc encouraged her to take this one. One less for Frank O'Dwyer’s people to have to place. She hesitated. He told her as clearly as he could in German that it made no difference. There was, after all, a one in six chance that it was hers. She asked if he knew how often the garbage was collected. This he knew and he assured her that one of these little girls was hers and that she should
take this one and believe that it was hers. He held the baby out to her. She took it slowly and looked into its face. Linc explained that it needed food badly. She opened her coat and blouse and immediately started to nurse the child who took to it right away.

“My god!” Linc exclaimed. He was still hopelessly an old fashioned American.

The girl said that God had saved her baby and herself in all this. It struck Linc as strange that a girl who would have an abortion actually believed in God, at least more that he did. But maybe he was changing. The girl went to look at the other living baby. Linc explained that it was dying rapidly and that he would stay with it until it went. He encouraged the girl to leave. She hugged him with her free arm and turned to go. Then she turned back and asked him what he was doing there. “It’s what I do,” he responded in German. She nodded and started to leave.

“What are you going to name her?” Linc asked.

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought . . . ,” she answered in German.

“Zoë,” Linc said.

She pronounced the word.

“It means ‘life,’” Linc told her.

She smiled. It would be Zoë.

Linc went back and put all the little bodies lovingly back into the cans, gathered up his blankets and went back to the car. O'Dwyer wasn’t going to believe this. Or maybe he would.
Most of the time now Linc would just sit in the little chapel for quite a while before he started talking. Sometimes he would spend most of his visit just sitting. Sometimes he would not talk at all. There was something about the place. In the first place it was intimate in not being very large. It would seat maybe forty if you really crammed them in. It was rare that anyone else was there with Linc. Occasionally an old lady would come in and light a candle and mumble a short prayer. Then she would leave. Linc had gotten used to this and merely waited for her to leave. Sometimes he felt that he could outlast them all. This was because he didn’t want much. He just wanted to be there. He wasn’t lighting any candles or even praying. Whoever he was talking to, he just wanted to get it off his chest and it seemed like the little chapel itself could hear his confession. He knew that the chapel was old. At first he guessed about 300 years old but when he finally got curious enough to pick up the little pamphlet on the small table near the door, he found out in three languages that it was more than 500 years old. This impressed him. It was as though hundreds, maybe thousands, of people had gone before him in seeking the quiet sanctuary here. Yes, that was it, he thought, the quiet. It was not a normal quiet. The quiet itself seemed to have life in it. But it was a very peaceful
kind of life. Like an enduring life, a life that had known and seen everything and still lived, lived stronger than ever as a result of the accumulated experiences of the little chapel.

Of course Linc had studied every aspect of the interior. There was a lot of gold, gold paint, gold in symbols. Gold and red alternated to dominate the little room. After that it was just shades of brown. The brown of the old wood in the furniture and the walls and rafters. The candle rack where people came to light a candle sometimes looked like the flames would burn the place down. There was always a slight breeze that moved the flames. Linc sat in every place around the room over time and he never could determine where the breeze came from. He never felt a breeze, even a slight one. The room was quiet in every way, quiet of noise and quiet of air. No movement was discernable. Sometimes there was faint illumination besides the candles in the room but the light bulbs must be the lowest wattage that one could buy. The only other light was the flicker in the red globe that hung from the ceiling by a long gold chain. It ended up hanging right next to the crucifix. All in all the room was quite cluttered. But Linc would not have it any other way.

Linc knew what the crucifix meant. But he wasn’t sure just how it applied to him. This Jesus had been crucified for ‘the sins of us all’ according to Father O'Dwyer. Linc did not doubt that he was a sinner; so he guessed that it applied to him. But he wondered, if the babies that he rescued, needed what the man on the cross had to offer. They hadn’t had time to do anything except, for most of them, die before they could be born.
Besides what he could see in the chapel which included the colors, the objects around him, and the soft glow of the lights, there was also the smells. These too were very old smells. He didn’t know where they all came from although it was obvious that the incense from the ancient ornate incense burner next to the altar overpowered most of the other smells. But there were also many old odors there, very old ones from the candles and incense and whatever else of the past. These odors combined to set the little room apart from the rest of the world as a special place, even a holy place. It was as if the room was soaked in something that was not of this world. Something eerie but not evil. Somehow the whole effect was still greater than the sum of all of the parts. It was a special place. Often this was the only place that Linc could find any measure of peace. The burden of what he thought was a necessary part of his mission was often more than he thought he could bear.

Some of the symbols were unknown to Linc. He did not know what they meant. Even that added to the mystery and comfort of the room. It was like Linc understood them at a level that was deeper than intellect. What did I.N.R.I. mean? It was over the head of the man on the cross, the Christ. What did I.N.S. mean? These letters hung from the little iron lectern with an eagle on top. The Bible was opened on the back of the eagle. Linc wondered what that meant. What did C.H.R. mean? He made a mental note to ask O'Dwyer. The massive needlework design over the altar depicted Christ praying in a garden with drops of blood on his forehead. The hanging was dark and old. On the altar was a large golden plate which was empty and a large golden goblet.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

which he presumed was also empty. There was a rail all around the altar with kneeling cushions in front of it so that Linc didn’t feel that he could get to the table without trespassing in some way. He didn’t try. He was content sitting on one of the straw bottomed chairs in the room. He would just look and feel. Sometimes he would close his eyes and just take in the silence and the smells of the place. He wished he could come more often.

When he did speak, it was usually in desperation as speaking about it eased his conscience and raised his anxiety at the same time. He would wander in and out of conversation not even able to remember which part he had spoken and which part he had thought. He would remember waiting for an infant to die. “It took him so long to die. Why does death have to be a mercy to a little baby?” Did he think that or say it? A half hour after leaving the chapel he couldn’t have told you which.

Then a forgotten memory came back to him from before the nuns when he had to bury a little body. “It’s difficult to pick a grave in the middle of a forest. You wouldn’t think it would be; there is plenty of room. But you get to thinking. ‘Is this a path? Is some animal more likely to dig it up here than over there?’ It really shouldn’t be this complicated. It must be my emotional involvement. I wish I weren’t so emotionally involved. Then again, that might indicate that I have no heart.” Thinking or talking, who knows? Praying? No, he was not ready to volunteer for that.

“Then there’s the blood. Always blood. At the bottom of the can sometimes there is an inch or more. All mixed together. That one little girl that he had found on
the bottom bathed in blood. He wished he could forget that. But she had shown them. She had lived and thrived with the Sisters and now was doing fine in her foster home. She wouldn’t remember the blood. But he couldn’t forget.” He was almost sure that he had spoken that.

He had fears as well. He was less afraid in a dark alley that it was a mugger or some other criminal than he was that it might be the police to arrest him. “For what? Trespassing? Stealing? Stealing garbage? Trespassing in an alley? alley…alley.” He could actually hear the echo of that last word in the little chapel. Later he wondered briefly what effect the spoken words might have on anyone listening in.

When he was done talking, Linc usually felt a little better. At least until the next time. This work was both horrible and wonderful. It was horrible to do but wonderful to see the results.

There was seldom anyone between Linc and his car when he left the chapel. But he didn’t feel alone as he left.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
Joanna Flores stood well over 5 feet 10 inches in her bare feet. She spoke Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch and English and, as she put it, a little Russian ‘in a pinch.’ She was willowy and graceful but big where she needed to be. She liked to wear full skirts and was well practiced in grasping the skirt with one hand and pulling it up slightly to go down steps. She had beautiful luminous dark eyes and a smile that could not go unnoticed. She got her doctorate in clinical psychology in Rome and had a substantial practice. It could have been a thriving practice but she was also interested in a life outside of work and chose to limit her practice somewhat although it had a tendency to keep creeping up on her.

Linc met Joanna through her brother George. He used the English version of his name instead of Georgio. George was a buyer for one of Linc’s companies in Turin. It was late in the afternoon when Linc arrived at George’s company and they were both tired so they concluded their business quickly.

“You got plans for the evening?” George asked.

“Not really,” Linc answered. He had thought of making one of his searches, a short one, but was actually not up to it.
“My wife and I are meeting my sister for supper,” George continued. “Glad to have you join us.”

Linc had endured enough blind dates with someone’s sister or the like since he lost Marta. He had come to the firm conclusion that if a woman needs her brother to find her dates, she must be a real loser. Besides, no one could ever replace Marta in his life. The necessary polite words of refusal were practically on his lips when he noticed George perusing his brochure for their new line.

“Yea, that might be nice,” Linc found himself saying. He told himself that it was a business decision but he also knew that his loneliness was reaching epic proportions and even George’s sister might not be too bad.

“Great! You got your bags? You can wash up here if you want to and we’ll go straight to the restaurant,” George responded.

George’s private bath at the office was quite extensive, complete with a steam bath and shower.

“Take your time,” George said. “I have to check a couple of things on the floor and I’m already changed.”

Linc really enjoyed the bath. He put on a clean shirt and was quite relaxed by the time George was ready to go. They arrived at a really upscale international restaurant after a twenty minute drive in George’s Lamborghini. Wow, what a ride! But, then again, they were in Turin. George motioned to one corner of the restaurant after the maitre d’ motioned them through.

“Buona sera, Senor Flores,” he said almost clicking his heals.
Linc was sure that the woman who waved back at George could not be his sister. As they approached she hugged him first and then an attractive but somewhat shorter rounder woman hugged him. That had to be the sister. Linc was wrong.

“My sister Joanna,” George said presenting the slimmer taller woman. She extended her hand to Linc and looked him squarely in the eyes. Her eyes were so dark that Linc could not tell what part was iris and what part was pupil but they were large and luminous and he was temporarily fixated by them and her smile.

“My pleasure,” Linc finally managed to say.

George took Linc by the arm to get him to move and they were seated in the traditional boy girl, boy girl, pattern. Maria, George’s wife, was on Linc’s left and Joanna on his right. He tried unsuccessfully not to stare. George was getting quite a kick out of it and Maria was behaving with appropriate politeness. Hors d'oeuvres were ordered and George started up.

“The answer to what you are thinking, dear boy, is that she is a dedicated clinical psychologist and between getting her doctorate and growing a practice she hasn’t had time for many men. Every man I invite to meet my sister is equally smitten, I assure you.” George paused. Joanna gave her brother a less than convincing slap on the cheek.

“She really loves me, Linc; she is my only sibling,” George said. Her adoring smile verified this. Maria was still polite or perhaps even bored as she had probably heard all of this before.

All through the excellent meal Linc was careful to talk to Maria and George at the proper intervals, but he
wished that he were alone with Joanna. He thought all along that he was learning a lot about her with the questions he asked. She was very gracious and her smile was continually captivating. However, by the end of the evening when he was out of her presence, it dawned on him that she had probably learned more about him than his mother was aware of. He had been examined by an expert.

Linc found himself in Turin more and more frequently, but always after a call that would assure him of an evening with Joanna. She always accepted graciously and they always talked a lot. It soon became obvious that this relationship was going to be run very respectfully. But Linc was somewhat surprised at his own feelings in this matter. Because of his serious feelings for her, Linc was not looking for a one night stand. He wanted her desperately, but legally and honestly and fairly. On their fourth date he had caught a signal that led him to believe that he really had a chance.

Linc was telling stories of his childhood, again, and had just finished the part where he had sacrificed some points in the game to make his little brother feel better. Her smile seemed almost adoring. Linc had given up trying to the see the pupil of her eyes. He had read somewhere that the eyes dilate greatly when looking at someone you love. She turned her head just slightly and he knew that even though he could not really tell the difference between her iris and her pupil, he was sure that they were extremely dilated.

“That is so like you, dear Linc,” she said.

Yes, he had a real chance.
Then she looked at him very intently. “You have some terrible burden, Linc. Can’t you share it with me?” She asked.

He looked away.

She took his hand which was lying next to hers on the table.

He had to return her gaze.

“Not just yet,” he said. “Not even to you.”

“When you’re ready, my love.”

His heart skipped a beat. The thrill and the threat came together. She had called him ‘my love.’ But she wanted to know. He wasn’t sure how to tell her. It might not even be safe for her to know.

For the next few months he saw her just as much as ever. Often her look seemed to be saying, ‘if you love me you will tell me.’ He began to despise that part in a woman that equated intimacy with crawling into a man’s mind. It seemed that the male need to enter her body was much simpler. Yet she never said anything. To compensate, he would tell her any and everything that he ever thought or did. She just fell more and more in love with him and he was hopelessly in love with her. But he couldn’t even tell her that it was for her own safety that she couldn’t know what she most wanted to know. He even tried to hide his grief from her but he was pretty sure that he wasn’t succeeding. He was by now incapable of stopping his activities. He could only hope that she would stay with him. There was no one to talk to about it except in the place to talk. Of course, O'Dwyer knew that big picture, but Linc was the kind of man who needed to
share the details, especially the more painful ones in order to get some real relief.

“O.K., O.K., now it’s really gotten personal,” Linc said in the chapel. The overall influence of the place to talk had calmed him down a lot.

“There’s been two more since I was here last. They were both in terrible shape. And the pressure to tell my friend just keeps growing.” He took a breath.

“The little ones first.” Tears came to his eyes. “One of them had no left arm, just a bloody stump. That happens a lot. Why do they have to dismember them so? I don’t know why the little thing didn’t bleed to death. I thought she might have a chance so I wrapped her in a blanket and got her to some help. But she didn’t make it.”

“The other one, a boy, looked fine when I got him. He had a pretty big bruise on the back of his neck, but he was breathing regular and fussy but not actually crying. I wrapped him and took him but by the time I was five miles down the road he was gone. I took him to the nuns as well. They seem almost as happy to get a dead one as a live one. They like to have it baptized and give it a descent burial. But that’s the way nuns are. I wish I could quit this. I need out. I really can’t take it anymore, but I can’t help myself.”

“Now she just seems to be waiting for me to tell her. And I can’t be sure that it will be good for her or her safety to know. No matter how much I tell her about myself I can tell that it is never enough. She will only be satisfied with knowing that thing that plagues me so. But
I really don’t want to lose her. Maybe if I can raise the relationship to another level, she will forget, at least for a while. I really can’t stand to think more than a few weeks ahead right now. Who knows, maybe I’ll get caught or killed or something.”

Joanna had regular lunches with her old friend Giavanna. They had been friends since they were both fourteen. Giavanna was in real estate. Their birthdays were only two weeks apart; so they celebrated together privately every year. Most times they would also attend an ‘official’ birthday gathering put together by someone else. But the private one was the real one. Giavanna was married but Joanna was still her best friend. The marriage seemed to be just for other conveniences: to be able to say they were married, to save money by sharing expenses, to have a casual friend, for sex, whatever. Giavanna’s marriage was one reason that Joanna had never much wanted to be married. They were both 31 this year. Giavanna had been married for six years.

“So, what’s the hold up?” Giavanna asked. She could speak in any of four languages, but when Joanna spoke of Linc, she spoke in English and Giavanna switched when Joanna did.

“There’s still something that he won’t or can’t tell me, and it’s major,” Joanna said. Whatever it is, doesn’t matter. It’s the trust level. I wish he would trust me. I would love to be married to Lincoln Harper.

“I’ve known you a long time and you have never ever said that before. What do you think it is? You’re the psychologist.”
“My psychologist’s mind tells me that it is dark and dirty.”
“And your heart?”
“My heart tells me that he is the sweetest, kindest man alive.”
“You have got it bad. What are you going to believe?”
“I am going to go with my heart.”
“I guess we girls are all emotion,” Giavanna said.

On the next visit Linc abandoned his usual middle class but charming hotel. He got a suite at the very best hotel in Turin. They didn’t talk as much at supper. He had taken her to his room once before but nothing had happened. When he asked her this time, she just locked those fabulous dark eyes on him and nodded sweetly ‘yes.’ Once inside she noticed how nice it was and he gave her the flowers. Later as he held her, he temporarily forgot his burden. All she thought was, one day, one day I will know.

“Come on, Linc,” Joanna begged. “My brother will only be here for three more days before his trip. He and Giavanna are old friends.”
“Just friends?” Linc asked.
“Yes, it used to be more, but not now.”
“And who all is going to be there?” Linc asked.
“Just me and you, Giavanna and Marcello, George and Marie and one other couple.”
“Another couple?” Linc asked.
“Yes, she is an old college friend of Giavanna, her name is Marie and her husband is a doctor. It is their last
night here as well. If I don’t go, Giavanna and George will be hurt and if I go without you, it just won’t look right. Please, my darling.”

Linc gave in against his better judgment. He felt like he owed her something. She realized that his electronics job took a lot of time and travel but since he had not told her about the other job, she must have thought that he was away a lot especially for a man that she wanted to marry.

They got to the restaurant right one time. Giavanna was there already and had secured a really great table by a window. They kept the seats right next to the window for the other couple since they were Giavanna’s guests. The inside of the restaurant was charming and the window looked out on a little skillfully lit garden that was fully in bloom. Linc was surprised until he noticed that the garden was actually a greenhouse which they obviously kept looking good all year. He thought to himself that the garden was probably worth 20 per cent of the menu prices.

The other couple arrived. She was about the same age as the rest of them; he was older. The woman, Giselle, was attractive although she seemed a little immature, always whispering in Giavanna’s ear and giggling. The doctor was quite serious, almost grim. He had dark hair that was thinning fast and a tight set mouth. The meal went great with Giavanna and Giselle being the life of the party. The food was excellent; so Linc just concentrated on enjoying it until about dessert time when Joanna nudged him to talk to the doctor. Joanna was always sensitive to being nice to the older person in a group if she thought he was not getting enough attention.
“What kind of practice do you have, doctor?” Linc asked.

“I’m in family planning,” he answered.

Linc was afraid that he knew what this meant, but he was in it now so he proceeded. “Just what does that involve?” Linc asked.

“Oh, fertility, birth control and the like.”

‘The like.’ That was probably where Linc should not probe any further but he wasn’t one to take the high road.

“The like?” Linc asked.

“Yes, you know, elimination and such,” the doctor answered.

“You mean you’re an abortionist,” Linc said clearly.

“We prefer not to call it that. After all, fully half of our work is in fertility and birth control. We help people have children who want them and help others not to conceive in the first place.” The doctor started to talk faster and faster.

“That’s all well and good,” Linc said. “But the others.”

“Then we help them get rid of the product of conception.”

“In other words, you kill babies.” Linc’s voice was getting louder and he got a clear look of warning from Joanna.

“Actually they are not babies at this point,” the doctor said.

“Then, what are they?” Linc asked.

“Like I said, the products of conception,” the doctor answered.
“Mere lumps of protoplasm?” Linc asked.
“Yes, sort of.”
“Now doctor, you have seen these little creatures. How late do you abort by the way?”
“As late as the patient wants.”
“Like the day before birth?”
“If necessary.”
“And you’ve seen them? Right on down to the last week?”.
“Yes.”
“And these aren’t babies?”
“Technically, no,” the doctor answered.
Linc had long passed Joanna’s and Giavanna’s warnings. So he made a conscious decision to throw discretion to the wind and go for it.
“Do you have any children, doctor?” Linc asked.
“A girl five and a boy three,” the doctor answered proudly.
“And would you put one of them in the corner and turn a madman with a machete loose on them?”
“That’s not the same,” the doctor said.
“It IS the same,” Linc shouted. “Exactly the same. Twenty weeks, any number of weeks in the womb and 3 or 5 years old. They are the same children, just different ages. My god, man, you’ve seen it all. You’re an intelligent man. Can’t you see it’s the same. I really fail to understand . . .” Linc was shouting now.
Joanna kicked him in the ankle and the pain shot up his leg. She flinched as though to say she didn’t mean to kick that hard.
Linc flew into an angry tirade. “Don’t kick me, Joanna, and I don’t care what you or your friends think,” Linc shouted as he jumped to his feet. “You can stay here or leave with me,” Linc said firmly.

Joanna apologized to everyone and left with Linc. They rode back to her house in silence. He did not expect to ever see or hear from her again. But she fooled him. He stopped the car in front of her apartment. Joanna just sat in her seat for a few seconds. Then she reached over and turned the key off on the car. She was crying.

Linc looked at her and she looked back.

“Dear Linc, please come in and let’s talk. I do love you so much. And this man and his work don’t matter a bit to me compared to my love for you.” She touched his hand. “Please, darling.”

He followed her to the door like a puppy. She poured them both a sherry and sat down. Linc put his straight on the table. There was an awkward silence.

“My darling” Joanna began, “there is something that I must tell you.”

‘Oh, oh,’ thought Linc. ‘Here it comes. We are finished.’

“Obviously you love children. I do too. I hate what that man does. I don’t understand how he can be so deceived. But we will never see him again. The thing is, I love you and I don’t want to lose you.”

Again he was pleasantly surprised. She didn’t know how much he wanted to keep her always by his side. He liked to sit and just hold her hand. He liked everything about her.
“But, Lincoln, I . . . , I can’t . . . well, my doctor says that I can’t ever have children.” Tears came to her eyes and she searched his eyes for a response.

Gradually, Linc started to smile and then to laugh. His laughter got away from him. It was only the surprised and then the wounded look in her eyes that made him stop laughing.

“No, no, my dear Joanna,” Linc said. “There is not a problem here. I love you. We can adopt. Believe me we can, we really can.” He kissed her several times on the lips and cheeks.

