

John Tyler builds a beautiful house for his bride in 1919. For the next 100 years, 8 different families live in the elegant home in Rochester, Michigan. With real-life history of the area, it tells about the people that lived on Morning Glory Lane.

Morning Glory

By Cyndi Whitfield

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*Morning
Glory*

Cyndi Whitfield

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CHAPTER ONE

THE HOUSE THAT JOHN BUILT 1918

John Tyler was a happy man and believed he lived in a great day and age where anything was possible. At 40 years old, he owned a home construction business, drove a brand new black Model T Ford automobile and enjoyed life in general.

The Tyler Building Company operated from a small office in the village of Avon Township in southeastern Michigan. Its owner resided in a small apartment above it on Main Street.

At the age of 14, John began working for the Keller Building Company in Detroit and spent a number of years avidly learning every facet of the business. Graduating with a business degree from the University of Michigan years later, the young entrepreneur started his own building company, hiring a handful of seasoned builders to work under his employ. Detroit was a growing entity, but John believed there were areas far north of the city that needed services like his.

At the age of 25, he took horse and buggy and left the city to explore the land farther north. One week out, he came across the small village of Avon Township. The area seemed the perfect place to relocate his business. The Clinton River wove in and out of the village and, although he followed it for quite some time, could not find the end. The river was,

obviously, a long one. In exploring, he found Paint Creek as well, and realized the waterpower available from having both. The area had gently rolling hills and miles of open land in every direction. Though the population stood around 900 at that time, John had the foresight to know more and more families would want to build homes and farmhouses in this beautiful location. It was the perfect spot for a building company.

Now, 16 years later, the population had reached 2,000 and the Tyler Building Company was booming.

Prosperous city workers were moving to Avon Township for larger houses. They wanted yards and fresh air for their children and found the area to be just what they were looking for.

John still lived in his small apartment over the building company, as he had since 1908, but as of late, had begun to think about stretching his own horizons. His business was indeed a success, but now it seemed time to turn focus to his personal life. After building numerous homes for others, it was time to build his own. But first, a wife would be nice. Romance was never at the top of his list. He'd spent time with women, of course, but preferred spending time focusing on his business and creating homes that families would live in for many years to come.

That is, until he met Leah Ramsdale. At just half his age, she, her parents and younger sister, Madeline, had moved to Avon from Detroit the previous year.

John saw Leah one day during the church service in town. She sat with her parents in the pew in front of him and he noticed first her platinum blond hair. She wore it down below her shoulders where it hung in wavy tresses. When they turned to greet each other, he saw her blue eyes, a shade he

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had never before seen. Her beauty overcame him and he had a hard time focusing on the sermon that day.

Afterwards, he greeted the man he presumed to be her father outside the church as people milled about. Richard Ramsdale seemed a nice man and told John he was opening up the village's first financial institution, the Bank of Avon. Richard told him he moved his family there just recently and was interested in acquiring a new home. The rest was history.

John courted Leah over the next eight months and found her to be everything he could want in a wife. She had beauty, femininity and a sense of humor and he felt she would be a fine mother to any children they might have.

Now, this wonderful and perfect woman had just agreed to be his wife. John had proposed the evening before and, despite their age difference, her parents seemed to have no qualms about their union. John was only a few years younger than Richard, after all. But seeing the success of his building company, they most likely felt assured their daughter would be well taken care of and never want for anything.

The wedding was to take place in six months' time, on August 24th. They would be married at the small church in town and then hold a reception at the Ramsdale home.

John smiled as he anticipated their future. Today he would start working on plans for the home he would build for her. Not enormous, but large enough for the five or six children they would have. It would be a two-story home and he already had the spot picked out for it. The land was rolling and heavily wooded and Paint Creek ran through it. He would situate the house atop the hill and the creek would run at the back of their property.

Drawing up preliminary blueprints, he headed over to the Ramsdale house that night to show Leah. Her mother,

Winnie, had invited him to dinner. Over beef roast and assorted side dishes, he told them of his plans.

“It’ll be white with a wrap-around porch where we’ll have two rockers. We can sit there every evening and look out at the trees and sunset and enjoy the peace and quiet. I want to build about a half mile from Main Street so we’re not too far from downtown or my office.”

Leah beamed with pleasure as her parents looked on, smiling.

“When can I see the property?” his fiancée asked excitedly.

“I’ll take you tonight. But first, I want to show you my drawings for the home. I’ve imagined them in my head for quite some time, but now that our marriage is on the horizon, I want to start putting my ideas on paper. I can have a crew out there this week to get started on the actual construction.”

After dinner, they laid John’s drawings out on the dining room table.

“I have four bedrooms planned. The largest is for us, of course, and the other three for our children.”

Leah blushed and looked away and John loved her even more in that moment. He went on to tell them about the kitchen, dining room, living room parlor and study.

“But there’s a special room I want to put in for you, Leah. It’s called a sunroom. We can eat breakfast there every morning as the sun streams in. Three sides of the room will be nothing but windows.”

Leah’s jaw dropped. “That sounds wonderful, John!”

Later that evening, the four of them got into the Model T and drove the mile or so to the property he had in mind. All four agreed it was beautiful. John watched Leah as they walked over the property, stopping at the creek. He wanted

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her to be as excited about their new venture as he; it was evident that she was.

At one point, John and Richard walked off to talk about adding a barn-like structure at the back of the property. It would house the Model T and a large workbench with John's tools. Leah and Winnie hung back.

"You are going to have a magnificent life, my dear," her mother told her, tears in her eyes. "You couldn't ask for a better man than John."

Leah nodded, too overcome to speak. Could her life really be this perfect?

The house progressed over the next months and John carved time out each day to check in with his workers at the site. They knew from the start that their boss had definite ideas on how the home was to be built and they followed his direction without question.

During this time, a number of city dwellers who had made their fortunes were moving to Avon to build estate homes surrounded by acres of property. Land was not available in Detroit, but it certainly was in Avon and the surrounding region.

In addition, as more and more middle-income families moved further north, the more homes were needed. John was now building subdivisions of homes and his crew had grown from 12 to 25 as he worked hard to keep up with the demand.

Tyler Building Company was booming with more business than they could handle, Leah had agreed to marry him and John Emerson Tyler was the happiest man alive.

Only one cloud marred this perfect picture. At the beginning of April, word began to spread of a virus. There had been 18 severe cases and 3 deaths from it in Haskell,

Kansas. That seemed a world away from them and plans continued for their home and wedding.

Leah mentioned to him once that her favorite flower was the morning glory. She loved the beautiful blue-purple color and the way the flowers unraveled into full bloom every morning. By early afternoon, their edges began to curl until they were closed, but the next morning the pattern began again.

“Morning glories greet the day in full bloom. I like that,” she’d told him.

As the builder for his subdivisions, it was his job to apply street names. Thus, the road in which they were building their home was named ‘Morning Glory Lane’. Another surprise for Leah.

A month before the wedding, John drove over to the Ramsdale home and told his fiancée he had a surprise for her. The two got into his car and he drove them to the new house, now completely finished.

Although Leah had accompanied John numerous times to see the house as it progressed, he refused to take her back for the last month, telling her she had to wait until it was completed. Now, standing on the road and staring up at the beautiful white house on the hill, Leah smiled widely.

“It’s finished?” she asked quietly.

“Sure is. I want to take you through every room.”

They went up several steps to the front porch where she saw two white wooden rockers, just as John had promised. Going in the front door, they stepped into the enormous hall with a large hanging chandelier and curved staircase to the right that led up to the four bedrooms. To the left was the living room. A hallway directly across from the front door took them up the middle of the house to a parlor on the left

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and the kitchen and dining room on the right at the back of the house.

Taking Leah by the hand, John led her back to the dining room and opened a door. The sunroom. As he had explained, three sides were windows and the summer sun streamed in, creating a bright, peaceful room to eat meals or read a book.

John walked her over to the back of the room which faced the yard. There she saw a small patio with a rock garden behind it, built up from the ground and growing higher level by level until it was at least six feet tall as it extended away from the house. And there were purple flowers everywhere. Morning glories. Covering the whole back side of the patio.

Leah turned to John and threw her arms around him.

“You remembered! I love morning glories!”