She started to smile. “I was afraid you wouldn’t have me. So I didn’t tell you.”

“There is truly no problem,” Linc reassured her.

“Then what is it? Lincoln, I am not a girl. My pride is gone. Why won’t you marry me?”

“My darling, I want to marry you. Right away. Tomorrow.”

Her eyes filled with tears. She smiled. And then kissed him hard. He kissed back.

He held her for a minute before he spoke. “I too have a secret,” he said.

She pulled back to look him in the eyes. “Go ahead, Linc. I can hear anything now.”

“Well, it’s not just you hearing it. There are also, well, legal complications.”

“You are already married,” she blurted.

“No, no. Not that,” he said.

“Then what?”

“I have a night job, you might call it. Stumbled into it a few years ago now.” He could imagine some of
the things she was thinking. Dope smuggler, burglar, and so on.

So he spoke quickly now to avoid twenty questions. “In short, I recover living babies from the garbage cans behind abortion clinics and turn them over to an underground group in the Catholic Church for adoption.” There, it was out.

“Linc, that’s wonderful. What could be illegal about that?”

“Well, believe it or not, there are a few shady areas legally. Evidently, it’s OK to kill them if you are medically licensed, but not quite as OK to rescue them as an ordinary person. And the laws are different in each country. And my route includes 5 countries normally, sometimes more.”

“I would have never dreamed. How do you do this? What is it like? Can I go with you? I have a million questions, my darling” She was genuinely excited now.

Linc put a finger to her lips. She listened.

“Maybe I can answer some of them, at least with Father Frank O'Dwyer’s help.”

“Father O'Dwyer?”

“Yes. He has a bunch of nuns that run the placement part. But I’m getting ahead here. This is the important part, my love, the worst part.”

“Go ahead,” she said softly.

“Sometimes, they are still alive. The majority of them are dead and you have to, well, sort through. And sometimes they seem strong enough to transport. But sometimes they are obviously in too much pain to even pick up. So I have to wait with them, right there in the alley, until they die. I can’t stand to leave them to die
alone. And that increases my chances of getting caught, arrested. You see, my dear . . .”

This time she put her finger to his lips. “Those poor little things. Oh, my darling, Linc. What a responsibility! Can’t you just dwell on the ones that make it?”

“That’s what O’Dwyer says,” Linc said.
“Well, he’s right. Oh, my dear,” she answered.
They held each other for a long time.
“And you thought it would be hard to tell me this,” Joanna said.

“Yes, and at first I had to keep in mind that in most countries a wife, and only a wife, is not compelled to testify against her husband. Then when I became sure of you, it had gone on so long and I was emotionally, well, paralyzed.”

“Yet another reason for us to get married soon,” she said. “You don’t feel trapped now, do you?” She asked.

“No, my dear. I feel well and truly loved.”
“When can I go with you?” She asked.
“Let’s meet with O’Dwyer and Sister Mary Margaret first,” Linc urged.
“Mary Margaret, you’re kidding.”
“That’s what I said to O’Dwyer at first. No, a real Sister Mary Margaret.”
“There must be hundreds of them,” Joanna said.
“But they are not all like this one,” Linc responded. “She’s special and she’s also really O’Dwyer’s Sister.”

“Darling, I had no trouble believing you about the babies, but now you are kidding with me,” she said.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

Linc just smiled.
CHAPTER 10
Wedding

Since they were both older, Linc and Joanna wanted a small simple wedding. But the Reverend Monsignor Frank O'Dwyer wouldn’t hear of it. Frank was ecstatic. His friend Linc getting married. Linc had not realized how much he meant to the priest personally. Linc had loved and depended on Frank for so long that he had begun to presume that some of the care he received from the priest was out of priestly duty even though they had known each other since their military service.

O'Dwyer insisted on the wedding being in a small Vatican chapel. For this they both had to be members of the Catholic church. Joanna, being a lapsed Catholic, recommitted and Linc as an accomplished hypocrite went along with it all. The week after they got it straight with the church, they were married. O'Dwyer would be disappointed in their church attendance for some time to come. Joanna didn’t like to go without Linc and Linc did not like to go at all.

Joanna wore lots of her grandmother’s lace over a simple white gown. Giavanna was her matron of honor. O'Dwyer performed the ceremony and Linc asked Joanna’s brother George to stand up with him as best man. The whole ceremony took less than half an hour. They had both insisted on keeping it short. Coworkers of both Linc and Joanna attended and Sister Mary Margaret and about twenty-five other nuns swelled the crowd. The
happy couple honeymooned on the Island of Capri, the Emperor’s island. In a week they were both back and hard at work.

Linc didn’t go to Holland very often and when he did, he really did not know where to look for aborted babies. This time he had to stay for a series of meetings in the aero electronics business. So he checked into a nice hotel in Amsterdam and decided to just enjoy what he could of the city. He wished that Joanna was with him but for the time being that could not be helped. He ate a leisurely supper the first night and went to bed early. The next day was crammed with meetings and he made several very large sales. Normally, this would have made him happy but he was always aware that one night off could mean the death of another innocent child. So he changed into his night crawler clothes as Joanna called them and plunged out into the darkness.

He managed to find a clinic that he had been to just once before. Normally, Linc had a great sense of where he was but this neighborhood had changed so much there was little to remind him. He was also a little unsure about his contact here and he had not been able to get O'Dwyer on the phone and no one answered the private line at the priory, which was quite unusual. He was about to call Joanna at home to get some more numbers from her when O'Dwyer called him.

“Linc, I saw where you called,” the priest said.

“Yes, Frank, thanks,” Linc said. “I’m in Amsterdam and don’t remember any drops. The Sisters must be in one of their long retreats because no one answers there.”
“They are and seven are off on a visit to another priory or they wouldn’t let you down like this. I told them to forward that line to me, but they aren’t much at technical stuff. Do you have a child?” Frank asked.

“No, but I am looking now. Just wanted to be prepared,” Linc responded.

Frank gave him exactly two local numbers and explained, “Now remember, Linc, you may have to explain yourself to the first number. He is a priest who has volunteered to help but has never actually been called upon to do anything. The other one is the older woman you used before. She should not need reminding and Mary Margaret told me just last week that she had called wondering why she hadn’t received a child to place in so long.” The priest wished Linc God’s speed and hung up.

Linc checked the garbage and as luck or whoever would have it, he found a strong girl child right away. There were two others but they were long gone. Linc had ‘borrowed’ a hotel blanket as he actually did not really know if he would need one and he did not have his car with him since he had flown to Amsterdam. He was sneaking off of the clinic property while trying to keep the baby warm and get it to take some formula which he had bought ready to drink at a chemist just before he left the hotel when suddenly he felt strangely surrounded.

“What you got there, man?” A gangly boy asked in plain English.

“What’s it to you?” Linc asked. This brought forth about 18 or 20 youths which Linc recognized as one of the international gangs that roamed this ancient city. They wanted everything they could get, Linc thought,
probably to buy drugs. One of the heftier guys snatched the blanket and almost dropped the baby. The throw away formula bottle hit the pavement like cheap plastic does and one of them grabbed it to see what it was. Then pandemonium broke lose.

“What’s this? Baby food?”

“That’s a baby and you almost dropped it,” one young woman screamed. They all gathered round and all the women wanted to hold the child.

“Man, what you doin’ here with a baby?” The first young man asked. “This is no place for a baby.”

They all looked at him like he was from Mars but they were very quiet.

For some reason Linc felt that the truth would do as well as anything in this situation.

“This is what I do,” Linc said. “I rescue them.”

“Rescue from what?” someone asked.

Linc looked back at the rear door of the clinic. There was a small sign there like the one in the front. More silence.

“Hey, this baby is supposed to be aborted,” one woman said.

“I can’t allow that,” Linc said.

“Wow, how cool,” the first young man finally said. “You’re like a life giver. A hero, man. Right, Tonya?” he asked the woman next to him.

“I’ve,…we’ve done this very thing, Glen,” she said.

“Yea, but that was real early before it was really a kid right?”
“I don’t know,” the woman answered. She had the sad eyes of a woman tortured by the memory of an abortion.

There was considerable talk. They gave the baby back to Linc and tried to clean up the bottle. Linc figured that it wasn’t much dirtier than where the kid had been, so he let her suck on it some more.

“Wow, she’s hungry,” one man said.

“How you know it’s a she,” another asked.

“Hey, the blanket was off. I can tell the difference even with a baby, can’t you?” he asked. The others all motioned for them to be quiet.

“Hey, man,” one of the young men asked, “can we help?”

“Help. What do you mean?” Linc asked.

“Can we help? Can we rescue some kids? Isn’t that what you called it? You’re not from around here, are you?” the young man continued.

“No, I’m from Munich, more or less. I’m a salesman by trade.”

“Well, we are always here,” the young man said. “Maybe we can help.”

“You’re all on drugs,” Linc said. “How can I expect you to be dependable or even gentle with the babies?” Linc had lost all of his fear of them.

“No, man, we are not on drugs. We are an anti-drug gang,” the first young man said. Linc had heard about these gangs. They still stole to live but they were anti-drug to the core. They all bared their arms to show him their anti-drug tattoos that Linc had seen in the paper.
“And we will take care of the kids,” Tonya said. “At least until we can find them a better home.”

“That’s already set up,” Linc said. “All you have to do is turn them in to our people. But you have to turn them in, most of them need a doctor for a while.”

“O.K. Good,” someone said. “We find them. Wrap them up and give them some formula like you do and take them to your people. Show us how.”

“Yea!” They all agreed. Someone asked where to get the formula and Linc told them. And he told them to buy it, not to steal it. They agreed.

Linc thought for a minute. Was he insane? Recruit a street gang into the system. Then he asked himself, ‘Who else was available for this in this city?’ He was sure that the babies wouldn’t mind. So he went for it. He called his contact and explained to her. She was a little hesitant; so they thought up a plan. Linc would give these kids her number which was a prepaid wireless. They would call and she would tell them where to drop the kid. They would leave the kid and go. The woman had a few places picked out which were watched by friends so that the pickup person couldn’t be followed unawares. They set a place for this drop off for a test.

The whole gang went quietly to the drop off and laid the child in a dry drain pipe and departed. In ten minutes they called the woman again; someone in the gang always had a phone. Linc didn’t ask if it was stolen. The woman would report that the child was safe. The gang escorted Linc back to his hotel.

“You can’t be too careful on these streets,” Glen told Linc. Linc went to bed amazed. O'Dwyer wasn’t
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

going to believe this. Just before he went to sleep, Linc thought, ‘What if they sell the baby to someone who wants a kid?’ So what? It was still better than a slow death in a garbage can.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
It was dark and Linc could not see anything at first. Then there seemed to be a faint glow about the fog that surrounded him. He knew that he had to walk carefully for some reason. Every so often he would hear a painful infant cry and he knew that he had stepped on another one. The cries weren’t very strong or piercing but they were full of pain, tiny voices full of pain. Soon it was fully light and Linc could see where he was walking. That was better. Then he began to notice small white stakes coming out of the ground. He knew that these babies had died and that these were grave markers. They were dying all around him. He would pick up the nearest squalling infant and try to run as fast as he could back to a woman far behind him. He would leave that baby and go to find another one to rescue. The field was covered with green grass almost a foot high and although he could see the grave markers, he could not see the living ones until he was right on top of them. Then they would cry out in pain. His job seemed to be endless, and hopeless, but he kept on working as if he was the only person working. He knew he could not stop.

Infants all around him. High grass. Cries of pain. Going back and forth and picking up crying infants to take them back to that woman in the rear. Who was she? Each time he delivered an infant to her he would study
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

her face. It was different every time. Linc thought it must be the mother of that particular child.

There was also blood on the field. The blood of infants. He tried not to step in it or get it on his clothing. But that was useless. Anyone out there would have infants blood on them. The crescendo of their cries rose up from the ground and seemed to penetrate everything around him. Then he woke up with a start and sat bolt upright. It was as if he were gasping for breath. That same dream again. The longer he continued to do this work the more frequent the dreams became. It didn’t take a psychologist to interpret this dream. There were so many infants and he felt that he was barely making a dent in the effort. He needed to talk to O'Dwyer again.

They were at one of their usual meeting places. A pub where the background noise was just loud enough. Frank had stopped wearing his priestly collar so that he wouldn’t be conspicuous. The entire ‘railroad’ was working rather well. Linc would leave Frank and Sister Mary Margaret a phone message when he was on his way to find a child, something like ‘the baby’s due any time now.’ If he struck out, he would call back with a ‘not yet.’ If either Frank or Sister personally answered it, it would still be the same message. If he came up with a baby, he would call and make the announcement like a proud father, “It’s a 6 pound boy.” Then they knew to have someone, preferably with a doctor, meet him. Linc would mention the town, they had the same meeting place in each town. This saved him round trip driving time during extra busy times. The count for rescues rose higher and higher. Essentially if the baby had to be held
at a convent for a few days, nobody ever knew. He found out that the nuns had been taking in and passing on unwanted children intermittently for generations.

“You are actually doing a great job, and it’s gigantic,” O'Dwyer said. “You have to try to see the glass as half full and not as half empty. You are so close to it. I can understand your feelings. Also Linc, and you really need to hear me on this, you need to actively, I said actively, look for more people to help. Don’t just wait until you run into them. I know that God is good to send them your way but you need to look for them. You are, after all, the most qualified person to do this. You can tell if they are the kind of person that will be able to do it. It is a hard and a difficult job. It takes brains and courage and a certain deep conviction for the children.” O'Dwyer paused.


O'Dwyer responded, “Actually?”

“It takes a lot of time away from actual rescues to actively hunt for help. And, Frank, even with the pain involved it is the rescue that gives me a feeling of satisfaction. I don’t know how I will find the time to do anything else.”

Frank waited until he was sure that Linc was finished before answering. “Well, old friend, that’s always the problem when you want to increase the work, any work. The top guy, usually the founder, has to give up some of the present satisfaction in order to recruit and train helpers. That’s where you know if you really love
the children. They have to come first, even before your own satisfaction. I know that’s hard, Linc, but that’s the nature of love.”

“I never thought of that, Frank,” Linc answered. “Now that’s hard; that’s a hard truth.”

“Yes, it is, ole buddy. But I don’t lie to you,” Frank responded.

“I know that, Frank. I know.”

Linc met Carlo Padua while ‘in the line of duty.’ Not Linc’s duty, but Carlo’s duty. What Linc thought would be the fulfillment of his worst fears suddenly turned to a great blessing. Linc didn’t check this particular little clinic in Northern Italy all that often. It was a little out of the way. For one thing Linc did not go to his electronics customer there very often. But this particular winter day Linc had to go check on this account and he did not get away until after dark due to the usual Italian courtesy customs associated with buying and selling. As he left the company parking lot, he was hungry so he stopped in a little restaurant nearby and feasted on authentic Italian. By the time he was full of three kinds of wine and who knows how many kinds of cheeses and pasta, he really just wanted to head for home and the warm arms of Joanna. But he realized that he would not be back this way for some time so he parked a respectable distance away from the little clinic, grabbed two new blankets out of the back and walked around the back of the building. There wasn’t much there but to his surprise Linc found an especially tiny little dark skinned boy who was making an effort at some respectable crying. There were several long knife wounds on his little
body but they didn’t appear to be very deep. Linc wrapped the baby in a blanket and put another blanket on top of that as it was really starting to turn cold. As he passed the end of the alley, he felt something poking in his back. His first thought was that it was the gun barrel of a mugger so he was relieved to find out that it was a policeman.

“And just what do you have in the blanket, signore?” The policemen asked in Italian as he removed his nightstick from Linc’s back.

Linc showed him.

“Oh, what a tiny bambino,” the policeman nearly cooed.

“Where did you get him; it is a boy, is it not?”
“Si, it’s a boy.”
“Why is he so tiny?”
“Because they aborted him early in the pregnancy,” Linc answered.

The policeman looked back down the alley and a look of understanding crossed his face.

“And you have dug him out of the garbage, signore?”

“Yes, I have,” Linc stated proudly.

“Oh, Signore, I am not even sure that is legal,” the policeman said.

“You and a lot of other people including the courts,” Linc answered. “If it is legal to kill them, why is it not legal to rescue them?” Linc asked.

The policeman thought for a moment. “My name is Carlo Padua,” he said. “How can I help?”

Linc was pleasantly surprised. “Well, I don’t get here very often,” Linc said.
"You have been here before?"
"Si, I come when I can. This is something that I do."
"Can I hold him, Signore?" Carlo asked.
Linc took off the second blanket and handed the baby to the policeman as he slipped his club into his belt and took the baby carefully. He folded back the blanket and the little fellow opened his eyes.
"He is wonderful, Signore." Then Carlo looked anxious and started to uncover the baby completely.
"Is he injured?"
"A little, but I don’t think the cuts are very deep," Linc responded.
"Oh, who would do that to a baby?" Carlo said angrily.
"It’s a shame, isn’t it?" Linc said. "However, Carlo, right now he needs a doctor and some food. I have people who will take care of that," Linc said.
"I have people who can do that as well," Carlo said. "Let me have him, Signore. My cousins and I will raise him right. He is obviously Italian."
"That offer could save me a lot of time tonight," Linc thought. "Maybe Sister and her nuns will forgive me one baby."
They both looked around.
"Your vehicle, Signore?" Carlo asked.
"Just down there," Linc pointed.
Neither of them knew just what to say. Finally Carlo spoke again. "I could watch this place for more of them," Carlo volunteered.
"That would be excellent," Linc said. "There are so many more for me to find."
“I will find them as I walk my beat,” Carlo said. “And I will take them to my cousin who is a doctor and to other cousins to raise them.”

“That’s great, Carlo. Can I have your phone number so we can talk from time to time?”

Carlo supplied the number without hesitation.

“There is just one other thing,” Linc added.

“What is that, Signore?” Carlo asked.

“There are a group of nuns in Germany that take most of the babies and they keep records, for the church that is. Could you keep them informed?”

“They won’t take them from us?” Carlo asked.

“No, no, they just like to know that they have been baptized.”

“O.K., we will have them baptized by a priest. How do I call them?”

Linc gave Carlo Sister Mary Margaret’s name and phone. He told him that Sister and some of her staff spoke Italian.

“That is good, Signore, and …” Carlo said with a question in his voice.

“Oh, I am Lincoln Harper. My friends call me Linc.”

“Linc, good. We will talk often. It sounds like you know about many such places. Maybe my cousins and I can help some more.”

“Of course,” Linc said. He knew that Carlo and his cousins were going to be a great help.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
The sight of other men around the priory was unexpected. Most any time Linc was there only one male gardener, Sasha, who was somewhere between 50 and 90 years old, could be seen on the property. One other time there was a mechanic who came to service the two old cars that the Sisters kept. One other time there were actually three monks from a neighboring monastery who Linc observed trading some of their special wine for some of the preserves that the Sisters put up. Linc knew that the Sisters would never lie to him. He also should have known that he had to ask pointed questions to get specific answers.

Carlo was now taking some time off to work with Linc. His cousins, Marco and Felix, also helped. On this visit Carlo and Linc were delivering two particularly fussy boys that they would be very glad to leave with the helpful Sisters. Linc and Carlo had barely slipped past some local officials in the town where they made the rescue. They had to learn to be expert sneak thieves since the clinics had taken to guarding their garbage. This action on their part convinced Linc that they were not really sane. If it really was garbage, then why guard it? And if it was not garbage, but something valuable, as indeed it was, why be throwing it away? Then Linc
learned that some of the ‘remains’ were being sold for experimental purposes and he understood then where the value was. However, when those who ran the clinics wanted to sell some of them, they made very sure that they were dead and sometimes even froze the remains for safe keeping. These Linc and Carlo could do nothing about.

The Sisters took the two noisy boys who sounded quite healthy from Carlo and Linc. They didn’t stay very long. Linc had plans with Joanna and Carlo always had something to do with his wife and seven children. Linc didn’t go directly to the priory for several weeks. It was all he could do to cover his electronics route since several new contracts had been signed by both the German and the American governments. Linc would find a child at the smaller rural clinics once every couple of weeks and he would call for a pickup, meet the messenger and be on his way. After he had worked the hump off of his new contracts a bit, he slowed down.

On one short trip Joanna went with him. He finished early and asked her, “Want to try our luck at a clinic, my love?”

“Yes, yes, I hope we find some tonight,” she answered.

Nothing at the first clinic. Another 26 miles to the next clinic where they found a reasonably strong little girl, that is considering that she had not eaten since she was born, probably about 3 to 4 hours, and her body temperature was probably very low. By this time Linc could tell just by touching the infants.
They had to pass another clinic on the way to the priory so there was no question that they would check it. It was closer to the city and a haphazard fence had been built around the back side. They parked down the block, left the little girl in the car and each of them grabbed a blanket. The gate was not even locked but there was a large ‘no trespassing’ sign in German. They slipped in. At first they thought the garbage had been collected but then they heard a whimper from one of the cans. There were four tiny bodies in the can and the little boy on top was flopping around on the bodies of the other three. Joanna started to gag and looked at Linc. He motioned for her to stop and she could read his lips telling her that everything was going to be all right. She held the blanket while Linc placed the little boy on it. Then she wrapped the baby tightly and they moved towards the gate. A little old man, they didn’t know if he was supposed to be the guard or if he was just passing by, shouted at them. Joanna shouted something back in German that Linc did not understand. He thought that his German was pretty good. Apparently not as good as Joanna’s this night. He asked her what she had said but she told him he really didn’t want to know. He took her word on that. They hurried back to the car and got out of there with Joanna in the back seat with the two babies. They went straight to the priory.

Linc honked the horn as he drove through the gates into the cobbled courtyard. He knew that the nuns would come running. Then he noticed a strange car in the courtyard. But the nuns came anyway. So the car must belong to someone who could be trusted. The nuns took the babies and they all went into reception. Linc wanted
to see Sister Mary Margaret who soon showed up with the usual welcoming smile. She hugged Joanna and the babies disappeared. As the door opened into the private area, Linc saw two monks. Mary Margaret knew that he saw them.

“Brother Farel is a doctor,” Mary Margaret said. “The other is his assistant.”

Linc looked skeptical.

“What?” Mary Margaret asked. “Lincoln, you know we are completely honorable.”

“That’s not it, Sister,” Linc said. “There’s something else going on, isn’t there?”

“Nothing to be concerned about,” she answered.

“Mary Margaret!” Linc almost shouted. Mary Margaret offered them some wine, some of the monk’s wine, but she knew that would not shut Linc down.

“Most of them, the great majority of them, go to foster homes outside,” Mary Margaret finally said.


“Nineteen out of twenty,” Celestine answered quite quickly.

“You knew that rather quickly,” Linc said.

“She gets the final figures,” Mary Margaret said.

“So you’re saying that five percent, 1 out of 20, actually stays in the priory with you,” Linc said.

“Well, we couldn’t keep the boys all that long,” Mary Margaret answered. “The monks take the boys.”

“And why can’t they be placed?” Linc asked.

“Handicaps. Most couples don’t want handicapped children. Our doctors are very good and we can’t lie to them.”
“What kind of handicaps?” Linc asked. Joanna was fully involved by now.

“Various things, crippledness, breathing disorders usually from heart problems, some from inhaling their own blood or the blood of another. And some mental problems from being so close to suffocation.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Linc asked while he rightly anticipated the answer.

“Well, Monsignor O'Dwyer mentioned to me, me only, mind you . . .” Mary Margaret began but Linc raised his hand to signal her to stop

“You thought I wouldn’t bring them in,” Linc said.

Mary Margaret nodded. “You see, Linc, we greatly appreciate what you do. You are a modern hero among us. We pray for you and your crew all the time. But we can’t bear the thought of even one being lost, well, er, unnecessarily. But now we know that you bring them all no matter what,” she said holding her clasped hands up in thankfulness to God.

“I often don’t have a lot of time to waste on site as it were. Why I’ve been shot at several times and yelled at many times but even then I always transport or wait until they die. If I absolutely do have to move, even if I think it will cause them more pain when they are dying anyway, I move.”

“We know, Lincoln. We do.”

“O.K. Fine. But I want to see some of these kids. How many girls do you have here?”

“Nineteen.”

“Nineteen! Are you sure you don’t keep more than 1 out of 20?”

Celestine nodded very clearly.
“You and your crew have rescued a lot of children, Lincoln,” Mary Margaret pronounced. “A whole lot, and we love you for it.”

They went to the back to visit.

Clara was three and a half and was dressed in a frilly little white dress. She was sitting in the corner of the playroom holding a stuffed bear and humming to herself. When they got within about twenty feet of Clara, Sister Mary Margaret called to her softly. Clara got up and walked directly to Sister. She was about halfway there when another little girl who looked to be slightly older ran in front of her and then moved quickly back out of the way. When Clara got there, she raised her head as if to look directly at Sister. It was then that Joanna realized that Clara was blind.

“The other girls try very hard to stay out of the way,” Sister said. “Sometimes they even take her hand and guide her around. They are all very loving children.”

“Will she mind if I pick her up?” Joanna asked.

“No, go right ahead. She is a very gentle child,” Sister answered.

Linc gave Joanna a slight glance of disapproval. He didn’t want her getting too attached. As they moved around the large playroom, Joanna kept hugging Clara repeatedly. Before long Clara put her little arms around Joanna’s neck.

“We believe that she is very smart,” Sister said. “We are going to start her on brail pretty soon. They have simple teaching versions for children.
Irma didn’t say anything at all. At first Linc and Joanna just thought she was very shy. The Sisters were all temporarily busy so they were on their own. When they couldn’t get Irma to talk to them, Joanna picked her up. It wasn’t long until Linc realized that Joanna was having a hard time holding on to her. The child was not squirming or complaining.

“She doesn’t cooperate,” Joanna said. “It’s like she is just dead weight.”

Sister walked up and just stood there watching. Finally she spoke, “Irma doesn’t react socially at all. She doesn’t speak. She’s almost four so she should. We even had her checked to make sure she has vocal cords; she has never even cried aloud. The doctors say that they can find nothing wrong with her but her brain scan is not normal. The speech center looks normal but the current doesn’t seem to be flowing, so to speak.”

Joanna put Irma back down in the big chair she had been sitting in. “Not a sound?” she asked.

“Never,” Sister answered. “And, as you have seen, she doesn’t socialize at all, just goes limp when you pick her up.”

“Is she deaf?” Linc asked.

“No. Watch,” Sister said. She went around behind the child and picked up two pot lids that some of the children had been playing with. She clanged them together hard. Irma jumped but did not look around or show any curiosity.

“We don’t know what to do. We feed her and bathe her and clothe her. She watches the other children eat, her arms and hands and mouth work, but she just watches.”
“Ever try just letting her go hungry?” Joanna asked.
“Yes. No response. She would starve if we didn’t feed her,” Sister answered.
“You might remember bringing her in, Lincoln,” Sister said. “I took her from your arms. You found her because she was moving, but she never cried.”
“On a rainy night in February?” Linc asked.
“Yes, February 29th, leap year. You said you felt sorry for her because her birthday would only come once every four years.”
“I do remember,” Linc said.
Joanna was looking into the child’s eyes.
“They are mostly blank,” Joanna said, “but every so often she’s in there. Someone looks back at me.”
“As a psychologist what do you think?” Sister asked.
“I think she’s hiding. She’s afraid to come out.”
“At this age?” Linc asked.
“Yes. It’s not a matter of intelligence; it’s instinctive. It’s a silent cry.”
“Like all the others who don’t make it,” Sister added.
“Exactly. She represents them all,” Linc said. “She is the poster child for all of them who have no voice or influence in what happens to them.”
Joanna and Sister Mary Margaret nodded in agreement.
“I want a picture of her,” Linc said firmly knowing that the nuns would do anything he asked if it were humanly possible.
Sister Mary Margaret looked at Sister Celestine and they left Linc and Joanna to themselves again. Linc and Joanna went around the room playing with and loving on the children who received it gladly, except of course, for Irma. Celestine returned with an instant camera and took a perfect picture of Irma. As it came out of the camera, she handed it to Linc. Linc and Joanna took a look. “Perfect,” Linc said as he put the picture in his pocket. Later he had a larger copy made and framed it for the mantel of their apartment. He kept the smaller original in the glove box of his car. For Lincoln Harper this silent child ‘said it all.’

Almost half of these children that the nuns had been unable to place had some kind of a limp. Some were very mild and some looked severe. But that didn’t slow them down. They ran and played like any happy child. This was a testimony to the nun’s selfless care for them and to the deep seated human desire to live and to prosper.

Little Cinzia had a palsy. She was an adorable little girl but Linc found her the hardest to look at because of the constant shaking. Sister showed them a dented place at the base of her neck.

“When you brought her in, neither you nor I thought she could live. This wound was obvious. But she pulled through and it was not long before the shaking began. The Monsignor has her scheduled for surgery in Rome with the hopes of stopping the palsy.”
“Let me know how it goes,” Linc said as he gave Cinzia a gentle hug which she returned with shaking arms.

Linc found out that the doctor and the brother that were visiting were from a monastery that had 22 boys and it would be 23 after tonight.

“What’s wrong with him?” Linc asked. “Why can’t he be placed?”

The Priest and the monk looked at each other. Something invisible to Linc and Joanna passed between them.

“I don’t think he will ever walk,” the doctor said. He showed them how the little fellow’s legs seemed to have no life in them.

“We, we didn’t notice,” Joanna said.

“We had them wrapped,” Linc added.

“That’s fine,” the priest doctor responded. “If he is able to walk later, we will place him. We are glad to keep these boys, sir. But we don’t keep any that we can place.”

“Here, come over to our monastery and we will show you something,” the monk said.

They went from there to the monastery to see the boys there.

Little Aldo came rushing out to meet them in his tiny wheelchair. He was almost four. The lower part of his body was very tiny, like a boy of less than two. But from the waist up he appeared normal.

“Brother Giuseppe made that chair for Aldo,” The priest proudly proclaimed. He had taken a simple wooden child’s chair and mounted an axel under it to hold two
small bicycle wheels, then two small wheels on the front that rotated in any direction. Aldo was held in the chair by a seatbelt made of an old wide farmer’s belt. Aldo’s little arms were already a little over developed. He wheeled round and round the adults squealing with delight.

“He’s a very happy boy,” Brother Sebastian said. “So full of life and joy. He is a great joy to all of us here and he is smart as well. He can already say his alphabet.”

Linc and Joanna felt better about the one that they had just brought in.

“You need to see Luka,” one of the monks told Linc. He had his own room.

Both Linc’s and Joanna’s alarms went off and they prepared themselves. ‘His own room’ seemed to signal something. Nothing else was said until they got to the room.

Luka smiled when they entered. He was sitting in bed in a pair of shorts. Linc breathed a sigh of relief. The boy looked as if he was covered with a giant pinkish blue birth mark. Joanna started to hug him and the friendly little boy seemed to draw back.

“He was burned,” the monk said.

Joanna proceeded with caution. The boy allowed a very gentle hug and smiled in return.

“I remember,” Linc said. “He was burned when I brought him in.”

“That’s correct, sir, some sort of new method. It essentially destroyed the health of the skin.”

“Is he in a lot of pain?” Joanna asked.
“It is constant, but not severe,” the monk answered. “That is why he prefers not to wear many clothes. We keep only silk sheets under him, more comfortable, and, of course, simple pain killers.”

Linc and Joanna were finally speechless. They stayed in Luka’s room in silence as if observing some kind of memorial and then left as diplomatically as possible. They didn’t even talk much between themselves for a while. Linc’s anger was boiling. He went to the chapel by himself and came back much calmer.

“Better?” Joanna asked.

“Yes. I told Him it was His problem. I am not big enough to carry it,” Linc said.

“Me too,” she answered.
Joanna decided to tell Giavanna what had happened the first night Linc took her with him.

“We drove to the rear of a clinic,” she began. “Linc opened the trunk and took the top blanket off the pile and started looking into several garbage cans. The tops were on but not very tight. We both had flashlights . . .”

“Flashlights?” Giavanna asked.
“Torches,” Joanna answered.
“Oh.”

Joanna went back to her story. “Anyway, I wasn’t watching where I stepped and felt my foot go down into something that I knew would be unpleasant. The odor was very bad and I could feel something wet seeping over the top of my shoe. The dogs had been into the cans. I shinned my torch into the mess. At first it just looked like table scraps or possibly garbage from a butcher shop, beef or lamb or something. Then I recognized something, a perfectly formed tiny human hand. I had to fight the urge to throw up very hard. ‘Oh, my God, Linc,’ I said. But he gestured to me and spoke. ‘Shhhh. Listen.’ We were both quiet. There was a slight whimpering from one of the cans. Linc moved carefully towards the sound. He removed the lid from the can and from the one next to it. He lifted several tiny bodies or parts of bodies from the one can and put them into the other. Before long he came
to the source of the sound. He lifted the baby out very carefully and examined it. It actually started to cry. ‘It’s a girl’, Linc said, almost proudly as if he had just become a father. He wrapped the little thing lovingly in the blanket and took me by the hand to lead me back to the car. ‘I don’t always have the luxury of checking them all,’ Linc said. ‘I used to but I learned that the ones with a will to live who were not too, er, lacerated almost always let me know.’ We got to the car. He helped me in and handed me the little bundle. ‘I think she’s hungry,’ I said as he turned the car around in that narrow space.

“We drove to a Catholic convent and pulled around to the back. I saw someone peek through the curtains as Linc turned off the engine. We took the child inside. There were a lot of nuns and two priests inside. ‘We’ve summoned the doctor, Signore,’ one of them said. They were both looking at me. ‘My wife,’ Linc said. ‘Signora, you are so welcome.’ They both shook my hand vigorously.

“Soon there was a slight tap on the door. We were in the kitchen. A little man came in. I was introduced to him, but he barely slowed down as he went to examine the child. He asked the priests in Italian for a small bottle of formula, type 2. They took a bottle from the refrigerator and warmed it in a waiting pan of water. It didn’t take long for the child to accept it. She seemed to want more but the doctor wouldn’t allow it. She had had her second meal.”

“I, . . . I thought the unborn were just a mass of protoplasm,” Giavanna said.

“That’s what they want you to believe,” Joanna said. “They know better but they don’t really care.”
Giavanna just looked at her for a while. “Where do the babies go from there?” Giavanna asked.

“Linc has had a deal with Father O’Dwyer. No need to swear you to silence?” Joanna asked.

“No, no, of course not, I’m as dumb as a post,” Giavanna answered.

“O’Dwyer has developed, with Linc’s help, a whole network that places the babies with foster parents. They are couples usually with several children already. They register these children as their own if they can. They have some cooperative doctors who supply birth certificates. If that doesn’t work, then there’s another, …well, never mind.”

“Here in Italy?”

“Yes, but also in Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Austria.”

“Wow.”

Joanna was visibly upset.

“What is it?” Linc asked.

“It’s Giavanna. There’s something bothering her and I advised her to talk to you. But she says that you will hate her if she tells you about it.”

“I don’t hate anybody, Joanna, you know that.”

“I do, my love, but she is so full of guilt.”

“For what?”

“She’s had two abortions, one before she met you and one just after. Quite a while ago now.”

“Why does she think I will hate her. She doesn’t know about my secret job, does she Joanna?”

Joanna looked sheepish.
“Joanna,” Linc asked forcefully. She confessed. “But you do talk about the subject a lot too. She knows you hate it.”

“She needs a place to talk,” Linc said. “Could you tell her that?” Joanna asked. “Can you get her to open up to me?” Linc asked. “I think so. I’ll invite her over.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow night.”

The next night came and sure enough Joanna got Giavanna to come over. She had obviously been crying. Joanna helped her get started. Linc was very sympathetic. “I though you would hate me”, Giavanna said. “I don’t hate the mothers,” Linc said. “They are mostly deceived into thinking that they aren’t killing real babies.”

“But I saw my last one. They try to whisk it away before you can see it. I saw mine. A beautiful little girl with perfect little fingers and toes. Only she was dead. Oh, I killed her and it haunts me day and night. I’m being treated for depression by my doctor. He has to keep increasing the medicine,” she said.

“You need a special place to talk,” Linc said. “Talk to who? We’re talking now,” Giavanna said. “I know. But you need a place to talk to, well, I guess it’s God. It’s helped me a lot.”

“You’ve never killed a baby,” Giavanna said. “It’s just that all of us have something we are not proud of,” Joanna said. “Linc has this little chapel where he goes to talk. Of course, it is fine for you to talk to us.
But this other kind of talking has helped Linc a lot in the past.”

“Sounds like praying to me,” Giavanna said. “I’ve never been very religious.”

“You could call it that if you want to,” Joanna said. “But you don’t have to,” Linc added.

“Where is this chapel?” Giavanna asked.

“Oh, it’s a short drive from here,” Linc answered.

“But I would imagine that any place like it will do.”

“Will you help me find one?” Giavanna asked.

“Sure,” they both answered.

Linc excused himself and called Frank O'Dwyer and came back with directions for Giavanna.

Giavanna tried the local chapel for a while, actually it was a small church, and said that she felt better. In about two months she asked the doctor to reduce his medicine for depression. ‘It was working,’ Linc thought. ‘Everyone needs a place to talk.’

Then Joanna had another idea which she brought up during breakfast one Saturday.

“Linc?” she said.

He knew that tone. He was about to agree with something.

“Yes, my love.” He was ready.

“Do you suppose we could take Giavanna with us on a rescue?”

“Do you think it would do anything for Giavanna?” Linc asked.

“Maybe. Also, maybe you could pick an easier one at first.”

“Easier?”
“Yes, I don’t know . . .” her voice trailed off.

Linc thought for a minute. “O.K. I know of one small clinic. Not usually too many bodies and a good chance of finding a live one. Carlo is working it now. But I could ask him to let us take a night or two.”

“Good. I’ll call Giavanna,” Joanna agreed.

Giavanna listened very quietly. Her eyes seemed to grow larger and larger. She was totally amazed. Linc asked her if she wanted to go with them. He knew that she would be more comfortable if Joanna was along. But three of them would be quite a crowd for such a mission so they would have to move fast and according to a plan. Linc outlined everything he could think of. Joanna told her how to dress, dark clothing with a snug fit.

They went on Tuesday. Linc parked down the block on the street behind the clinic because the back way in was simpler. This location he knew very well. Before they got quite to the back of the clinic they heard crying. The women started to hurry. Linc slowed them down. Slow and purposeful he had told them. They each had a blanket.

There were eight tiny bodies. Giavanna choked back tears. Linc told her firmly to cry later, it was time now to act.

She obeyed.

The crier was about half way down in the second can. It was a little girl and she didn’t look to be in too bad a shape. There was a lot of blood on her but most of it wasn’t hers. Linc was actually a little amazed. More and more he wondered if there really was a personal God and
if he was looking out for them. This could not have been better for Giavanna. She cooed over the baby and wrapped it in her blanket. Linc and Joanna checked the others quickly. All dead. Joanna didn’t choke once. As they started for the car, she looked at him and mouthed the words ‘Thank You.’

‘What was he doing?’ Linc asked himself. O'Dwyer would get a kick out of hearing about this.

When they got to the car, Linc started for the contact point. From this location it was the Priory where Mary Margaret lived.

“Where are we going?” Giavanna asked.

“To the drop off point,” Joanna answered.

“Drop off? To drop off what?” Giavanna asked.

“Why, the baby,” Joanna answered.

“No! no, we can’t. I want her,” Giavanna begged. “She’s perfect. I owe it. I love her already. Please, oh please.”

Linc and Joanna exchanged glances.

Joanna’s position was obvious. Linc was sceptical, the emotion of the moment and all that.

“First she has to see the doctor,” Linc said. And the doctor is at the Priory; that’s the drop off.”

“Priory? Nuns?” Giavanna asked.

“Yes. We couldn’t do this without them,” Linc said.

“They place the babies and provide medical care,” Joanna said.

“Giavanna, you must understand,” Linc said, “these children are legally nonexistent. They don’t have any papers.”
“Joanna told me that you have some people that help on that. Besides, I don’t care,” Giavanna said. “My cousin can get papers for her if necessary. I’ll buy them.”

Linc looked at Joanna again and mouthed the word, ‘cousin.’ Might come in handy.

At the Priory Joanna had to talk Giavanna into letting go of the baby so that the doctor could examine her. Then the nuns bathed her and started to feed her, a function that Giavanna begged to take over right away. They put clean clothes on the infant and wrapped her in a clean blanket and the little tyke actually fell asleep. Giavanna held her lovingly. What a sight!

“We had best get going,” Linc said probing for a reaction from Giavanna.

“Going? No!” Giavanna said. “Not without her.”

“My friend wants to keep the baby,” Joanna said.

“Are you a Catholic?” Sister asked Giavanna. Sister explained the agreement they struck when they got into this.

“No. Er … but I will become one. I want this baby. I love her. Her name is Irene. I’ll call her Renee. Look she’s so peaceful. Doesn’t Irene mean peace? That’s a good Catholic name, isn’t it? Little Renee, so quiet and sweet,” Giavanna said.

“Can she care for the child adequately?” Sister asked.

“She has lots of money, her own money, and good maternal instincts,” Joanna said.

Linc and Joanna looked at Sister. Sister looked squarely at Linc. Linc nodded and that was it.

“Very well,” Sister said, “but you will have to bring the baby back here so that Father can baptize her
and talk to you about joining the Church. You will be expected to keep your promise.

“I will,” Giavanna said. “It’s high time I joined a church anyway.”

Linc and Joanna came back with Giavanna to meet the priest. By now they were all more or less one big family. Giavanna had Renee baptized and arranged to join the church. From then on Linc and Joanna could watch Renee grow and celebrate life. Before long Joanna wanted to go on every rescue and began talking about choosing a baby or two for herself.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

CHAPTER 14

Romance

Linc always looked forward to the glass of wine that they offered at most of the religious houses where he dropped off the babies. The nuns in Italy always came up with some hearty red wine and the Brothers in Germany some good white wine and the Brothers or Sisters in France could come up with almost anything. Even though Linc no longer considered himself to be an alcoholic, his work kept him sober. The occasional glass of wine at some Priory or Monastery along the way didn’t seem to count. Besides it gave him a chance to rest and recover. His heart always raced after a rescue from either the excitement of saving another innocent human life or the chance of getting caught. Joanna told him that he was a thrill seeker. She was getting to know him pretty well the longer they were married. But he knew in his heart as did she that he did this work for the love of it. He loved rescuing the children. There was one other advantage of staying for that glass of wine. Most of the time he learned if the little fellow or girl was going to make it or not. Most of the time he could call it himself but sometimes he was mistaken. He could be sure that the kid was a goner and it would live and flourish and he could be sure that the baby would make it and it would die.