“And guess what this road is now named?” he asked mysteriously.

Leah shook her head, too overwhelmed to even hazard a guess.

“Morning Glory Lane.”

Tears came to her eyes. What a wonderful man she was about to marry! She pictured them living here the rest of their lives, enjoying these beautiful rooms and the surrounding property.

“We need to make a trip into Detroit to buy furniture,” he told her.

John, Leah and Winnie made the trip that following weekend. Winnie’s brother and sister-in-law lived in Detroit and welcomed the three of them for the weekend. Leah and Winnie shared a room and John took another down the hall from them.

They spent Saturday going to furniture stores and found what they wanted for almost every room. Unfortunately, it couldn’t all be delivered until the beginning of September.

The following weekend was spent placing the furniture that had been delivered in the downstairs rooms and the couple was happy and excited with the new changes to their home. A dining room set and living room furniture were now in place, along with a few odds and ends like the gorgeous alter table for the entry hall.

August 24th arrived and, with it, a perfect day. The ceremony went as planned and the reception, held in the Ramsdales' backyard, went off without a hitch.

After a short honeymoon in Toronto, Canada, they returned to Avon and settled down to married life. For two weeks, they would live in John's small apartment above his office until the rest of the furniture arrived. He had only a single bed and it made for interesting sleeping.

"I'm glad we like each other so much," Leah commented and they both laughed. Being newlyweds, they weren't getting much sleep anyway.

Before long, they were arranging more furniture in the rooms upstairs and, finally, were able to move in.

As John predicted, they had breakfast each morning in the sunroom before he left for work. More often than not, he found Leah on the patio, staring at the mass of purple flowers when he left the house. His wife spent considerable time in the sunroom and on the patio enjoying her beautiful flowers. Sometimes she read a book and other times just sat and relaxed. For someone who never expected to be married, he marveled at how his life had changed, all to the good.

The virus that had started the past winter now made its way to Avon and they were hearing of a number of friends and neighbors who had fallen sick. Leah's sister, Madeline, caught the virus and became quite ill. Winnie and Richard nursed her back to health, but it took several weeks before she returned to her usual self. They all breathed a sigh of relief;

several people in Avon had succumbed to what was now called the Spanish Flu.

The government began closing down theaters and other public establishments and prohibited public gatherings in an effort to get the virus under control. It was a worrisome time for the world at large.

Time went by and soon Christmas was upon them. Leah seemed quieter than usual and John finally commented on it.

“I don’t understand why we’re not expecting yet. We’ve been trying for over three months.”

Her husband smiled. “Sometimes these things take a little longer. It’s certainly fun trying though, isn’t it?” He wriggled his eyebrows and she laughed.

For the first time, he began to see the difference in their ages. She was young and naïve and maybe thought she would be pregnant as soon as they were married. For some people, it happened that way, but not for everyone.

Christmas came and went and when all the decorations were put away, he sensed a deepening melancholy in her. The house was finished, the holidays over and winter snows were upon them. Everyone was a little down in January, he reasoned. Still, she was alone from early in the morning until he got home at six or seven in the evening. It made for a long day, with nothing much to do. John began to hope, too, that a baby would come soon so his wife would have something to keep her occupied.

Leah visited Winnie during the day and her sister, Madeline, came to visit occasionally after school. Some of her friends came by, too, but people were still not taking chances with the virus and kept their visits to a minimum. Many of Leah’s friends were not married yet and she found they didn’t have as much in common anymore.

Building slowed down soon after the new year. Early January usually marked the beginning of heavy snows and the next few months would see a lot of it.

John parked the Model T each night in the barn when he came home to prevent snow and ice accumulating on it. Then he and Leah had their dinner and sat in front of the fire in the den, talking together and reading. It was a peaceful existence for both of them and they enjoyed their evenings together.

In mid-January an unusually cold burst of air filtered into the area and temperatures became frigid. Just walking from the barn to the house after work made John's hands ache with cold.

He came in the back door, a puzzled look on his face. Leah turned from the stove where she had been adding more wood to fuel the fire inside.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Were you out in the barn today?"

"No." His wife shook her head.

"I have everything organized out there and it looked like a few things had been moved." He shook his head. "I must be imagining it."