One thing he was sure of, even at that age, it was not merely a matter of physical strength or how badly
the child was mangled or lacerated. Linc was convinced that a lot of it was attitude and he was sure that different babies had different attitudes. Some would push harder against the blanket as he carried it to the car as if he or she was insisting on being born from this blanket to face the world. He could sense the spirit in a kid even if it was weak from blood loss or pain. And he admired these children. He admired them for just being who they were. So far they hadn’t accomplished much in life, just survival. At that age and under these circumstances that was an accomplishment. The other thing he noticed was that a dead child felt heavier than a live one. As he was carrying one back to the car, even if it was very quiet, he could usually tell if it died. Even wrapped tightly in a blanket, when it went limp, it felt heavier as if some lifting influence had left it. Linc was not a man of faith, at least not yet, nor was he religious, but he was sure of the existence and importance of the human soul. His cat had died in his arms once and it was not the same as a baby.

This night as he sat finishing his wine at the Priory with Sister Mary Margaret where he probably dropped off over half of all his babies, the doctor from the village that they often used came into the receiving room where Linc was sitting. The doctor did not look pleased.

Linc was surprised. “Didn’t make it?” Linc asked surprised.

“No, too much internal damage,” the doctor said.

Linc suddenly realized that he was crying.

Mary Margaret came to his side. “Now, Lincoln, you save so many. Please don’t grieve for this one.
Monsignor is due here in the morning. He will baptize this one and we will give it a fine send off.” She patted Linc firmly on the back.

“I don’t usually grieve for any of them much. I can’t afford to,” Linc said. “I guess it’s because I figure that they are getting a second chance. This one just hit me that way. I wonder what he could have been or done. Don’t get me wrong. You Sisters are wonderful. You take them all. You get them baptized so they can get into heaven. That is what that’s for, isn’t it? And you bury them with love.”

“Ask Monsignor about that. What you said is a little bit of an over simplification. He can explain it better than I can.”

Linc nodded, finished off the wine and headed for home. He didn’t tell Joanna about it.

He dropped by the next day to see O'Dwyer. Linc still wanted answers about dying, especially regarding these babies.

“The book says there are several reasons,” O'Dwyer said. “If the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.”

“Whaaa?” Linc was lost from the start.

“It symbolic,” O'Dwyer said. “You got a moment?”

“Sure,” Linc responded. He had another glass of wine and slid down in the big soft chair and prepared to listen.
“The silver cord is all God’s doing. It connects the soul to the body and if it is cut, then the soul leaves the body,” the priest continued.

“I’ve felt that, Frank, I really have,” Linc said.

“I believe you, Linc. You’ve seen a lot since you started this work.”

“Most of your cases are probably due to the second cause, the golden bowl is broken. This means that this wonderful human body is just too damaged to contain life. You see a lot of those.”

Linc nodded.

“The other two are a little more complicated,” O'Dwyer said.

“Let’s see, something about a pitcher and a wheel and a cistern?” Linc asked.

“Yes, it has mostly to do with the will to live. Perhaps there is some of that in these little ones but it usually refers to someone old and discouraged and worn out. They just don’t have the will or the strength to draw the water of life from God,” O'Dwyer paused.

Linc was thinking.

“You see, the fountain flows but the pitcher must be put forth to get the water and the cistern is full but the wheel has to be turned to pull it up.”

“I understand,” Linc said. “I’ve thought about this. I think my kids who don’t make it are a combination. Can there be combinations?”

“I don’t see why not,” O'Dwyer responded.

“I think they are combinations of the broken bowl and the lack of will to lift the pitcher again. And they just …go.”
Linc fell silent again. Father Frank O'Dwyer was silent with him.

Linc liked dancing with Joanna even now after they had been married for a while. He had liked everything about his first wife and even caught himself missing her from time to time. Marta was his blonde blue-eyed doll. Her blue eyes put the waters of the Greek Islands to shame. Of course Linc’s entire continuous drinking binge had been brought about by Marta’s death. He knew that at the time it was happening and he offered no apologies. He had never suspected that he could love another woman like he loved Joanna. Joanna was nearly as tall as Linc. She was slim and she moved very gracefully. Linc was amazed at how he could lead in dancing with her and she never failed to anticipate his every move. Linc wasn’t a very good dancer and in his mind he reasoned that this would make it more difficult for a woman to follow. After a warm meal and a few glasses of wine at one of their favorite little restaurants he would start to nod and she would extend her hand and he would take her hand and they would dance. The music was usually slow and sweet. He would put his arm around her slender waist and feel the softness of her breasts against his chest. They would start off in the traditional position with her left arm on his shoulder but before long she would put both arms around his neck and they would move around the floor. They did not do as most couples do in that position where they just stand in one place and sway. They really danced.

“You follow so nice,” he whispered in her ear. He could feel her smile against his cheek. “How do you
figure it out,” he asked as he spun her around a few times. She didn’t miss a step.

“I don’t figure it out,” she said. “There’s no time to think; it’s instinctive.”

“Instinctive?” He asked.

“Yes. I can sense which way you want to go.”

“I don’t think a guy could do that,” Linc said.

“You want to dance with a guy?” She teased.

“Never have,” he answered unthreatened. “I just don’t think a guy could anticipate such things.”

“They’re not made to,” she answered.

“We move together nicely,” he said.

“Um, yes, everywhere, my darling,” she answered. He could feel the smile again.

As they walked back to the table, the place had gotten quite crowded. Joanna took his hand and placed it on the small of her back. He knew what to do. Just like when they were dancing, he guided her through the crowd back to their seats. Linc thought of how close they really were and how fortunate he was to have two such women love him in one lifetime.

After another few sips of wine Joanna asked, “Linc, can we talk about the children?”

“Sure.”

“When can we pick the first one for ourselves?” She asked.

Even though Linc remembered his promise from the night that they both made confessions and she assured him that she could not have children of their own, he hadn’t been thinking of this much. He hesitated.

“I have surprised you,” she said, softly touching his hand.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

“A little,” he responded, “but it’s O.K. Let’s start thinking about that.”
“I’ve already started,” she answered with that wonderful faint trace of a smile that she had that could reduce him to putty.
“So, do you want a boy or a girl first?” He asked adding, “we can choose what we want. We sort of own the store.”
“When do you expect some more, ah, inventory?” She asked going along.
“Well, there is always some slightly damaged merchandise at the warehouse,” he said. He watched her for a reaction. There was no anger or hurt in her eyes. She was thinking. ‘What a woman,’ he thought.
“I think, Linc, that considering what you, er, we do, it might be best if we got children that are not so conspicuous. There is already enough trouble with papers and such.”
“So that would rule out interracial children too,” Linc added.
“Yes, I think so. Not that I couldn’t love an interracial child just as much. But we really need to keep as low a profile as possible considering the nature of the work.”

“You are a wise woman, my love. We have our hands quite full already.”
“Why do you bring up the interracial children?” She asked.
“It’s just that they have had a harder time getting them placed, and more so lately. They are usually the offspring of an American soldier and a local woman.
They have to keep them with the handicapped ones a little longer. But they do get them placed.”
“My, what a world we live in,” Joanna said.
Linc nodded.
CHAPTER 15

Adoption

In about 3 weeks Linc picked up a little boy on one of his regular stops. The boy was not too loud so it took Linc a minute or so to find him. But he did seem to be doing pretty good. It was almost as far to a drop off as it was to the priory so Linc skipped his next electronics stop and went straight to the nun’s house. He wrapped the child tightly in a blanket and managed to feed him a bottle on the way. It took him a few minutes to get used to the nipple, but then he took off. He had already wet the blanket by the time Linc arrived. He took the baby straight in and two nuns took over. He stayed to talk to Mary Margaret for a while and then the village doctor arrived. He was on call for the priory that day and it was always understood with these loyal Catholic doctors that to be on call for the nuns was to be on call for the infants.

“Yes,” Linc was saying to Sister, “Joanna really wants to go with me more often but her counseling practice keeps her very busy. She is considering making some changes in that.”

“I never realized that her work was so demanding,” Sister said.

“It appears it can be but she is more interested in sharing more of this work with me now”.
“Lincoln, you have something on your mind. I have a suspicion that this was not entirely a social call,” Sister said.

“Yes, this little one. I, rather Joanna and I, might want him.”

“Lincoln, that is wonderful.” Sister Mary Margaret smiled her broad honest smile. “How wonderful for you and Joanna to have one of the children. You will, of course, let Monsignor O'Dwyer baptize the child?”

By throwing in Frank O'Dwyer’s name she was practically assured that Linc would agree.

“Of course,” he said.

“And Joanna will agree.”

“Sure. She’s a Catholic and I joined the church when we married even though I am a nominal heathen.”

“I know, Lincoln. But this work has changed you.”

“It would change anyone,” Linc admitted. “If you and your brother Frankie don’t have any concerns, we will cooperate completely. Don’t we always?”

“Yes, of course,” Sister agreed. It appeared that it was all right for her to call him ‘Frankie’ in private, but perhaps not so good for others to call him that in her presence.

It seemed like the doctor was taking forever. Sister went back and checked on him three times and each time she returned and assured Linc that he was almost through. Linc hoped that there was nothing wrong with the boy as he remembered his agreement with Joanna. He wasn’t quite sure that Sister would agree with them on that very quickly. Then he told himself, ‘so what, I’ve done this work for these years now. I should be able to
pick the ones I want.’ He noticed that he told himself ones, in the plural.

“Lincoln, if you and Joanna take this one, we would probably like to try a new alternative on the papers.”

“Meaning?” Linc asked.

“Well, it’s not easy to get these papers in several countries that we work with here. Our contacts are good. However, we have placed a lot of babies. Monsigor O'Dwyer has something new to tell you about that,” Sister said.

“New? Tell,” Linc insisted. He did know that when Sister Mary Margaret referred to Frank O'Dwyer as ‘Monsignor’ she was talking about something official.

“I really should let him tell you,” she said.

“I’ll act surprised,” Linc promised.

Mary Margaret was the only nun than could steal O'Dwyer’s thunder and get away with it. “O.K.,” she said lowering her voice. She took a deep breath and waited a few more seconds, savoring the moment.

“The Holy Father has made it official that every aborted child will be considered a citizen of the Vatican City State and that all the guardians of the living ones have to do is apply for the papers.”

“They don’t have to become Catholics?” Linc asked.

“That would be encouraged,” Sister answered.

“The Vatican City State?” Linc asked.

“Yes, it is a sovereign City State. It is not a political part of Italy even though it is located in Rome.”

“I never really understood that,” Linc said.
“Yes,” Sister continued. “And Vatican papers would never be contested.”
“But how?” Linc asked.
“What do you mean?” Sister asked.
“But aren’t all the Vatican people celibate?” Linc asked.
“Oh no, no indeed, Lincoln. There are many family people employed there. And even if they live in Rome itself, they qualify for Vatican citizenship. Some work for the Holy See.”
“And what’s that?” Linc asked.
“Well, it’s sort of complicated. There are lots of buildings scattered around Rome and other parts of Italy, and then there are the embassies in other countries. They are all owned by the Church and are a part of The Holy See.”
“I’ll leave that to you people,” Linc said. “But the children will be covered. That’s great!”
“Yes, The Holy Father really hates abortion,” Sister said.
“Yea, me too,” Linc said. “Sounds all right to me,” Linc continued, “especially if it will help in some small way to take the pressure off our already burdened system.”
“And Lincoln…”
“Yes.”
“Could you and your people perhaps count the dead ones for us; nothing complicated; just the date, place, and number of boys and number of girls,” Sister asked.
Linc started to ask why but thought better of it. “Sure, I’ll get the word around,” he said.
Sister was happy.

The doctor finally arrived. Linc tried to jump right in with his Italian and ask how the baby was but Sister soon took over.

The doctor said that as far as he can tell now, the boy is fine.

“It would be good if we could keep him for a week as usual and have the doctor check him at the end of that time just once. Can you handle the wait?” She asked.

“Sure, yea,” Linc said. “It’ll give me time to set up a nursery to surprise Joanna.”

“She is expecting this though?” Sister asked.

“Yes, yes, she brought it up,” Linc said. He was grinning ear to ear.

Linc fixed up the nursery in his old office at home and Joanna discovered it. He told her about the boy and she insisted that they go get him. They were all three family right away. They named him Philippe.

Linc and Joanna had planned on getting a little sister for Philippe when he was about ten months old but that time came and went and they hadn’t done it. Linc still ran about two-thirds of his runs alone. Joanna’s work kept her away but for the one third that she did go with him, she entered in joyfully and seldom felt sick anymore. It was getting harder and harder to find live babies and to get past security at the clinics and hospitals so they had to widen their search area. To do this Linc widened his sales area to include some new companies in new countries. It took a while to get the necessary approvals but when they came through, it was very lucrative. Joanna would joke that the babies were making them rich. Linc just smiled at that one. He considered the
electronics sales to be his cover in the rescue business. If it happened to work out that he made more money, a lot more money, then that was fine with him. It helped cover expenses and he was able to give O'Dwyer’s placement network some extra cash as well. And Linc bought a new fast car once again.

One time, when Joanna was with him, they found a little girl. At this time Philippe was about eight months old. Linc looked at Joanna with a question on his face and her response was that Philippe was not ready for a sister yet. Joanna had drastically restructured her work to be with the boy. She was a very loving mother and Linc approved whole heartedly.

Once they started operating more in the Scandinavian countries, they hit the jackpot again. There were lots of babies to rescue. Their only enemy besides the abortionists was the cold. The rescuers would often have to use several blankets and a small chemical hand warmer inside near the baby to get the child’s body temperature out of the hypothermia range. Once this started they used the warmers throughout the operation. Linc found a company who donated them under the guise of helping cold children, not a complete lie. However, operating in Scandinavia involved setting up a new placement network up there. Often Linc did not get home for three or four nights in a row. This was O.K. with Joanna because it gave her more ‘face time’ with Philippe. Auntie Giavanna was a willing baby sitter as she just kept Philippe with her own baby Renee.

One night as Linc was moving towards home he decided to check a small hospital in Denmark and then
drive through the night to cover the 500 miles to home. He was already late, the story of his life, so he wanted to make this stop quick. It took him a while to find where they dumped their garbage but as it came out it was very accessible. He discovered one little girl quickly so he wrapped her in some blankets with a heater and actually got her to take some formula as he drove. Then she fell asleep. She looked so good that Linc took her directly home and was tucking her into Philippe’s old crib when Joanna caught him.

“Honey, I just couldn’t pass this one up. But we’ll find one of Sister’s doctors in the morn …. I guess it’s already morning,” he said looking at the light stream in the window. “If I can just get a couple of hours sleep,” he said tugging at his shirt. Joanna came to him. She was still sleep warm and extra soft. He folded her into himself. God, she felt good. She let out a few quiet groans and kissed him. Then she walked to the crib and uncovered the baby. It was love at first sight. The baby gurgled and squirmed a little.

“Oh, there now, sweet ah,…girl,” Joanna said checking.

“She’s been fed?” Joanna asked.

“Yes, but she’s still a little cold.”

Joanna opened her night shirt and put the child next to her skin and held her tight.

“She has not, however, been washed,” Linc said. “That’s not her blood on her.”

“Oh, I don’t care,” Joanna said firmly. “She’s precious. I’ll warm her up.” Their talking awakened Philippe and he started to complain.
“You sleep, love,” Joanna said pushing Linc from the room.

“Remember, she hasn’t had a medical yet,” Linc reminded.

Joanna just gave him one more gentle push.

They arrived at the priory just before noon. Joanna had bathed the baby and phoned ahead and the doctor was waiting. They left the baby with the doctor and took Philippe to visit Sister Mary Margaret. The doctor came in with the little girl in about twenty minutes. He had a somewhat tentative look on his face, not so bad, but they could tell there was a hitch somewhere. Joanna’s look was enough of a question.

“She,…she has a slight heart murmur. Probably from not having the right nourishment in the womb. I don’t know if it will ever be serious but I know you both have expressed yourselves on this in the past.” The doctor continued, “If something has to be done, it is a fairly simple procedure but I would go to the United States to have it done.”

Linc nodded and looked at Joanna who was staring at the baby eye to eye.

“Too late,” Joanna said. “I’m already in love.” She turned to Linc. He smiled a big smile. They were in agreement.

“And let’s name her Mary Margaret,” Joanna said. “We’ll call her Margaret, little Margaret, after her Aunt Sister here.”

Sister Mary Margaret was delighted and she started the papers procedure from the Vatican City State.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

When the time came for the operation for little Margaret, they did go to the United States and Linc remained behind after Joanna and the children went home. He spent nearly three months there encouraging the kind of rescue work he did. He went where there were the most abortions.
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
Giavanna was the first to voice her concern for the mothers. Linc had not given much thought of sympathy for them even with the memory of Marta’s death inside an abortion clinic. By now all Linc could think about was all those tiny infants, lacerated, cut up and dismembered, their little bodies soaked in their own blood and the blood of their fellow babies. Linc couldn’t understand how such a number of, say ten year olds, in the same condition could be a travesty and a crime but these little ones were considered subhuman. Would such a number of kittens and puppies in the same shape also be a shame?

Giavanna had her own reasons for feeling empathy with the mothers who had aborted their own children. Like many women she had aborted at least one child herself. She understood how many of them felt. The symptoms were well know to Giavanna and she had shared it all with Joanna.

Giavanna started small coffee and tea groups in her home for some of these women. Their stories were all negative.

“Celia has experienced increasing incidents of casual sex, nightmares, and problems in dealing with infertility as a result of the abortion. Dafne has had deterioration of relationships, anxiety attacks, and eating disorders.”
“Fabrizia has depression, nightmares, phobias, flashbacks in memory about the abortion, and over protectiveness of subsequent children. Giada experiences anxiety attacks and problems in dealing with infertility as a result of the abortion.

Gina has depression, deterioration of relationships, nightmares, and eating disorders.

Adriana has deterioration of relationships, anxiety attacks, and flashbacks in memory about the abortion.

Alessa experiences addictions, nightmares, and she looks at pictures of fetuses even knowing how it will upset her.

Mimi has a strong desire to get pregnant again to ‘replace’ the lost baby. She has phobias about a half dozen things including, get this, baby toys especially stuffed dolls.

Valeria has had addictions, depression, and over protectiveness of her two present children.

Zeta has experienced deterioration of relationships and phobias. She’s afraid of white clothing like doctors wear.

Piera has anxiety attacks, three or four a day, and she looks at pictures of fetuses knowing the pictures will upset her.”

“Rosalba has nightmares, obsessions while excelling in other areas to make up for the abortion. Last week she made a mistake in math at work and expected her boss to fire her.

Sofia has all sorts of phobias and depression.

Antonia is angry at herself and almost everyone else especially the man who got her pregnant. She tried to kill him twice but he won’t report her to the police.
Bianca has been through one atonement marriage and thirty, count them, thirty affairs in a year and a half. Now she has syphilis.

Carlita is afraid of everything including her own shadow.

Imelda has obsessions about excelling in other areas to make up for the abortion and depression.”

“Jolanda has had two atonement marriages and numerous phobias.

Luciana has had two atonement marriages, both failed.

María has all sorts of phobias, anger against herself, the man responsible, and others. And there are any number of variations on these problems spread around to women who have had an abortion.”

The list seemed almost endless to Lincoln. Surely it would be immensely easier to carry the baby to term and put it up for adoption than to go through any form of post abortion stress.

In starting these groups Giavanna was aware there were many such treatments available, but the one thing that Giavanna offered in her group was the need to admit that the abortion was wrong and the assurance of forgiveness for having had an abortion. Sister Mary Margaret and Monsignor Frank O'Dwyer would come to these meetings to drive home the forgiveness issue. With these two simple extra steps not offered at the ‘nonjudgmental’ group Giavanna’s women recovered faster and more completely.

Joanna attended some of these groups as Giavanna’s guest. She didn’t say much so that the
women just assumed that Joanna had been through an abortion too. They usually didn’t like ‘spies’ among them who had not had the experience. This just underscored their paranoia and fear over the subject. In telling Linc about some of these women she usually just left the name out. She would usually call her ‘this girl’ or ‘this woman.’

“This girl can’t stand to look at a pregnant woman,” Joanna was saying. “One day she was forced to be packed in next to one on the bus. As she felt the belly of the pregnant woman press against her arm, she started to get afraid and angry. All sorts of images flashed across her mind. She started to see blood everywhere. Then she started to hyperventilate. Someone else in the crowd made everyone crunch together even more and gave her a bag to breathe into. She said that helped but inside she wanted to strike out at the pregnant woman.”

“Wow,” Linc said. “Is that the worst of it?”

“No, dear, not nearly the worst,” Joanna answered. “One of her strongest emotions is to die, but not just to die, she wants to die so she can join the baby.”

“Woah.”

“Yes, and she gets extra upset every month during her period because there is so much blood and cramps but no baby. And she goes into depression on the anniversary date of the abortion and of the baby’s predicted due date.”

“A true long vacation in hell,” Linc said.

“Exactly,” Joanna agreed.

“At least Giavanna had given them a place to talk,” Linc said.
It had happened before to Linc but he thought that after he and Joanna were married, it would not happen again. They had moved into Joanna’s apartment after the wedding. He had left a forwarding address for his mail at the old postal office but there was no reason to forward the phone since they didn’t have any land lines. There was a knock on the door one night. They were still up because they were both night people and in addition they had been out earlier in the evening. As soon as Linc opened the door, he knew it was one of the mothers. Mothers who were still suffering from the guilt and shame of an abortion had the same look on their faces to Linc. Father O'Dwyer said that he couldn’t tell and Joanna could tell some of the time. For some unknown reason Linc could always tell. It was the look of a woman who had lost something. There was pain and shame mixed in with a quizzical look. It was like she wanted to say, “what hit me?” but couldn’t find the words.

“Are you the rescuer?” she asked in pretty good English.

“My name is Lincoln Harper,” he responded. He was angry about the interruption and wanted to make this one woman work for it. The children were at Giavanna’s and he had been counting on a romantic evening alone with Joanna. He knew that it was unkind but he had started to wonder who would expect him to dig through the gory mess to rescue the infants and then listen to how bad the mother that had aborted one of them felt and then try to make her feel better. The effects of Post Abortion Stress Syndrome were grim indeed. Linc stood back from the door for her to enter.
“They told me this was your present address,” she insisted.
“It is my address,” he said.
“Lincoln, you can just stop that now,” Joanna said as she entered the room. “You can see that this girl is traumatized.”
“Here, sit down. My name is Joanna. I am married to this, …man. What can we do for you honey? Would you like a hot drink? It’s cold out tonight. Coffee or tea?”
“Some coffee would be nice,” the girl said.
“Fine, you stay here. He will talk to you now,” Joanna said flashing a ‘you had better’ look at her husband.
Linc was still moping so they sat in silence for a few minutes.
“Lincoln,” Joanna said from the kitchen.
“So, when did you get your abortion?” Linc asked.
“Just over six months ago,” the girl answered.
“What’s you name?” Linc asked.
“Dora Mueller,” she answered.
“Your first?” Linc asked.
“Ya, er, yes, it was.”
“What do you want me to do?” Linc asked, his voice had softened some.
“Tell me what I can do to make up for it. I know I can’t get the baby back. But there are so many reminders,” she said.
“The reminders are always there,” Linc said. “It’s the guilt that makes you notice them. I have a friend who is a priest. Perhaps you should talk to him.”
“A priest, oh, no, they hate girls that get abortions,” she answered quickly.

“Not true,” Linc said. “He can help you, really.”

“Well, maybe, if you think so,” Dora said.

Just then Joanna returned with the coffee. “But while she’s here, she can talk to us for just a little while,” Joanna said. She served them all and sat on the arm of Linc’s chair.

“What’s the worst part?” Joanna asked. “Oh, please call me Joanna.” She took a sip and waited.

After a while Dora said, “Well, take for example today. I was doing fine, hadn’t thought of it all day. After lunch I decided to clean the apartment, it really needed it. As I was vacuuming, that usually bothers me right there but it wasn’t today, I ran the wand under the sofa and the vacuum pulled in something large and made that ‘thunking’ noise. It went straight through me. My stomach felt sick and I started to sweat. All I could remember was that same noise during the abortion, pieces of my baby being sucked through the hose. I, well, I…” she started to cry.

“I hate those kind worst of all,” Linc said. There’s nothing left to rescue.

“And there are so many more things,” Dora said. “Last week I cut my finger and I went to get something to put on it. The smell reminded me of the clinic and how none of us women would look at each other in the waiting room either before we went in to have it done or when we came out. Oh, will it ever go away?”

“It’s called Post Abortion Stress,” Joanna said. As soon as she said it, she realized that this girl was living it and that she probably didn’t care about the name. ‘But
what about the company of other women suffering the same thing?’ she thought. “There are groups that meet to share,” Joanna started.

“That won’t work for me,” Dora said. Then, “I want to work with the rescuer. That is the only thing that will help me. Oh, please, Mr. Harper let me help you.” She looked at him pleadingly.

Linc was quiet for a minute. The women didn’t speak.

“O.K., Dora. Dora, is it?” he asked.

“Yes, Mein Herr.”

“O.K. let’s go. Joanna are you going with us?” Joanna was the first one to her feet. Dora was quick to follow.

“This might be a good night to get one. It’s pretty late and they may have all died by now. But we’ll go see. If you pass out on me, I swear I’ll leave you right there,” Linc said.

Joanna was distressed that he was giving this girl such a hard time but she decided not to object for now.

They went to the first clinic and slipped down the alley beside it. Linc open a can and shook it some, then he watched and listened. Joanna put her arm around Dora. They were all quiet. Then Linc repeated this on another can. There was a slight muffled moan.

“Get the blanket ready,” Linc said.

Joanna opened the blanket and folded it once across and gave it to Dora. As Linc pulled the child out of the blood and tiny bodies, Dora extended the blanket. Linc motioned for her to wait while he checked the baby. She was rocked by sobs but kept the blanket steady. Linc took his time. Joanna steadied Dora.
“The cuts are practically nonexistent. They must have thought it was suffocated.” Linc said. “The other bodies kept it warm. Wrap it tight,” he ordered. Linc checked all the cans the same way. “If they can’t groan, they are probably too far gone this late at night. We could lay them all out on the steps here but I’ll shake the cans all again harder.” This he did and Linc was satisfied that they had the only live one.

They hurried to the car with Dora clutching the baby to her chest and sobbing all the way. When they got in the car, Joanna produced a bottle with formula and the girl child took the nipple right away. They eased away from the curb and headed towards the priory.

Joanna made a phone call, “Yes. A girl. Pretty good. About 20 minutes. She is eating.”

“Where are we going?” Dora finally asked. She had been totally involved with the infant.

“To the priory,” Linc said. “There will be a doctor there.”

“No, I want to keep her. I found her. I mean we. I want her. This is the first time I’ve felt human in months,” Dora blurted.

“Not another one of those,” Linc muttered. Joanna poked him.

“She has to be checked. Besides…,” Linc started.

“No, no I have to keep her,” Dora was shouting by now.

Joanna knew that Linc was remembering Giavanna and was about to lose it with this woman.

“Now you listen to me, young lady,” Joanna commanded. “We do this all the time, and if, I say if, you
get to keep this child, it will be by our rules. Do you understand?” This time she was very firm.

Dora nodded. Evidently Joanna was firm enough to get her under control. She continued to feed the baby.

When they got to the priory, they all went in instead of dropping off the infant. Sister Hilary and the doctor took over the baby and Sister Mary Margaret took over Dora.

The doctor said that the baby was in very good condition considering and Linc stood to leave. It had been a long day and it was now 2:45 in the morning. Mary Margaret said that Dora would be staying with them for a while. Linc was relieved at that and it suited Joanna just fine. They got to bed about four A.M.
CHAPTER 17

Ricky

Linc always wanted to know more about the children that could not be placed with foster parents, the ones that had some kind of deformity or handicap that kept couples from adopting them. So the nuns and the monks had come to an early agreement. The nuns would keep the girls and the monks would keep the boys. They would endeavor to find parents for these children all along the way. And when the time came, they would seek to get training for them that would bring a decent living on into adulthood. Also, when the time came, they would be free to join the order if they so desired but it would not be a matter of compulsion. They could remain as ‘visitors’ all their lives so long as the order existed and since these orders had existed for centuries, some with fewer members and some with more, they were a dependable option.

Some of these children Linc had seen grow to their present age. Since Linc had now been doing this work for almost eight years, the children ranged in age from tiny infants to seven plus years old both in their adopted families and within the confines of the priories and the monasteries. Ricky was one child that Linc had watched grow right along with his own two children. Ricky, actually Richard, was a down’s syndrome baby that no one would take so the brothers and fathers had adopted
him themselves. Ricky was always happy. He was not particularly athletic so he was a chubby little guy. Everyone liked Ricky and was usually glad to see him arrive. When the fathers or brothers were particularly busy at something, they always had something for Ricky to do on standby. Ricky liked puzzles. They had to have big pieces and be fairly simple but he loved them. Brother Theobald was an accomplished woodworker and the monastery made a good income from his furniture manufacturing which he did with two other brothers. When they discovered Ricky playing with some scrap wood and trying to assemble them into patterns, they started making puzzles for Ricky. Someone would draw and paint a picture on a thin piece of board; there were a lot of volunteers for this. Then Theobald or one of his helpers would take the scroll saw and cut it into a puzzle. Their scroll saws were all manual, no power tools here. The only problem was once Ricky had worked a puzzle twice he wanted a new one. At first they tried pictures on both sides before cutting. Ricky would put it together from either picture without an ‘answer’ on the box; there was no box. So they started selling the ‘used’ puzzles in their furniture shop and this became a significant source of income for the order.

Ricky would often greet Linc upon arrival. He liked babies and always wanted to carry the baby inside to the doctor. Fortunately, this house had a resident doctor who had retired and joined the brotherhood so he was always there. After Ricky was five, Linc let him carry the baby in if the infant was not too badly injured. There would be loud announcements from Ricky on these occasions.
“Nother Baaabee,” he would shout as he joyfully entered the common room.

If Linc would not turn the baby over to him, Ricky would ask, “Huurt?” Linc would nod yes and Ricky would say something like, “Pooor Baaabee, Pooor Baaabee, Baaabee huurt.” This became a regular event at the monastery.

Sometimes Linc could only get as far as the Priory with a male child who was obviously not ‘normal.’ That didn’t matter as the Sisters would pass on the infant in one of the regular van trips between several of the houses picking up or delivering whatever that house produced on a barter basis. Most of the time the abnormality was due to the abortion process; sometimes it would have been that way anyway. Linc had asked the doctor once just how severe Ricky’s condition was and the doctor had told him that Ricky was well into the more serious half of the condition. He was never expected to get better and yet Ricky was a constant ray of light to those around him. Linc had to admit that even though he and Joanna had passed over Ricky when they took their children, someone besides the brothers could have enjoyed him a lot. How strangely people think about irregular people. They consign the biggest blessings to the trash heap and Ricky had been thrown sight unseen. The doctor said that his mother was probably much older than the average mother, possibly well into her forties. When Ricky was of age, about 17, he would probably join the order; he wasn’t that smart but he understood the simplest things about God. And the order was not created for genius but for obedience and dedication although it contained many geniuses over the years.
Over at the priory was little Suzanne. She was five when Linc started his visits to the children. Unlike Ricky Suzanne was very thin. She had some sort of digestive disorder due to her abortion injuries. Linc remembered how he had to wrap her very carefully to bring her in as some of her insides were exposed. Linc really didn’t expect her to survive. She had fooled everyone. Suzanne was the overwhelming favorite of the Sisters. Suzanne loved everyone and showed it constantly. It wasn’t the usual ‘I’ll love you if you’ll love me’ attitude. Suzanne would hug anyone and usually lay her head on any part of a person that would do. One old Sister was very uncomfortable around children. She had joined the order when she was 15. She was not particularly attractive. In blue jeans and a shirt one might mistake Sister Porsche for a man. As a matter of fact Sister Porsche had objected in chapter meeting at taking in children who could not be placed. She was voted down but she made her position clear.

Little Suzanne started on Sister Porsche as soon as she could crawl. She sensed that the old woman didn’t like her. But she would not be discouraged. At first the other nuns would rescue her from Porsche’s rejection. The old woman would growl at her and actually push her away. One time she actually picked the child up under the arms and carried her, arms extended, to another room like the infant was some foul creature to be cast away. The other nuns objected particularly to this as they believed that in the child’s soul there was already a deposit of this rejection from the abortion table and the attitude of the mother while she was carrying the child
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

within her. But Porsche was adamant. And Suzanne would not accept defeat. The Sisters let it run its course.

After a while the old woman would accept the affection in the hopes that would make the child go away. That didn’t work either. Then one day another nun entered the room and there was Sister Porsche feeding the child pieces of a tangerine. When it was all gone, the old nun hugged the child. Suzanne cooed with satisfaction. After that Porsche could not go to a meal or to bed without a hug from Suzanne first. On her deathbed the old nun called for Suzanne who held her hand while she passed away. Suzanne was nearly five then. After Porsche died, the child kissed her hand and calmly walked away. When Mary Margaret told Linc and Joanna the story about a week after Porsche’s death, they both cried.

“All that love from the trash heap,” Joanna said.

Mary Margaret’s goal was to raise Suzanne to be a nurse at a hospital or a hospice. The child remains very thin, but she eats well and is in no pain.

One night Linc found a baby girl at about ten thirty P.M. that appeared to be in perfect condition. At first he was sure that she was dead because she didn’t make a sound and Linc could not see her breathing. He had learned to look at the tiny tummies for the gentle up and down movement. Babies were born knowing how the breathe from the first smack on the bottom. Unlike some adults they always breathed with their stomach not their chest. Linc found no other living babies and was about to leave. Then this little one coughed. He had laid her on top when he repacked the can. He always repacked just to
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

keep stray animals from getting at the little bodies. He considered that to be a great insult on top of injury. He picked the child up and observed what he knew to be a slight seizure. He wrapped her in a blanket and made a run for his car. Headquarters priory was the only acceptable destination, so he made no calls to meet up. He pushed his Audi as hard as he could while monitoring the baby in the seat beside him. He never observed the child restraint rule. He had to be able to observe the child and these kids already knew how to live dangerously.

Linc sounded his horn insistently at the front gate and a tiny Sister hurried to open it for him. It was the usual gatekeeper. Linc had often wondered why a larger nun could not have been assigned to that task but knowing this group he knew better than to ask. Sister Porter always did her job well, that was her job title not her name. He jumped from his car jamming it into park and left it running. The front door opened and he quickly rushed into reception and laid the baby down to check her.

“Doctor! Doctor,” was all he said.

The doctor was there with his bag before Linc was done checking the baby. She was weak, no doubt hungry, but peaceful.

“She was having a seizure when I found her,” Linc said.


“Looked pretty strong to me, even her toes were curled.”

“Um, she’s peaceful now. Hungry.” The doctor nodded at a Sister and a small warm bottle of formula
appeared in about fifteen seconds. The baby took it willingly.

“Good,” the doctor said. “She wants to eat.”
“What else can I do?” Linc asked.
“Well, we need some labs done. If I draw them, can you take them to St. John’s in the city?”
“Yes, I’ll take them.”

Calls were made and Linc was given instructions to give the vials to only one man.

He delivered them and went home to bed. Before he left the priory, he requested that someone get back to him when they knew something. He knew that this was necessary because the standing rule was after they received the baby, they were to leave Linc alone. His part, by his own choice, was obtaining them.

The next morning Linc got a call from Mary Margaret herself. “The mother had taken a variety of chemicals that she believed would bring on a miscarriage,” Sister reported.

“My God,” Linc said.

“She apparently thought that one of them would have to work eventually so she delayed going to a clinic. The baby is almost full term.”

“I thought she looked big.”

“Yes, and she is beautiful in every way. But the doctor is hesitant about putting her up for adoption. She will be the only baby who is not too lacerated or malformed that we will probably keep with us. We would have to be honest to perspective parents and the seizures, barring a miracle, will be unpredictable, strong, and
lifelong. Right now there is not exactly the right medicine to control them.”

Linc did not answer. He thought he had expended all of his anger. But this brought it all back up again. This beautiful perfect little girl consigned to a priory by no choice of her own. Linc was very thankful for the work the nuns did but he considered the lifestyle as extreme and no one should have it forced upon them.

Finally Linc spoke, “What are you going to name her?”

“Mary Grace,” Sister answered.
“A good name,” Linc said.

Linc was having yet another meeting with O'Dwyer.
“Where do they come from?” Linc asked.
“I didn’t know you had so much to drink,” O'Dwyer answered. “You know where babies come from. You see the father puts a seed into a nest in the mother . . .”

“That’s not what I mean, Frank. I mean, what does the church believe on this?” Linc said.
“It varies.”
“Varies? I thought the church was uniform in all things.”
“It is a very big church,” Frank said. “And many, shall we say, less essential doctrines have various interpretations throughout the church.”
“So, tell me one or two.”
“O.K., my friend,” O'Dwyer continued. “The predominant position is that God gives a sensible soul to each child at the moment of conception. So then each
time a sperm comes into an egg, God Almighty takes a second to create a sensible soul and send it into those two cells. And then the cells divide and multiply and grow at a predetermined rate until birth. Then the baby continues life in this world among us.”

“And other theories?” Linc asked.

“Probably the most predominant, and it was an eastern theory not a Roman one, is from a church father named Origen. He believed that God made all the human souls that will ever be on the sixth day of creation. This is the day that the scriptures say man was created. Then at each time of conception God sends a waiting soul.”

“Do a lot of people believe this one?” Linc asked.

“A good many. There are stories of young children, the ones who are old enough to carry on a simple conversation, who when they get a younger sibling, will say to them, ‘quick, tell me what God is like. I am starting to forget.’”

“Humm.”

“Yes, some of our theological anthropologists believe that this is because there is an inward memory of being aware before conception and birth because of this assembly of unborn souls.”

“So when one is aborted, that soul is going to go back to God?” Linc asked.

Father O'Dwyer knew why Linc was asking about these things. He knew that Linc worried about the ones he could not save and that he would accept the church’s answers for them if not for himself.

“Yes,” O'Dwyer answered, “either way the soul goes to God. They are too young to be accountable. They
just go home. But in the Origen theory they have a memory of that home that they came from.”

“What about the fathers of these children?” Linc asked.

“What about them?” O'Dwyer answered. “You’ve been there.”

“Yes, and I paid a tremendous price,” Linc answered.

“I know, my friend, I didn’t mean to sound cruel,” O'Dwyer answered.

“You didn’t. I have been there and I wish I could change the past but I can’t. What can we do about the other fathers now?”

“It would help if they would step forward,” O'Dwyer said.

“That’s not likely, at least in most cases,” Linc said.

“No,” O'Dwyer said. “I guess education is the best thing we have. If we can convince the men that these are really little people, maybe they will join the cause.”

“That’s about it,” Linc agreed. “They have to be set free from that ‘mass of protoplasm’ stuff.”
CHAPTER 18

Panic

Lincoln was glad to see Frank O'Dwyer but the times together were getting more and more tense. And tension was the last thing Linc needed. He knew the priest could tell but he also knew that Frank was very patient and wise. O'Dwyer never pushed for information.

After a while Linc remembered that he wanted to thank O'Dwyer for telling him about the little chapel. “It’s really been a help to me personally, Frank. I find peace in that place and I can talk freely to, well, whoever I am talking to.”

“Good. I felt that you would like it,” O'Dwyer said. He was tempted to try to define Linc’s listener but he showed his usual restraint. Then he did have one thought.

“Uh, by the way old friend, not that it really matters because they are bound by their vows but you are never really alone in there.”

At first Linc thought the priest was talking about God but why did he mention vows.

“Vows?” Linc asked.

“Yes, the nuns. There is, well, I guess I should have told you about this before but I didn’t really expect you to go there so much.”

“Tell me what?” Linc’s voice was somewhat stronger now.
“Linc, there is always a Sister behind the screen, the one on your right facing the altar. She can hear you but she can’t see you. She is there to intercede. To help you to pray.”

Linc felt a sudden cold flash starting at the top of his head and flowing right down to his gut. His stomach knotted and his palms began to sweat.

“Why, why?” Linc managed to choke out the words.

O'Dwyer was really apologetic by now. “As I said I didn’t expect you to go there that often. And besides,” he hastened to add, “they are under vows. They are not allowed to repeat anything to anyone. Really, not anything.”

“Nothing?”
“Yes.”

Linc started to calm down a little. He was going over in his mind the things he had told in the chapel and if his memory served him correctly, it would most certainly seem confusing to a stranger listening.

“Is it the same one every time?” Linc asked.
“No, no, they rotate,” Frank added.
“Of course,” Linc commented. “That was a silly question.”

They talked for a few minutes longer and Linc said he had to go. Frank walked him to his car reassuring him all the way.

Linc didn’t sleep very well that night and he skipped his usual rounds. His biggest problem was where
now. How could he go back to the chapel? He finally decided that he would go back but he would not say anything. He would just sit there and try to soak up the peace and find somewhere else to talk. This didn’t work out too well because he was always aware of where he thought his feeling of a presence was coming from. He would catch himself staring at the screen and straining to hear some indication of her presence. Once he even thought of addressing her directly but quickly set that aside because she probably wasn’t allowed to say anything. Inside he was just a little disappointed that there was another human being present. He had secretly started hoping that the presence he felt was actually God. He found an old garden not too far into the surrounding woods to talk in but it was not the same either. He tried hard to regain his composure and actually tried praying to God a few times but that didn’t work for him either.