They sat down for dinner and the moment was forgotten. That is, until John returned from work the next day. After parking the car in the barn, he spied an old, worn blanket in the back seat of the Model T. Now where had that come from? He talked to Leah about it, but she had no idea.

"Did you put the blanket on the back seat in case you needed it?" she wondered aloud.

"No. I've never seen the filthy thing before. It seems someone went into the car while it was in the barn last night. But I can't imagine why."

The next morning, several hours after her husband left for work, Leah sat in the sunroom reading a book. The room was

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chilly at this time of year, but the sun streaming in the windows brought some warmth. Seeing movement from the corner of her eye, she looked up to see a small figure run from the area of the barn to the far reaches of their property in back, getting lost in the woods.

Things started to click into place. John mentioned things being moved around in the barn, then the blanket appeared and she just saw a person running from the barn. Was someone taking refuge there in this frigid weather?

Leah waited until John came home that night. He had just parked in the barn, but when she described what happened, he headed immediately back out, a kerosene lantern in hand. It was dark already, almost 6:30 in the evening, and the skies were clear. That meant an extremely cold night in Avon.

He approached the barn quietly and threw open the door. Nothing. He stepped inside and called out. Still nothing. Circling slowly around the car, John peeked inside. Someone was lying on the back seat.

All right, you can come out now.”

John opened the car door and a head popped up. It was a young boy and he looked terrified, pulling the worn old blanket around him.

“Who are you?” John asked.

After a few seconds, he heard a faint reply. “Jackson.”

“Where do you live, Jackson?”

The boy shrugged his shoulders. His teeth were chattering with cold.

The older man’s hands were numb, even with gloves on, and he quickly decided their conversation could wait.

“Come in the house with me and we’ll talk.”

He tentatively reached out a hand and the boy took it, jumping down from the car, blanket around his shoulders.

Leah's jaw dropped when they walked in together, but she didn't say anything.

It took a few minutes to take off coats and boots. At least the boy had those on. He also wore gloves. Still, he was shaking, and John wasn't sure it was from the cold or being afraid for getting caught. The boy stared around the kitchen in wonder, taking in the surroundings.

"Jackson, this is my wife, Leah, and my name is John. Leah, this is Jackson. This young man was hiding out in the barn. Actually, in the back seat of the car."

Jackson's head dropped and John felt sorry for him. Leah jumped in.

"Dinner's all ready and we have plenty for three. I hope you like meatloaf and mashed potatoes."

Jackson nodded his head vigorously, long blondish hair falling over one eye. He was dressed well for the cold, but after a short period of time in these temperatures, nothing was warm enough. The young boy looked to be about 11 or 12 years old and John could see concern on his wife's face when she looked at him.

They sat at the kitchen table, near the fireplace. John had lived all his life in Michigan and, when building this house, insisted on a fireplace in the kitchen, living room, parlor and each bedroom. The cast iron radiators worked pretty well, but there was nothing like a fire to warm up a room, especially during a cold spell such as this.

Leah brought food to the table and they said a short prayer. John gave the boy a few minutes to begin eating before peppering him with questions. The lad ate like he hadn't seen food in a very long time and husband and wife glanced at each other.

"Tell me about yourself, Jackson. How old are you?"

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The boy looked at John and finished chewing his food, swallowing hard.

“I’m 12 years old.”

“And where do you come from?”

“Well, my ma died back in Ohio. We didn’t have much to start with and the man ownin’ our house wanted rent. When Ma got too sick to work, I stopped going to school and got a job, but it wasn’t enough. When she died, I had to leave.”

“There was no one to take you in?” Leah questioned.

“A couple people offered but I didn’t want to work 20 hours a day in the factory to pay my way. So, I left.”

“Do you have family out this way?”

Jackson looked at John for a moment, then shook his head. “No. I just keep movin’ around til somethin’ feels right. I’ll find a place I can stay somewhere.”

Leah had a look of alarm on her face and John decided to take the plunge.

“Well, we can’t have you sleeping in the barn. It’s much too cold. We have three extra bedrooms upstairs if you’d like to stay for a while.”

Jackson’s face brightened considerably. “I’ll work for it. I can plow fields, take care of horses, muck out stables, you name it, Mister.”