So back to the chapel again. “So God, I guess there is a God, I think the priest has me saying things I don’t really believe. Oh well, it just helps to talk even if I am just hearing my own words. What’s that called? Catharsis, that’s it, catharsis. I think it means that it somehow relieves the inner pressure just to talk about it.”

He had decided to trust O'Dwyer about the hidden nun, although it did cause him to somewhat edit what he said as he went along. The muted colors and old odors of the little old chapel somehow had a calming effect on him and the sight of the old, rather overlarge, crucifix also had a sort of calming effect. He figured that must be some kind of left over from his childhood when his mother would take him by the Catholic church to light a
candle for some dead relative. Linc had never lit a candle here; he didn’t have much inclination to do so.

“You see,” Linc started, “it’s sort of addicting; I guess I should say that it is addicting. In the first place you never know what you are going to find. It’s a little like gambling; no, it is like gambling. I can’t seem to lie even to myself here. I mean, what is a greater thing to win. If I find one alive and can get the little guy or girl to a doctor and safely placed with adoptive parents, then I have actually saved a human life. Who knows what that kid is going to grow up to be. He might cure some disease or lead a whole country to victory in some manner or fashion. Even if I don’t find one, that just heightens the whole feeling of uncertainty for the next time. Maybe this whole thing is just some form of my desire to gamble. I stopped gambling for money.

“I really hate to lose, even though it is sometimes difficult to resist the temptation to drop into some casino. But here I don’t really lose. I either win, and so does the kid, or it’s a draw so to speak. He wouldn’t have lived anyway; so what have I lost?” He paused. He felt a little like he might have straightened the hidden nun out. That, however, depended on which one was there today. He knew deep inside that he was powerless to fix anything about it.

The next time Linc was at the chapel was about two weeks later. He chatted on for a while about the three he had rescued since the last visit, a little boy and a girl that were pretty strong that were already placed, and one that the sisters were still looking after.
CHAPTER 19

Betrayal

At their next meeting in Turin Linc was almost himself again. This time it was Frank O'Dwyer who was unusually quiet.

After the meal when the coffee had arrived, O'Dwyer began. “There has been one more little development, Linc, and I think I must tell you about it even though I hate it.”

Linc started to tighten up again.

“One of the Sisters at your little chapel has flown the coop so to speak.”

“She’s left?” Linc nearly shouted.

Frank motioned for silence. They both looked around. He had attracted the attention of some people but they were quickly going back to their own meals and concerns.

“Now, this doesn’t necessarily mean anything. She is considered a little unstable and she didn’t do the prayer duty very often in the chapel. So there’s a good chance that your secrets are safe with her. She had plenty of problems of her own and she’s not the type to inspire confidence even if she does say anything.” O'Dwyer was trying real hard to be a comfort.

Linc was now starting to feel despondent. He was not sure that he had the energy left to really be afraid. He was more than a little angry with O'Dwyer. The priest
had explained repeatedly and apologized profusely about the confusion.

“You know I had no idea that you would say anything, er, …sensitive,” O'Dwyer had said repeatedly.

Linc knew that his old friend had not done this intentionally. But it was difficult waiting for the ‘shoe to drop.’ Any day now Linc could be confronted or arrested. But he still missed his chapel.

O'Dwyer told Linc about another chapel that he said was totally confidential if there were no other ‘worshippers’ present. It wasn’t even attended. It was in the gardens of an old monastery and it was near Linc’s regular route. It was only one small unattached room and you could see everything from the inside. The windows were larger than the old chapel and you could see anyone approaching. There was a front and a back door clearly visible. There was no screen or any space for any kind of hidden room or closet. It was not quite as ornate as the other chapel but it was nice, old and nice.

Linc decided to try it. But he kept everything he said safe. It didn’t help much but he told himself that he had to test the place for a while at first. After about a half an hour he began to think it might be O.K. He opened up a little. Yet he was still angry at the priest; he was angry at all priests. Linc started to really open up. He was looking at the floor at the time. He looked up suddenly. No one was there. He backed up and tried it again. There it was again. He was not alone. The priest had gotten the whole thing wrong again. He walked around the room. Nothing. He went out the back door and circled the building. It began to rain. So he got back into his car and
He had a scheduled supper with O'Dwyer in two days. Boy, would he nail the priest this time.

Back in their favorite restaurant Linc was ready when he arrived.

“I don’t know how they do it, Frank,” Linc said. “But I tell you, I was not alone. Someone was listening.”

“Well, you don’t want to hear my solution,” O'Dwyer said.

“Uh, huh, yea, you,…you might as well not tell me that it was really God, O'Dwyer. Last time you told me I would be alone and I didn’t trust my instincts and it turned out to be a somewhat dipsy nun. Do you think I’m going to lay aside my instincts this time and buy that?” Linc was talking loud enough that people in the restaurant were looking.

O'Dwyer took it all on the chin. He figured that he deserved it. Finally, O'Dwyer spoke, “Listen Linc, I’m sorry that it worked out that way. I know it’s particularly difficult for you now. Don’t decide right away. Just think about it for a while. Sometimes He makes his Presence felt, that’s all I am saying. You could see for yourself that no other human was there.”

“Maybe a planted microphone,” Linc answered.

“You know that would not be the same,” O'Dwyer answered.

“Yea, I guess you’re right on that,” Linc admitted. He was going to think long and hard and maybe make another trip to that chapel.

“I know how important a place to talk is,” Frank said.
“Yea, thanks,” Linc said. “But why me, Frank? I mean I am absolutely not religious.”

“You have the need to talk, as many of us do. Who’s to say that the need isn’t really to talk to our Maker? The real thing, Linc, is the place that is in your heart. I only help you find these old chapels because sometimes they help us to find the chapel in our heart,” Frank answered. “And, and, my old friend, maybe it’s not all about you. Maybe it’s about what you are doing. That’s something that God likes. Maybe it’s for the kids, and He wants to keep you working.”

“That makes more sense than anything you’ve said all evening,” Linc replied.

What had he done? Linc couldn’t believe it. He was driving toward meeting Sister Mary Margaret with no less than seven, count them, seven babies in the car. Two of them were even sharing a blanket as he had run out of blankets. It was like the old days. They were getting sloppy in their work again. They were all alive, the product of two nearby searches. But inside he was sure that they all couldn’t make it. But as he drove along, he told himself that it was a good decision to bring them all. It was very quiet in the back of the car.

There was a construction road block about half way to his drop off. Since it was night, there were only automated signs and one lane out so you had to wait your turn to go either way. Linc gunned the engine of the car nervously. He was tempted to run the light and take his chances since he was sure that he could see the other end and nothing was coming. He knew that getting stopped and inspected by the police was not something that he
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

wanted. However, he was about to risk it when the light changed.

As he pulled behind the convent he blinked his lights three times. The back gates moved slowly open. He pulled into the cobblestone compound, stopped and unlocked the doors. The Sisters swarmed the car as Linc grimaced. But they didn’t mind. As a matter of fact they were thrilled that there were so many. Linc was amazed. He saw one nun cross herself as she held a tiny baby in a blanket, one that did not make it. Linc was out of the car by now and he looked around. The other six, must have made it, no crossing signs. The Sisters soon disappeared into the depths of the convent.

Linc wondered what was all the way inside this very old establishment. Probably lots of small dark dank rooms where all sorts of holy things happened. All he ever got to see was Sister Mary Margaret’s hospitality office just off the compound near the front pedestrian gate. That was the only place that visitors were allowed to go. Sister wasn’t there yet so he took his usual big leather covered seat and waited for the inevitable coffee and snack which arrived almost immediately. The usual coffee nun, as Linc called her, arrived all smiles and served him. He expressed his sincere thanks and she melted away. He just sat and sipped. Sometimes he still wished that he could really pray although Frank O'Dwyer assured him that his talking in the chapel was a form of prayer. For the first time he wondered if this place had a chapel. Of course, it had to have a chapel but what was it like? He would ask Sister Mary Margaret. He was just about finished with his first cup of coffee and the sweet
bread that came with it and as he reached for the small pot for a refill, Sister arrived in a flurry.

“Linc, you have outdone yourself tonight,” she said with a smile.

“Have I?” he asked.

“Yes, indeed. Six living babies. We will bury the little boy that did not make it. We have our own cemetery here, Linc. You know that. We will name the boy something that could be either male or female and put up a small stone. Our order has never used dates on the stones. We consider that irrelevant.”

“Oh,” Linc responded.

“As for the others,” Sister continued. “how did you get so many anyway?” She asked.

“These guys are particularly sloppy,” Linc answered. “The two places are near each other. There were four from one and three from the other. Even at that it was a lot for one night. I’ve seen the night when there was only one or none.”

“I know,” Sister answered again. “But we are so glad. One is pretty roughed up.”

“What will you do with her?” Linc asked. He had noticed the little girl.

“Probably keep her here. She will be difficult if not impossible to place. But, who knows, this is Providence, Linc. God is helping you more than ever now.”

“It’s still not enough. Do you have a chapel here?” he asked.

“Yes, of course we do. And I will take you to it in a minute. But Lincoln, my dear man, you can’t berate yourself. Look at the good that you have done. The
doctors are with the children now. We can place five easily.”

“You women are amazing,” Linc said.

“We are just servants,” Sister answered.

She showed him to the chapel. He called Joanna; then talked in the chapel till dawn and felt a lot better afterwards. In the morning he took a nap in Sister’s office and they fed him breakfast and coffee. This was a first. He inquired about the babies. The more mutilated one was still fine although it would take a while for the wounds to heal and she would probably never hear.

Linc wished that he knew what he would do now. This could get to be a transportation problem if there were too many. As it was, he didn’t have to worry because he went to one clinic garbage dump after another and came up empty handed for weeks after that. Then there were some, but not too many. It was as if somehow the abortionists were aware that they had let too many get away and were being more thorough in their efforts. Whatever blessings the surviving children of that night would see, it was paid for by many that followed.

Linc was more amazed at the continuing tension of this whole thing. He thought of the incredible differences between the two sides. On the one side, the Sisters, who will take care of an invalid all of her life rather than see her killed in infancy. And on the other side, people who can kill these tiny ones by the thousands, even millions, and sleep well at night. It was like there were two human races. And there stood Linc between them. He wouldn’t be doing what he was doing if he wasn’t against the killing. Then again, he was always glad to turn the children over to the Sisters. He wasn’t built to take care
of any but his own two. He left that to the nuns and the foster parents that they found.
Linc kept an apartment in Munich in addition to their place in Milan for several reasons. Outwardly, he claimed it was so he could serve his customers in the northern part of his route better from Munich. Actually, it was also helpful in his work with the infants not to have to drive back to Milan so often and he frequently had some cleaning up to do which did not lend itself to a hotel room. Also, he did not have to cross a border with any child as he could drop off either in Germany or Italy. The just over 200 miles between the cities was not a great distance for a man like Linc who drove constantly but it seemed a long way after a tiring day and evening. He had been in Europe so long that the different countries did not make much difference to him personally. His German was as good as his Italian; he was equally at home with both. That last confrontation with the clinic manager in Stuttgart had made him nervous however. The manager had accused him of trespassing and stealing from their garbage. Linc had consulted a lawyer provided by O'Dwyer. The garbage still belonged to the clinic until the city picked it up. Then it belonged to the city. The city did not prosecute anyone for stealing their garbage, even if it was a living child. But the clinic said that they would. The trespassing charge was a misdemeanor but against the law just the same.
When they came for Linc in Munich, he was ready. The next two days were a whirlwind in Linc’s mind. He was kept in a detention cell which wasn’t really that bad and interrogated by a succession of men and women from several countries. Interpol had become involved. And then there were his ‘victims,’ the managers of the various clinics and hospitals that he had ‘stolen’ from. The reactions of both these groups of people varied. Some couldn’t understand why in the world he had done such things, an attitude that continually amazed Linc. Some were incensed that he had taken it into his hands to violate law or custom and try to give these children life. Most of them, when they were willing to talk about it, made it clear that these ‘products of conception’ or ‘fetuses’ were not really children or human beings yet. Some refused to comment and Linc could tell that they knew better but as Father O'Dwyer had said, they simply did not care. They had the power to kill the children and they were bigger than the babies. Most of the ‘plaintiffs’ really didn’t seem to care.

One man named Schmidt had brought the charges and his complaint was that Linc had trespassed on his company’s property and stolen something that could be sold for a profit to various laboratories who experimented with these remains. Most of the rest just showed up because they thought they should. They signed Schmidt’s complaint and didn’t hang around very long. Some of the officials hoped to make something of it to their advantage, like being elected to a higher office or re-elected to the one they already held. It looked like the trial would be held in Germany but overnight it was
mysteriously changed to Italy. Nevertheless, Linc was glad that Joanna had been back in Milan at the time.

Monsignor Frank O'Dwyer came to see Linc daily and seemed to hang around and talk to various people afterward. He brought Linc an Italian attorney, a tall thin Italian who asked Linc obvious questions. Once in a while Linc thought he saw a mild twinkle in the man’s eye that said, ‘I wouldn’t be too concerned about this if I were you.’

Linc was soon out on bail and the trial was set for two weeks later. Linc even accomplished one rescue near home during the wait for the trial. Sister had even chided him for that. So he decided that he would wait for a while.

Joanna sat behind him through the trial sometimes laying her hand on his back when the judge and prosecutor were not looking.

“Now, Sister, er, Fraulein Berta,” the prosecutor began, “what kind of things did you hear Mr. Harper say in that little chapel?”

The girl did not answer. The prosecutor approach the witness stand and speaking just loud enough for the girl and the judge to hear said, “Now you promised, Berta, to give full and clear testimony here. So give now, or I will ask the judge to hold you in contempt of court.”

“But my vows,” she answered.

“You have renounced your vows and you have been released by the head of the order. Do I have to show you the paper again?” the prosecutor insisted.

The girl was clearly conflicted. Even as a deserter from the order, somewhere in her conscience she still felt
bound but it was time now to proceed. She had not left herself a way out.
“Well,” Berta began, “a lot of the time he seemed confused. Sometimes he would just say a few words or a short phrase. You see, it was sort of difficult to follow.”

The prosecutor shot back an insistent frown to the girl and a begging look to the judge.

She looked back at the prosecutor and then to the judge and began again. “He would say things like, ‘so much blood,’ and ‘it took him so long to die,’ and ‘where could I bury him,’ and ‘how dark the alley was.’ Stuff like that.”

“And what did you make of these, er, comments?” the prosecutor asked.

“Well, I didn’t know just what to make of them. Obviously someone, many people, were dying and it was a violent death because he mentioned all the blood. It had to be some sort of a crime, didn’t it?” she ended with a pleading tone.

“What else was mentioned? Think hard,” the prosecutor asked.

“He talked about some help from someone named Frank,” she said.

“Any other names? Did Frank have a last name?”

“No, that’s the only name I heard. Oh, wait, there was also a Marta mentioned. One time he said something like, ‘if I had stopped Marta, maybe I wouldn’t have been brought into this.’ I don’t know what that meant.”

The prosecutor called Linc to the stand and he explained how his first wife Marta had died having an abortion and that maybe his rescue efforts were either a
punishment or a reward for that. The prosecutor said that Linc sounded confused.

However, Linc made a solid case for his rescue efforts. And his lawyer argued that since there was no fencing and no “No Trespassing” signs that Linc could not be held responsible for trespassing. He also argued that there was no law against stealing garbage. He even cited a case which ruled that when people put things out for the garbage man, they are giving tacit permission for anyone to take it. Linc refused on advice of counsel to reveal the identity of the man named ‘Frank.’ And for some reason the judge let it pass.

The trial took three hours. There was no jury. Linc had been told by O'Dwyer to request that. O'Dwyer himself was there accompanied by fifteen other priests in a variety of clothing. O'Dwyer had on his usual black outfit which was trimmed in Monsignor purple. However, there were two priests with red caps. Everyone knew that they were Cardinals. The judge was a kind but firm Italian who listened to everyone and very quickly announced some fines that would take Linc the better part of a year to pay. Then he told all assembled that the trial was over.

The priests rushed Linc and went with him out of the building. Linc started to talk to O'Dwyer but the priest motioned for him to be silent. As soon as four of them climbed into O'Dwyer’s big Mercedes, it sped away. Linc remarked that the judge didn’t even say not to do it again. One of the priests that Linc did not know said, “I am sure that is implied.”
“All that the judge told me was that he hoped he wouldn’t see me in a court room again,” Linc said. Then O'Dwyer told Linc not to worry about the fines. They would be paid for him.

Horst and Maria DeLuca were one of the first couples to adopt when O'Dwyer and Sister Mary Margaret started their placement program. At the time Horst didn’t have a lot of money but through some savvy business ventures and an unusual insight into investing he had managed to get wealthy very quickly and he also seemed to have the ability to hang on to his wealth. He supported the placement program steadily and he and Maria, who were unable to have children of their own, had adopted six children, two boys and four girls by the time of Linc’s trial. Horst was in the courtroom throughout the trial and Linc recognized him from the first. But Linc did not act like he knew anybody except the few that were no secret to the judge and the prosecutor. Following the old adage that ‘he who does the most should be asked to do even more’, O'Dwyer had gotten Horst to pay Linc’s fines as well. O'Dwyer confided this to Linc as they had their first planning meeting after the trial.

“It’s obvious to me, Linc, that this particular jurisdiction is actually on your side,” O'Dwyer said. “And there may be many more like it if the whole truth were known.”

“It is amazing to me,” Linc said, “that even those who see the tragedy of abortion are shy to speak against it.”
“It’s not just shy, Linc, it is just plain fear,” the priest added.
“But what about the lack of awareness that it is just wrong?” Linc asked.

A somewhat bored look passed over O'Dwyer’s face. They had talked about this before. Linc recognized the look. Neither of them had a real answer to this. Linc had often likened it to the slave trade of the 18th century and the work of William Wilberforce to stop it. Many times 600 men, women and children would leave Africa and only 200 would arrive alive in the new world. One out of three. The abortion trade was even worse. He saw the abortion trade as the slave trade of the 20th and 21st centuries.

“Awareness, that’s no doubt what we need. Too bad your trial was so short,” O'Dwyer said.

Linc was so relieved that the trial was over that he had not thought about this. “So maybe you would like to be the defendant next time,” Linc quipped.

“I would if the opportunity arrives,” the priest said. “It’s the best free publicity there is and it just might raise public awareness of the wrongness of it all.”

It was at this moment that Linc realized the true commitment of the priest. Until now Linc tended to assume that Monsignor O'Dwyer was just an insulated big shot from the Vatican who lent his help to a good cause. Linc wanted to apologize to the priest but at the same time he didn’t want to admit to his formerly false opinion.

“That’s all right,” O'Dwyer commented as if he had read Linc’s mind. “We are all still growing in this thing. One new good thing has come of it.”
Linc was all ears.

“Horst has a new idea that only money can solve.”

Linc was still listening.

“You know more than any of us how difficult some clinics have been because they can sell this human flesh for research purposes. It even makes them feel noble to imply that some diseases might actually be healed by the death of these children,” O'Dwyer said.

Linc nodded.

“Well, Horst is actually ready to pay for their garbage just so we can find an occasional live baby in it. He’s forming a special ‘scientific’ company for this purpose.”

“Wow,” was all Linc could say. “That could amount to a lot of money for one child. But then again I can’t put a dollar value on any child’s life.”

“That’s what Horst says. He and Maria love the six they have gotten from you,” O'Dwyer said.

“From me? You guys run the railroad,” Linc said.

“But you are the main man,” O'Dwyer said. “You started the rescues and the others who are now rescuing were inspired only by you.”

Linc felt good when O'Dwyer said that. “But won’t they make sure that they are all dead?” Linc asked.

“Horst has even thought of that. They will make it clear that if they sweeten the pot with live ones, he will pay even more,” O'Dwyer answered.

“As near as I can tell, here is how it will work,” O'Dwyer said. “We, the new ‘company’ that Horst is setting up, will contract for everything and pick up on a very frequent basis. There won’t be anyone associated with the company that can be traced back to Horst or you
or me or any of our people. The buyers will wine and dine the clinic and hospital officials. Horst will pay for that too. As they work their way into the confidence of the clinic managers, they will suggest that there will be a premium for live ones as they will make far better materials for experimentation.”

Linc winced.
“All’s fair in love and war,” O'Dwyer said. “And this, my dear friend, as you know is love and war.”

They were both silent for a while.
“Do you actually think they will go for this?” Linc finally asked.
“You know they will, Linc,” O'Dwyer answered.
“Yes, I guess I do. This is the wedding of slavery and infanticide.”

They both nodded.

At first there were just a lot of dead babies which the Sisters gave decent burials in their own graveyards. Some of the smaller priories and monasteries had to buy more land for cemeteries and this was right expensive in Europe where no more land was being created. Horst not only helped in this but got other parents from the organization to put in some money themselves.

As Linc got the reports, the thought came back to him time and time again of that first night in the alley when he got the first child. And he didn’t even realize what he was doing. How it had grown. At first the reports showed only an occasional live child and it usually was destined to spend it’s life with the sisters or the monks. Horst was paying through the nose for little results. But gradually the buyers were getting through to the
managers and although Horst was now paying even more for the live babies, normal babies, they were showing up in larger and larger numbers.