“Well, we don’t have a farm here or even a horse, but we could probably find some things for you to do. Can I ask how long you’ve been staying out in my car?”

“Just a few nights. I forgot my blanket in your car yesterday.”

John nodded. “How long have you been....travelling?”

“Since late October when my ma died. It was no problem finding a place to sleep when the weather was warm. But now...”

Leah piped up. “Well, you finish your dinner and then I’ll take you upstairs to get settled in.”

“Thank you, Ma’am.”

He was a cute kid, John thought, and polite as well. He didn’t appear to be troubled in any way.

After the meal, they both took the boy upstairs and let him choose which room he would stay in. He chose one at the front of the house. It was evident he had never had a bedroom to himself before.

“This room is just for me? Don’t you have any kids?”

John smiled. “Not yet. For now, this will be all yours.”

The gratitude on the boy’s face brought tears to Leah’s eyes. She made up the bed and offered to help empty out the knapsack he had been carrying over one shoulder. Jackson seemed a little embarrassed when she pulled out a few half-rotten apples, a crumpled piece of cloth, several small pieces of wood and a book of matches.

“When it gets really cold, I try to get a small fire going,” he explained and Leah’s heart went out to the boy. That he’d survived this winter so far was a miracle.

John began heating water on the stove so the boy could have a hot bath. While Jackson soaked in the claw foot tub upstairs, Leah and John talked in the kitchen.

“There must be someone that can take him. A family member somewhere,” John suggested.

“Don’t you think he would have gone straight to them if there was? No one would choose to live outside during winter.”

John looked at his wife and it occurred to him that this was just what she needed. Leah was feeling at loose ends and until they had a child of their own, she could lavish her motherly instincts on this young boy who seemed to have no one. It could be a winning situation.

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Now, he smiled at his wife and said, “Let’s take it slowly and see how things work out. If he stays, he’ll have to go to school, at least for a few more years.”

Leah smiled.

Life found its rhythms in the house with Jackson. Leah wanted a pantry in the basement to hold extra goods they didn’t presently need and John took the lad down in the basement to show him how to build shelves. He had to admit, the young man caught on fast and while he worked all day checking in on job sites and Leah kept their home running, the boy threw himself into the project.

Leah took on the maternal role and flourished with it. Jackson had chores to do each day, including making his bed and keeping his room picked up. The boy followed their instructions to the letter and neither adult had any reservations about him.

Richard and Winnie, on the other hand, weren’t quite as convinced. Outwardly, they were kind to the boy, but when Leah went to visit her mother one afternoon, Winnie asked her to sit down for some lemonade.

“Honey, I know you and John are very fond of the boy, but are you sure this is wise?”

Leah picked up a sugar cookie from the plate Winnie had set on the table. They were fresh from the oven and still warm.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you don’t know anything about him. He could run off with the silver and be in Detroit before you noticed.”

Leah set her cookie down on the table. “Mom, Jackson is not like that. He’s a sweet boy and I trust him completely. He would never steal from us. Why would he take the silver and go to Detroit when he’s so happy here with us?”

“But what will happen when you have a child of your own?”

“Then we’ll have two children.”

Winnie sighed. “I hope you’re right. It’s just so strange that he has no one.”

Leah took a sip of lemonade. “But he does. He has me and John.”

The end of March arrived and one day when John came home from work, Leah met him at the door.

“I sent Jackson to the store so we could talk alone,” she told him excitedly. They went into the parlor and she proceeded to tell him she was with child.

“I saw Dr. Miller today and he said the baby would be born in November.” Dr. Miller was the resident doctor in town.

Her husband was beside himself with joy at the news and the two decided to tell Jackson that night at dinner.

But when Leah told him their news, Jackson’s face fell and he grew very quiet. Leah didn’t seem to notice and continued talking animatedly about the baby, wondering if it would be a boy or girl and what room would work out best as a nursery.

Together, they all brought dishes to the counter. Jackson disappeared up the stairs and John decided to wait a while before following him. He’d let the poor kid process the news that might change his life yet again. The boy had been with them for over two months now and they’d all fallen into a pattern.