In late October Linc and Joanna had a meeting at the priory with Sister Mary Margaret and O'Dwyer and Horst and his wife Maria and nine other people who worked in the system. They were all thanking Horst for his financial help.

“Gentlemen and ladies,” Horst began. “so far these expenses aren’t making a dent. But if they were, Maria and I are prepared to give everything except what it takes to keep our own children to further this work.” This kind of dedication moved Linc’s heart.

The actions of Horst's group didn't stop the work of the other rescuers. Some of them even tried to get arrested but their cases were usually thrown out for lack of prosecution. The abortionist had learned what O'Dwyer knew and didn't want to give free publicity to the other side.
Lincoln was starting to dream. In twenty-six days he had relived as many years of his life. He knew it was an accurate accounting of these years. He had either experienced the events that passed before him or someone, usually Joanna, had given him a detailed account of the incidents. But now he knew he was dreaming.

Yet the dream was not meaningless. First, it began to get light. Then he realized that he could not tell where the light was coming from. It got brighter and brighter. He realized that he was looking up when he began to hear a pleasant clamor down near the ‘floor.’ There was a great crowd of babies standing there looking up at him. The expressions on their faces, although their faces were small, were the expressions of an adult. They stood erect for small babies and their eyes were very clear and it seemed that they recognized him. At first he thought, ‘these are the ones we have rescued’ because they were all saying ‘thank you’ to him. Then it dawned on him that there were too many of them to be the rescued ones. These were the ones that didn’t make it. The ones that he was always worried about.

One little girl about seven rows back started to speak for all of them. She spoke like an adult. “You see, Mr. Linc, we are all fine. We are happy here.”
“Then why that trace of sadness that I hear in your voice?” he heard himself saying.

“That is because we will never get a chance to grow up,” she answered. “But it is only a faint memory here. You do not need to worry about us. We are blissful. We do want to thank you for those you are giving a chance to grow up. If they all knew, they would all be thankful. The ones that do know are very thankful.”

Then a little boy from the third row said, “Thank you for holding my hand until I was gone.” Several others spoke at once with a very similar ‘thank you.’

Linc heard a voice from beyond the light and the whole scene started to slip away from him.

“He’s crying, Frank, he’s crying in his sleep,” he heard Joanna say. She called for a nurse.

Linc’s last thought before regaining consciousness was that he would not worry about the ones that didn’t make it again. He would no longer need a place to talk about that subject again.

His arm hurt. Linc had the definite impression that his right arm was hurting on the inside near the bend of his elbow. It was a sharp piercing pain. He moved it and it just got worse. Gradually he opened his eyes to discover that his I.V. was twisted and it was pulling the wrong way on the inserted needle. He thought ‘boy, am I groggy. How long have I been asleep.’ He remembered slightly going over the last several years of his life and the thought that he must be dying. Then the dream. He had to do something about this pain. He reached over with his other hand. It was shaking. He really felt weak. On top of the pain there was bright sunlight streaming through the window just opposite and blinding his
already groggy eyes. He fiddled with the I.V. trying to fix it so that it didn’t hurt.

“No, Linc darling, hold still.” He heard Joanna say.

Some sort of an alarm went off. It was a piercing beep. He was so aggravated with the needle like pain, the bright light and the piercing alarm that he let out a loud frustrated groan. Suddenly there was a nurse turning off the alarm and fixing the I.V. Linc continued to hold up his other shaking hand in front of his eyes to block out the bright sunlight. Another nurse appeared.

“The sunlight is bothering him. Close the curtains,” the first nurse ordered.

Ahh, sweet relief. All three of his tormentors were eliminated.

“Mr. Harper, Mr. Harper, can you hear me?” the first nurse shouted.

“Yes, you don’t have to shout,” Linc answered.
“Well, I guess he’s back with us,” the second nurse said. “And a little grumpy,” she added.
“He’s always like that when he wakes up,” Joanna said. “And he’s been asleep for a long time, haven’t you, darling?”

When Linc heard her voice, he turned and smiled. He was home; he was with Joanna.

“Now listen to me Harper,” the doctor was saying through a heavy Italian accent. Dr. Giuseppe Vitalli was the local expert on Linc’s condition. “You have significant damage to several major organs. You are going to have to learn to live at a much slower speed.”
“We thought we were going to lose you,” Joanna added.

“Yes, and you have managed through your reckless driving to take several years, if not decades, off of your life,” Vitalli added. “But you can do quite well if you slow down, pace yourself, and be careful.”

Linc started to talk but Vitalli put his finger to his mouth.

“You see, Harper,” Vitalli went on, “you have no bones or joints that are not healing well.” Linc had noticed the cast on his left ankle, right thigh and right wrist. There were also bandages on his head. “Before long you will be able to do anything. In the morning you will have good energy. But it will not last the day. You will have to ration your energy throughout the day and take a nap every afternoon. And no more alcohol or tobacco, none whatsoever. You only have one kidney now and it is not in that great of shape.” Vitalli stopped talking. It was Linc’s turn but he didn’t get it.

“Please listen to the doctor,” Joanna said. “I would like to keep you around for a long time yet.”

“How long was I out?” Linc asked.

“Twenty-six days,” Joanna answered.

“Wow, what a vacation. I remembered a lot during that time, Marta, the children, you, the trial, and, of course, O'Dwyer.”

“Good. I wouldn’t want to be left out,” O'Dwyer chimed in.

“You old sky pilot, glad to see you,” Linc said trying to offer his I.V. arm to shake his hand. O'Dwyer moved quickly and grasped Linc’s arm.
The doctor and nurses left and Linc and Joanna and O'Dwyer talked for a while.

The next day Joanna brought the children, Margaret and Philipp, to see Linc. As the children talked quietly on the other side of the room, Linc asked Joanna, “You know what I kept wondering about as I relived my life in that coma?”

“No, my love, what?”
“How these children, the living ones, all of them, how they are doing now. When I’m able, I want to go, er, …visiting.”

“Why don’t you. I’ll go with you when I can,” Joanna said.

Linc hurried on his way while enjoying his new car to a supper meeting with Father Frank O’Dwyer. Linc had not enjoyed much time with the good Father for quite a while and he missed it. This time they didn’t talk about anything very specific; the whole operation was practically running itself by now and Linc could hardly believe that it had barely been eight years since that first time in a dark and stinking alley when he found the first child. He tended to think of them as his children and often wondered where they all were and what they were doing. They enjoyed their meal. However, Linc didn’t finish all of his supper.

“A little off your feed?” O’Dwyer asked.

“Yes, I guess so. I really haven’t been that hungry lately,” Linc said.

They talked for a while longer and Linc noticed that Frank was looking at him intently as he talked.
“What?” Linc finally asked.
“You seen the doctor lately?” The priest asked.
“Yes, he warned me. But you know me. I have a hard head. He insists that I have to slow down. I see him again tomorrow for some more rules”
“You do as he says, my old friend,” O'Dwyer said. Linc nodded.
They finished the evening talking about old times and broke off early so Linc could get home and go to bed. He went back to Dr. Vitalli in the morning.

A week later the security man in Father O’Dwyer’s office building in Rome said, “The Monsignor will see you, sir. Just take the second elevator.” He gestured down the hall. “Then turn right and go down three doors on your left,” the man added. Not even a room number.
The elevator looked like it had been made at least 500 years ago but Linc knew in his mind that this could not be true. The elegant old cage rose slowly to the third floor. Linc peeked in the half open door and a young nun with a fantastic smile beckoned him to come on in. She touched a button on her intercom.
“You friend is here, Monsignor.”
There was no answer. Frank came right out.
“Please see that no one less than the Holy Father interrupts us,” Frank instructed.
The little nun nodded.
Linc smiled at Frank’s instructions but the nun did not. Maybe the Pope called Frank a lot.
Inside Frank’s office he pulled up a very comfortable chair and sat Linc in it. Linc had been to this
office at least twice in the past, but he did not remember the chair.

“He says I have to slow down; I mean really do it, Frank. I can live maybe fifteen years if I pace myself. The damage to the internal organs from the wreck and the wrong medicine has weakened them a lot. If I keep going like I have been, I could only live another three or four years. He explained what ‘slower’ is: ten hours of sleep every night, no more drinking, no heavy physical work, and no fretting. He gave me some pills for that last one.”

“Does Joanna know?”
“Yes, she’s O.K.”
Silence.
“You’ve got to help me Fath…Frank.”
“No problem, my friend. None of us really know.”
Frank put his hand on Linc’s arm and they talked about the afterlife for a while and then Frank prayed.
Linc felt a deep peace settle down upon him. The two men just sat there in silence for several minutes but it did not seem like a long time.
Finally Linc spoke. “I want to see them, Frank. As many as I can.”
Frank understood and gave no argument. They reasoned that the older ones, the ones from the first, would be the more interesting to see as they would be nearly eight years old by now. But the problem was that Sister Mary Margaret’s railroad had not been in operation at the very beginning but they had back researched and could probably find some of them. Frank said he would set up a meeting of the three of them for the following
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

week. Frank asked Linc about money. Linc said that Joanna had plenty and was totally behind him.

Linc and Joanna enjoyed their own children. Philippe was an early walker and an early talker for a boy. He was a bright and quiet child. He was curious about everything and wanted to know the names of everything and everybody. When he encountered something or someone he didn’t know, he would point and either look at one of his parents with his distinctive ‘what is that’ look or sometimes he would just ask ‘what?’ or ‘who?’ He clearly understood the difference between a ‘what’ and a ‘who.’ He was an obedient child and wanted to please. One of the things that Philippe particularly liked to do was play horsy and ride around on Linc’s back. After the accident the doctor said that this was definitely out. At first Linc and Joanna were concerned that this would have a negative effect on Linc’s relationship with his son. But as it turned out, Linc took a more personal interest in Philippe’s mental growth and sitting next to the boy taught him many things. Joanna remarked that no matter what, Linc seemed to never lose.

Little Margaret was Linc’s perfect blue-eyed blond angel. But he did not allow this to interfere with his relationship with Philippe. Little Margaret was everything that Linc believed Marta’s baby would have been. She looked like a miniature Marta and she was one toddler who was into everything. Joanna soon became aware that Linc thought of Marta every time he held little Margaret but she was mature enough and sure enough of herself as a wife and a mother not to let this get in the
way. Once she even asked Linc if he wanted to change the child’s name to Marta. Linc replied, “No, Margaret is close enough.” Joanna spent a lot of time with the children and any time Linc asked if she needed a break, she would ask him how anyone could need a break from such joy. Sometimes Linc wondered if ‘chosen children,’ the adopted ones, didn’t get better parents than those who were naturally born to people. He was sure that adoptive parents where often more thankful for their children. He knew that he and Joanna were.

Giavanna was the perfect built in free babysitter. She was the only reason that Joanna had any semblance of the practice left and she also freed up Joanna to go on rescues with Linc from time to time. As a financially independent person Giavanna was free to take care of her own Renee as well as Philippe and little Margaret. Her husband, as usual, stayed pretty much out of the way. The three children were growing up together with Renee being the perfect ‘assistant mother.’
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

CHAPTER 22

Leisel

When Sister Mary Margaret became involved in finding homes for the children, Linc was so exhausted that he truly couldn’t remember all that transpired. Sister had contacted the very first woman that had taken a baby and found out that this woman actually knew the second woman who took a child and the third and so on down the list. There were only two or three that had slipped through. Although Sister definitely believed in the miraculous, she was not a starry-eyed nun. She had another Sister inquire and found out that the first woman had brought in the second woman and so on. Linc was not aware of this at the time and somehow it was never communicated to him. It was fortunate that those first babies had all been obtained from the same source because the abortionists there were particularly sloppy in their efforts. Since Linc was usually pretty drunk back then, his memory was a little sketchy. All he knew was that he had to rescue those he could. Later when he was raiding the human garbage cans of other clinics, he remembered wondering why the pickings were so slim. Two factors accounted for this which the Sisters were well acquainted with. The first clinic did a lot of later term abortions; the really little ones never lived. Linc knew that. And most abortionists now were better at their jobs than those Linc first encountered.
In the beginning Linc had not yet widened the scope of his operations; he was strictly playing the whole thing by ear. When Linc did start to expand the circle of his operations following his sales route for the company, he did find some other willing parents on his own that Sister had been able to trace. When Sister and the nuns had taken over the placement process, they kept meticulous records and added those first ones that they knew about to the front of their list. Many parents maintained contact with the nuns and a few even got a second child through them. All of which proved that good people wanted children and would take those who had barely escaped death at the moment of their births.

When Father O’Dwyer contacted Sister Mary Margaret about Linc’s desire to visit some of the older children, he did not tell her about Linc’s prognosis. Everyone just thought that it was a good thing that he visit the children that he had rescued. The nuns contacted the parents and they all gladly agreed to tell the children that Linc was an old friend.

Linc would visit the first few kids and then jump ahead to where the Sisters had taken over. The first ones were all very close to eight years old by now. After the nuns took over the records it was all clear. They told Linc there were a total of 276 children “on the books.” He was astonished. After the first few the next group was only a few weeks younger at the beginning of the list. The youngest child rescued only last week by Carlos was only a week old.

When the list arrived including the rescue dates, Linc presumed that the first one started somewhere down the line. But when he checked the date carefully it
dawned on him that this little girl was actually the first he had rescued. He remembered the date because of the big party his boss had thrown for him that evening. He was top in sales for the third time in a row while grieving and drunk. And that was the night he found her. That he remembered.

Sister even had the names and addresses. Linc went to that address and was very careful. When he got there, a little girl of about eight was playing hopscotch on the sidewalk in front of the house. He sat on the steps of the house next door; it did not seem to be lived in. Then he saw the hour glass birthmark on her knee. He was sure this was her. His “first born” so to speak. At one turnaround she smiled at him. His heart jumped. What a pretty healthy eight year old. He did not know how long he could look without being taken for a child abuser and he was thinking about leaving. He studied everything about the child and wished he had a camera. He resolved that the camera started tomorrow.

“Leisel, come in now.” Linc heard a woman’s voice.

Leisel did not respond.

A woman came to the door and called the child in. The girl smiled at Linc as she obeyed. At first the woman looked startled, thinking what most people would suppose she was thinking. Linc waved sheepishly and tried to communicate with his look that he meant no harm. He got off the steps and started to slowly walk away.

“Wait,” the woman said.

Linc stopped.
“Do you know my daughter?” the woman asked.

Linc turned. The woman was studying his face carefully now.

“We’ve met. About eight years ago,” Linc answered. He continued, “She was wrapped in a dark blue coat.”

The woman smiled. “We still have that coat,” the woman said. “She thinks it’s ugly, but I, I think it is beautiful.” The woman nodded. “You dear man. Come in. Please come in just for a few minutes.”

The woman had never been married. Her mother Gilda had died just a year after she received the baby from Linc. So now it was just Marie and Leisel.

The child was very smart and sensitive to the needs of others. She knew that she was “adopted” but that was all. She needed more papers for school so Linc told Marie that a priest would visit them soon and that he could be trusted. He didn’t know which of O'Dwyer’s priests it would be. Before Linc left the little girl had actually sat for a minute on his knee. Linc thought that made everything worth it. As he went out the door, Marie suddenly remembered something, “Oh, please, sir, wait here for just a moment,” she asked. Linc waited and talked some more to Leisel. The woman returned. “Your coat,” she said as she presented Linc with the coat. “Leisel will be so glad that it’s gone.” Linc took the coat. After the mother led the child in hugging him again, he walked slowly down the front steps.
CHAPTER 23

Greta

Most of the time Linc would just arrive at the child’s house but he wouldn’t identify himself right away. He would sit on a bench or a fallen tree, whatever presented itself, and see if he could identify ‘his’ child from among the neighborhood children. He remained cautious in this to avoid being taken for a child molester. Most of the time he correctly identified the child. He was not quite sure how he did this. Mary Margaret would sometimes even have a few pictures of each child, but few of them were recent.

Otto was all boy. He was coming right up on eight years old when Linc saw him and was involved in a tough game of street soccer with about five other boys roughly his own age. Otto was the loudest and the dirtiest of the bunch. This made it obvious that he was the most involved in the game. He had obviously slid down a few times and it had rained heavily the night before. In addition to the dirt on his clothes his shirt was nearly all the way out and both knees had a bloody injury on them which he seemed to be unaware of. Linc was sure that he remembered him from the night he found him. He was one of the very first of them and he had been complaining loudly when Linc found him. By all rights he should have been exhausted and severely dehydrated
by then. He had been born about three hours and was telling everyone that he fully intended to stay among the living. Linc had examined him carefully and could find no wounds of his own on his little body. There was a bruise at the base of the neck which apparently had been intended as the death blow and which probably rendered the little fellow unconscious long enough to get him outside and into one of the cans. Still, by all rights he should have been dead. But even then his determination to live had been apparent. Linc remembered how he took to the bottle. Linc was almost afraid to let it go lest little Otto would suck the entire bottle right down. This kid had a real zeal for life.

Wham! Otto hit a tree and fell dazed to the ground. Linc instinctively got up to go check on the boy. Before Linc could get to him two of his pals had pulled him up as if they were accustomed to it and showed absolutely no concern for his well being; neither did Otto. They resumed their game. After a while Linc heard a woman call the boy from the front door of her house. Even though she was standing behind the screen door Linc could tell that she was watching him so he thought that he should probably identify himself. He followed Otto to the house and the other boys moved on away. They were probably all hungry by now and would be checking in at home soon. The woman hurried the boy in and relocked the screen as Linc approached. Linc started the conversation in English as usual since most people spoke English. If they did not, he would have to try his German, or French.

“Madam,” Linc began, “my name is Lincoln Harper, you may remember me . . .”
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

She stared at him but no look of recognition. She motioned for the child who was now curious to go further into the house and wash up. She took a few seconds to comment on how dirty he was.

Linc spoke again. “I, I was the one who, er, found ...” he began.

At first the woman looked shocked and then the look of recognition came to her face.

“Sir,” the woman said. Then, “please, please come in.” She called for her husband. “This is the man,...” she began. The husband understood immediately.

He was invited for supper and gladly accepted. They told Otto that Linc was an old friend and that he could call him ‘uncle Linc’ if he wanted to. The boy accepted that. The boy was active right up until bedtime. Normally adults would have tired of this quickly but these three adults had a special interest in watching him. Otto was delighted to be the star of the show. When his father told him to go to bed, he said “Guten nacht” to everyone including ‘uncle Linc’ and went to his room. His mother told Linc that he always fell asleep in minutes. Because of this she always got him cleaned up good before supper. They both hugged and kissed Linc as he was leaving and tried to give him money. At first Linc refused but they made it clear it was for the work, for the children. He gladly accepted it and told them it would be used only for the children. He turned it over to Sister Mary Margaret.

When Linc picked up the next list from Sister Mary Margaret, he was really excited. The first two pages were enough to keep Linc occupied for months.
There were names and contact numbers in seven countries and thirteen cities. O’Dwyer’s network spread over most of Europe and even into America. Some of the parents had moved since getting their children. Linc did not know how the earlier ones got the necessary papers to take their children to other countries since all of the children were legally nonexistent and he wasn’t going to ask.

Just as he finished reading the second page, Sister interrupted him with a page with only one name and address on it that the efficient record keeper, Sister Celestine, had just given to her.

“Do you remember this one, Linc?” She asked.

“Greta Schneider,” Linc read.

“No, the name doesn’t ring a bell,” he answered.

Sister moved a little closer and spoke very softly all the while looking Linc squarely in the eye.

“No left arm and a little limp,” she almost whispered.

She saw the look of recognition in Linc’s eyes. She knew that he had been particularly touched and tortured by this one. He was touched because he brought baby Greta out even though her left arm was entirely gone. He had noticed that her heel was bleeding but he wrapped her in a blanket and hurried her to his contact for medical treatment. Linc was not surprised when she survived. She was the spunkiest little one Linc had ever seen. Linc was tortured by the memory of Greta because it set him wondering along the old familiar trail in his mind that asked over and over again, ‘could you have saved more of them. Don’t the wounded have a right to live as well?’ Linc knew that it was always a judgment call and he had
made hundreds of them. In the end some got to medical treatment in time merely because he couldn’t wait with them; he had been found out or someone was actually coming after him. He found just a little comfort these days when his “associates” asked him the same question. They seemed to be haunted by the same questions.

Linc did remember that there were no other candidates for life the night he found Greta. They were all certainly dead. But Greta was alive. She was alive and crying softly under the great pain of having her left arm sucked off at the shoulder by the abortionists blade and vacuum. When she sensed that Linc was there, she began to cry. It was amazing to Linc that she could cry that loud in her condition. He also remembered that most of her right heel was gone as well which would cause a lifelong limp.

Linc broke his gaze with Sister and looked at the address. It was nearby in Austria.

“Of course, she’s barely five,” Sister said. “But she’s fine and I knew you would be interested.”

Linc would go there first.

Greta’s parents had a beautiful farm in Austria and Linc felt relaxed for the first time in months as the train rolled along.

Greta’s Dad, Jacob, met Linc at the station and took him home to see Greta and Clara his wife. They conversed freely as they rode along. Linc’s German seemed to flow easier when he was relaxed. Jacob even complimented him on his German. Linc just said, “thanks.” Jacob helped Linc with his bags and they went inside the farmhouse as Linc admired the fantastic view from the
porch. Clara was glad to see him. It was as if they had met but as a matter of fact the feeling of familiarity from the Schneider’s side was strictly from Sister Mary Margaret’s description of Linc. They felt like they knew him.

In a minute little Greta came into the room. She looked questioningly at first her mother and then her father as if to ask, ‘who is this?’ Clara immediately put her arm around Linc and motioned for Greta to come closer. Inspired by her mother’s familiarity with this stranger the little girl came right on over. The limp was barely noticeable. She had on a pretty little dress and her mother had apparently very neatly sewn shut the left sleeve. Linc learned later that Clara had done this with all of Greta’s clothes. Linc hunkered down as Clara said, “Greta, this is Linc. We love Linc.”

“Linc,” the little girl said. Her voice was loud and clear.

Linc smiled as tears came to his eyes. ‘That’s my girl Greta,’ he thought. ‘It was that loud clear voice that saved your life, baby.’ The child held out her one arm towards Linc in a clear gesture of wanting to be picked up. This Linc was glad to do.

Linc stayed with Jacob and Clara and Greta for three whole days and two nights. They insisted. They continually put Greta in his arms or his lap. There were no other children. Linc and Greta became great friends.

In the evenings when the child was fast asleep, they would talk. They would ask him about his work.

“I don’t understand,” Clara said, “why everybody is not against this horrible practice. Sometimes I think ‘if
they could actually know Greta’ but I know that many people are surrounded with children that they love and never think about what abortion really is. It is beyond comprehension.”

“Well,” Linc began. They listened in rapt silence. “It’s a lot like slavery in the eighteenth century or the genocide of the Jews in the twentieth. People are blinded. Like with the slaves they actually believed either that the slaves were better off as slaves in America than they were in Africa or they believed that the black man was a lower form of life, subhuman. And, of course, with the Jews they had been taught that the Jews were subhuman and they denied that they knew about the death camps. With abortion they either actually believe that they are not tiny humans, subhuman again, a mass of protoplasm, or they just don’t care. That’s the worst case. Father O’Dwyer once told me about the abortionists themselves, ‘they know, Linc, they know that the children are human. It’s just that they don’t care.’ But the mothers choose to kill them for their own convenience or because of their own fears and they can do it because they are bigger. The baby is helpless.”

The Schneiders just sat in silence as if it was the first time they had ever heard of such a thing.

Linc played all sorts of games with Greta and she was not at all intimidated by her lack of an arm. She was a very smart little girl and Linc knew that she was going to be quite a woman. When it came time for Jacob to take Linc back to the train station, Greta cried and clung to Linc. Inside she knew that there was a special bond between the two of them. They had met in a cold, dark,
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES

smelly alley when she was naked and in unbearable pain and Lincoln Harper had been her first friend.

On the train Linc couldn’t help but go over that scene again. He was about to give it up and leave. He had gone through three cans and there were only four babies in the bottom of the fourth can. The stench at the bottom of these cans is always so bad that Linc was saving the worst for last. At first it seemed like it was just full of parts. He remembered picking up and dropping several little arms and legs when he reached for what was to be his last leg and heard the cry. He lifted the baby out and laid her on a blanket on the back steps to the clinic. Her cry rang out loud and clear. He noticed the missing arm right away but the cries seemed to drown out the reality of it. He had never taken a child with a missing limb. He found himself putting a sterile dressing lightly over the wound. The blood was so clotted that she apparently did not feel the dressing because she did not yell louder. Then he noticed the heel. There was a good bit of clotted blood there too so he figured that wound was not very deep. He remembered thinking, ‘oh, well, what if she doesn’t live. The pickings here are slim tonight. And, who knows, she might make it and be an extraordinary girl.’ He gave himself a small inward pat on the back.
CHAPTER 24

Four Kids

It was not too far a drive to visit Benjamin. He had been adopted by a Jewish couple in southern Germany. Linc thought that Monsignor O'Dwyer and his flock of nuns must be slipping to allow one child out of the Catholic fold. Actually, they had slipped up. It was always their intent to place the children with Catholic families so that they would be raised as part of the faithful. Ben had been taken to southern Germany along with another rescue child. The carriers, one of their regular couples, believed that both children, both boys, were going to one couple. When they arrived, the couple told them that they really couldn’t afford them both as much as they wanted them. However, the woman’s sister really wanted one. Knowing that the nuns had done a check on the woman, they agreed and left both boys with the couple. Later it turned out that the two women were Jewish but one had converted to Catholicism when she married a Catholic and the other had married a Jewish man. By the time this was all discovered nearly a year had passed and the couple had bonded with the child. So Father O'Dwyer gave his approval of the placement on his own authority. In other words, if there was a conflict, it all fell on O'Dwyer. O'Dwyer had broad shoulders. As usual the thankful parents met Linc at the train station. He still was not driving much.
Like Otto little Ben was all boy. He was stocky like his adopted father and people often comment that he looks just like his Daddy. Usually the couple just says ‘thank you’ rather than tell the whole story. Ben runs hard, plays hard and even sleeps hard. He can stomp down a flight of stairs something awful and he is the only boy Linc had ever met who could actually fall up the stairs. He must stump his toe at least fifty times a day. The front of his shoes look like they have been in combat but he doesn’t seem to notice. It is all a part of his zest for life. At only six he can already read in German and is pretty good in French since France is close by and there are a good number of French speakers around. Like most German boys he says he wants to be an engineer but Linc thinks he has been brainwashed on that issue. Believe it or not, Linc thought that the boy would end up a Rabbi.

“A rabbi?” O'Dwyer exclaimed when Linc gave him his routine report at their next supper. “Why a rabbi?”

“You don’t think anyone should be a rabbi?” Linc remarked chiding the priest.

O'Dwyer just returned a ‘you know better than that’ look.

“I don’t know, Frank, he just seems to have a sort of spiritual aura about him. I realize that it doesn’t fit into the general rough boy image. But I bet you were a handful when you were his age.”

“Well, you may be right, Linc. You’re really getting to know these kids.”
Linc tried to place in his memory the night he got Ben.

Frank got a phone call and went out on the porch of the restaurant to talk. It was a long call.

Linc remembered one really rainy night. He stopped by a location that he had not visited for a long time because there weren’t usually many there and very seldom was there a live one. This night he expected no difference. He actually pulled down into the alley instead of parking a block or so away and walking. It was an unusually wide alley and he planned on a very short stop. There didn’t seem to be anyone living in the area. He stopped the car and left it running and walked over to three garbage cans. The lids were on them all. Since he really wasn’t in his ‘rescue clothes’, he was extra careful. He didn’t want to soil his clothes. One empty can. Another can with some foul smelling waste but no babies. In the third can he could see four distinct bodies as he shinned his little flashlight into the can. ‘Top two, dead. Bottom two, ugh, why do they always have to be on the bottom?’ Linc supposed that someone has to be the one on the bottom. One dead for sure, two many pieces missing.

Linc noticed how cold and analytical he had become but he guessed that no one could really help it if they did what he did. Besides, he still cared very much about the children. But the last baby, a boy, bellowed as Linc lifted the other little body off of him. Linc pulled him out. He seemed untouched by the abortionists knife or vacuum. He must have seemed already dead when he came out. ‘Wow, he had really escaped unscathed.’ Linc wrapped the child in a new blanket that he had thrown
over his shoulder in the event that he actually found a child. He hurried back to his car and put the baby beside him on the front seat as he slipped behind the wheel. As he closed the door, he heard a shout behind him so he rammed the car into gear and sped down the alley. He hoped his memory served him correctly and that the alley was open at the other end. It was but Linc almost ploughed into a city bus as he emerged from the alley and made a sharp left turn. He went straight to his contact point to drop off the child. He tried to hold a formula bottle for the child as he drove by pulling the baby over close to him. He always wrapped them tightly in the blanket. But the little guy wouldn’t feed. Yet he seemed strong. After Linc dropped him off, he wondered how long it would have taken the boy to die there on the bottom of that garbage can. Sometimes strength can be a curse to these kids if they don’t get rescued. Linc was convinced that this memory was of Ben.

O'Dwyer returned from his call.

“I though you had left,” Linc said.

“No, just a very long call.”

“About the kids?” Linc asked.

“Sort of, and the military,” O'Dwyer answered.

Linc had forgotten that O'Dwyer was military liaison from the Vatican.

“Some of the American military wives want to help place some of the children,” O'Dwyer said.

“Will that work?” Linc asked.

“I think so as long as it is the spouses of military and not any actual soldiers, male or female. Still it could get tricky.”
“I guess it could,” Linc said. “Always a new wrinkle.”
“Yes,” O'Dwyer agreed.

Hans Karl Hartmann is a lot of name for a little boy. Hans was placed not five miles from where he was rescued. Linc fit this visit in one afternoon as he was traveling in Germany. Hans was almost eight now and he was tall and slender with bright blue eyes and a pleasant smile. His parents welcomed Linc the same way that all the parents did. They seemed to have a mixture of awe and admiration for Lincoln Harper. They fed Linc a good German lunch, one that probably eliminated supper for Linc on that day, and Hans didn’t say much. Linc noticed how organized he was. He kept each portion of food separate on his plate and evenly rotated his attention to each one. Linc watched the parents and it was obvious to him that Hans’ method had not come by watching them even though they were German and the stereotype of Germans called for strict routine and order. It was amazing to Linc how certain things are just in us when we come into the world. After the meal the parents left Linc to talk to Hans while they cleaned up.

“So, what do you like in school?” Linc asked the boy in German.

Linc was surprised to hear, “I like sports, and… reading stories.”

Linc had supposed that the boy was not heavy set enough for sports. “You mean football?” Linc asked.

“Nein,” he answered.
No, so then what? “You are eight years old?” Linc asked.

“Ya,” he answered.

The boy was shyer than Linc had expected him to be. “Nein, futbol?” Linc asked.

“No, I …like… to… run,” he answered carefully in English. He accompanied this with a vigorous running motion and smiled.

“Hans is going to be an Olympic runner,” his mother said in English as she entered the room.

“He watches running all the time,” the father said proudly. “He wants to train for the Olympics. He is very, how do you say? … yes, fast.”

The smile on the boy’s face told it all. He was made to run. He was a sensitive kid and might even end up being a poet but running was his passion.

Linc took endless pleasure watching his own children grow and the fact that they were rescue children made it all the better. Linc kept a small notebook on his visits to these children. Next to Hans Karl Hartmann he wrote, “sensitive, quiet, still has the blue eyes he was born with, a runner.”

Linc and Joanna visited Sonja Krause together. One strange thing that Linc had noticed in visiting these children was that very often they were the only child. Sometimes this had a sensible explanation. The couple might have taken the child because they couldn’t have children. They may have even been turned down by certain adoption agencies because of age or low income. These issues didn’t matter so much to the Sisters. If they saw a good parent in the eyes of the couple, they were
willing to take a chance. After all, God was in charge so far as they were concerned. Also, the Vatican City state birth certificate for the rescued child might have turned certain authorities off when they applied for another child. But no one ever impressed Linc or Joanna that they were sorry about their decision to take the child. They all, down to the last man and woman, adored their child. The Sisters were doing a good job indeed.

Sonja was tall for her age and graceful. As soon as the formalities were over she wanted to dance for the Harpers. There was no doubt where her passion was at the age of seven. Granted it might change as she grew older but she was already a very good ballerina. Her parents had even installed a mirror and a bar in the living room for her. Everything revolved around Sonja. She was active and definitely a showoff but she really didn’t act spoiled. She was obedient and polite. Her desire to please seemed to be inborn. Linc wondered about the mother who had aborted her. If she was like this child, how could she have done what she did?

Linc remembered the night he got Sonja by tying the date in the Sister’s records to another event in his life, a promotion at work. Later when he was arrested Linc thought of how little sense things often made. That night with Sonja he should have been caught but he had escaped most unexpectedly. As Linc left the alley with the baby, a policeman shouted for him to stop. Linc froze and the policeman started towards him.

“What do you have there?” the policeman asked in German. Linc did not answer. Suddenly the policeman’s radio squawked and the man turned and ran the other
way. Linc moved quickly to his car. He delivered the baby to the Sisters in less than an hour.

She gave Linc and Joanna an extensive guided tour. Sonja’s room was filled with ballet. There were pictures of ballerinas everywhere and magazines about dance everywhere. Linc wrote in his notebook. “Sonja Krause - tall and sweet - a ballerina.”

Susan loved to write. For the first five minutes that Linc was in their home little Susan would not come out from behind her mother. Linc began to think that she was still, even after seven years, in some sort of trauma because of her manner of entrance into the world. But he soon stopped thinking such thoughts when her mother put her onto her favorite subject. Susan was a writer. Even at her early age she was already writing stories. This was possible because her mother had seen her desire to read when she was four and began to teach her at home. The child caught on quickly and was reading whole books at the seventh grade level by the time she was six and she had already started to write. Linc couldn’t remember anything about her rescue although the Sisters had assured him that he had done it.

She started reading one of her stories to Linc and he sat amazed. Her father who had not said a word since Linc arrived just sat there with a very big smile on his face as Susan went on and on with her story. When she finished, she looked straight up at Linc and asked him how he liked it.

“Very much,” Linc answered. “You are a very talented little girl. I know that you will continue with your writings.”
It’s a gift,” the girl answered. The adults smiled and nodded in agreement. Susan asked if she could read him another story and her mother interrupted to say that perhaps Mr. Harper would rather just talk.

“No, please Mrs. Konig, I would like to hear another story,” Linc said.

Before long Susan’s parents were content to leave Linc with Susan for several hours as she shared her creations with him. Linc was sorry to have to leave but the little girl volunteered a big hug before he departed. And she asked, “Are you sure we haven’t met before?”

“You were too young to remember,” Linc answered.

Susan nodded as she looked into his eyes as if to discover something more about him. She had big brown eyes and she didn’t blink much or look away. Finally, Linc tore himself loose. He simply wrote in his notebook, “Susan Konig, shy but very much a person - an author.”
HEAR THEIR TINY CRIES
Linc saw several interesting names on the next list. One little girl that Linc actually remembered was placed with an American military family. Being American Linc looked for American placements but he really didn’t expect to get a chance to visit them. As it happened, Joanna had a convention to attend in Tampa, Florida and things started to line up unexpectedly. Linc wasn’t sure how much he believed in circumstances. But he believed that all of “his children” were important; he had been able to rescue them for a reason. Joanna arranged to leave Philippe and Margaret with Giavanna for nine whole days. Giavanna was always glad to keep Linc and Joanna’s kids and she had a big local family to help who loved to take care of children.

As it worked out, this little girl had been placed by the Sisters with a couple at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. The couple was catholic and maintained an active correspondence with Sister Hilary at the Priory who did personal follow up on the children. They were now stationed in Tampa because the husband was assigned to the American Central Command there. Joanna really wanted Linc to go with her to Florida so they could vacation for a few days after the short but boring conference was over. So he agreed to go.
Following his doctor’s orders he rested up a lot before the plane flight to Florida.

As soon as Joanna left for her conference, Linc took the rental car and drove to visit the Johnsons just off base near McDill Air Force Base. Sister Hilary had arranged everything for him. Major Johnson even got the day off for the event. Sister had told Linc that the little girl was just about to turn six and that her name was Sarah. Linc was not prepared for the surprise that he found.

Bill and Joyce Johnson greeted Linc warmly at the driveway and brought him in for coffee. Little Sarah emerged from the front door just as they were approaching and her mother motioned her back inside for introductions.

“Sarah, honey, this is Mr. Harper. He is an old friend of ours and he met you when you were just a baby,” Joyce said.

Sarah put out her little hand and Linc shook it gently. She was a dark haired girl with big dark brown eyes and she fairly glowed with brightness. Linc remembered that she was born with a lot of black hair and that her skin was fair.

“Did you rescue me from the garbage can?” she asked before Linc could release her hand.

“Yes,” her mother interjected a little embarrassed. “We tell her everything, Mr. Harper,” she quickly added.

Linc had not encountered this before and thought it was a little unusual but he was about to understand better.

At this Sarah took Linc’s hand and they sat down for coffee. Sarah had chocolate milk and she was a very poised and gracious little girl. Linc was glad that he
came. Again this one child alone was reward enough for anything he might believe that he suffered or sacrificed to do his work. But the visit had hardly begun.

“Sarah took a day off from her school,” Joyce said. “so she could visit with you today.”

“Oh, where do you go to school?” Linc asked.

“I go to a school for gifted children,” Sarah answered. “There are only five like it in the country.” She spoke more as matter of fact than in pride.

“I see,’ Linc said. “Then you must be a very smart girl.”

“Yes, it’s a gift,” she said. Linc remembered hearing that before.

“Here, Sarah,” her mother said as she picked up Linc’s rental car keys off of the table. “There is a serial number on Mr. Harper’s car keys. “Let’s see, it has nine digits. Is it a prime, Sarah?”

The child glanced at it. “No, mother,” she answered.

Linc was an engineer by education. He knew that a prime number was a number that could only be divided by 1 or itself, like 1,3,5,7,11, etc. But to recognize such a number with nine digits at a glance took a very smart girl. He was impressed.

“Now, Mom, you know that Dr. Bingham says that is just showcasing. We have to have a higher regard for our gifts.”

“Just humor me, honey, and tell Mr. Harper what grade level you are in math and a few other subjects.”

“Lincoln or Linc,” Linc said.

“Pardon,” Joyce answered.
“Please just call me Linc. Sarah too, if you don’t mind.”
“They’ll let me call you Uncle Linc,” Sarah said.
“O.K., fine.”
Sarah looked at her Dad who smiled his approval.
“Dr. Edwards says that the whole world has order, without order there is chaos. So we obey our parents and I really love mine,” Sarah said.
Joyce poked Sarah gently.
“O.K., Uncle Linc,” Sarah said. “I am currently studying advanced college calculus, abstract algebra and algebraic topology. I’m studying advanced quantum mechanics and string theory in physics. I’m also interested in gaming strategy.”
Linc was speechless and very affirmed. How often had he asked himself when a baby didn’t make it to the Priory alive, ‘what could that child have done?’
“I’m also interested in virus studies in molecular and cellular biology. That really interests me. The other is really just a sort of a game,” the child continued.
“We can’t even help her with her homework. That ended when she was four. But that’s O.K., they have lots of staff to help with that although she spends a lot of time at school,” Joyce said.
The parents glowed and Linc tried to think of something appropriate to say. Almost in jest Linc asked, “And what exactly do you want to do, Sarah?”
“The cure for cancer. I want it, Uncle Linc, and I am going to have it.”
Linc arranged to bring Joanna back to visit in three days after her conference was over. Joanna heard little else for those three nights except more about Sarah.
Linc Harper and Frank O'Dwyer couldn’t remember how many times they had sat like this after a good meal drinking a glass of red wine. They usually had beef or pork and they honestly believed that it helped the digestion. They certainly didn’t get a buzz on with that much food in their stomachs. But now Linc had to settle for water. They had been friends together in the army and since then for many years now as Linc brought O'Dwyer’s nuns child after child. O'Dwyer had never pushed Linc about his faith. It seemed to the priest that the work Linc had done was proof of something. But Frank just wasn’t content to leave it that way. In this conversation he found an opportunity.

“Yea, Frank, those nuns of yours are really something,” Linc said.

“They’re not my nuns,” O'Dwyer answered. “They belong to their respective orders and to God. Why do you think they are so devoted anyway? You have observed them now up close for years.”

“No doubt it is their faith,” Linc responded. “They do good things because they believe.”

“This is going to be easier than I thought,” O'Dwyer mumbled.

“Why do you do good things, Linc?”

“Because they are there to do,” Linc answered.

“That’s all? You don’t believe?” the priest asked. “Oh, I believe in something. I’m just no good at talking about it,” Linc said. He took another sip.

“But you know the story,” Frank said.

“The story?”
“Yes. You have stared for hours at the man on the cross in the little chapel. You were talking to somebody.”

“Frank, I don’t really know who I was talking to. All I know is that it helped a lot at least until your little nun deserted and turned me in.

“As I said, Linc, she was not my little nun. There’s usually a bad one in every barrel; one tiny bad one in a great big barrel. Also, she was still a novice; she wasn’t fully committed yet. Furthermore, you know the rest of them. Besides it’s time you realize that even if the nun wasn’t in the chapel, you would still not be alone,” Frank said and then he left the ball in Linc’s court. He had really loaded Linc up.

It was quiet for a while.

“O.K. maybe,” Linc said. “There is probably someone else there. And I do know the story of the man on the cross.”

“Do you believe it?” Frank asked possibly risking their friendship.

“Yes, I do, I now do,” Linc admitted.

Father Frank O'Dwyer leaned back in his chair. There, after all this time he had finally heard Lincoln Harper admit it.

“And a little child shall lead them,” O'Dwyer mumbled.

“What?” Linc asked.

“Nothing, nothing, Linc,” O'Dwyer said.
Dr. David J. Keyser has served as an international theology teacher and college adjunct faculty. His earned degrees include a B.S., an M.Div, an M.S., a Th.M., and a Ph.D. in Theology. His interests are in Theology, History, Biblical Fiction, and the rights of the Unborn. He lives with his wife in Northern Alabama.