After the first couple weeks, when it seemed that things were working out with Jackson moving in, the boy had started school in the one-room schoolhouse in town. He appeared to be quite intelligent and was doing well in his classes. Their news tonight, though, may have shocked him.

Just as he was adapting and doing well at home and in school, the rug might be pulled out from under him once more.

John grabbed a towel and began drying dishes and Leah looked at him thoughtfully. She usually did the dishes solo and wondered if her husband needed to talk. After a few moments, he did.

“I think our news shocked Jackson.”

Leah looked at him in surprise. “Why should it? It doesn’t change anything, does it?”

John hesitated and his wife looked at him earnestly. “Do you want Jackson to leave?” she asked incredulously.

“No, no,” he assured her. “But he may not be thinking the same as we are. I feel he’s been a great addition and, as far as I’m concerned, he’s our son.”

Leah’s eyes filled with tears and she let the washcloth slip back into the water. Putting her arms around her husband’s neck, she kissed him soundly.

“I think of him as our son, too. Maybe we should tell *him* that.”

They went up the stairs and John knocked on Jackson’s door. They heard a muffled sound and Leah opened the door. The boy was laying on the bed, eyes red and puffy from crying.

“Oh, Jackson!” Leah ran to the bed and sat down beside him. “You *are* upset about the baby, aren’t you?”

There was no answer, just sniffing. John came in and sat cross-legged on the floor in front of the bed.

“Jackson, we want you to stay. How do you feel about being a big brother?”

Slowly, the child sat up, wiping his eyes with the back of one hand.

“I can stay? You don’t want me to leave?”

John smiled. “You can if you want to. But we’ve kind of grown used to having you around. We like our small family. Don’t you?”

A smile broke out on the young boy’s face and Leah leaned forward, hugging him tightly. As far as they knew, there was no family Jackson could go to. They would keep him here and raise him as their own.

Leah planted morning glory seeds in huge pots and took great care to check on them every day and water as needed. When the last frost had passed, John and Jackson planted them out in the rock garden in the yard. The plants were small, but they would grow blooms before long and his wife would have her beloved morning glories for another summer. If they lived in a warmer climate, the plants would carry on each year. Being in Michigan meant replanting them annually, but Leah didn’t mind.

Just a few years before, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating a new national holiday: Mother’s Day. It was a day set aside to honor all mothers and John had an idea. He talked to Jackson about it and the two were excited about their planned project to celebrate Leah’s first Mother’s Day. They began work in the barn and Leah was told she was not to enter inside until they were finished.

Before church the morning of the holiday, John and Jackson carried the finished project from the barn to the back of the rock garden. When her husband came in to get her, they walked out to the patio. Their son stood above the rock garden holding up a long expanse of white picket fence that would be installed at the top of the rock garden so the morning glories could climb it.

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Leah was truly surprised and started crying when they explained it had been made to honor her on Mother's Day. Later in the day, her two "men" dug holes for the posts and by dinnertime, the beautiful fence was in place. John insisted Jackson had done all the work, including the painting, with only his direction, and that made the present even more meaningful to Leah.

Summer came and the morning glories crept slowly upward. The sight was even more dazzling than the summer before with the white picket fence in place across the back of the rock garden.

Leah spent many hours on the patio, either reading or just gazing at her flowers. She was most content there and wondered how she'd ever made it through winter without the beautiful leafy trees that surrounded their property and her purple morning glories. She also enjoyed strolling into town on a beautiful summer day.

The virus appeared to be under control again, after having several agonizing waves of it, and restaurants and shops had opened up again. John offered to buy her a Model T of her own or a horse and buggy, to go to the shops and cafes, but his wife enjoyed walking. She thought nothing of the half mile to walk into town and enjoyed shopping or having tea at the café.

Leah sometimes met friends or her mother for a meal at lunchtime or even met up with John if his day wasn't too busy.

The summer progressed and by September, she was beginning to really feel her pregnancy. It was getting difficult to lace her boots and put stockings on and she had to rely on her husband for assistance.

Jackson continued to flourish under their guidance and the three became closer. The young boy celebrated his 13th

birthday on September 16th and family, friends and classmates were all invited to the house on Morning Glory Lane.

Many of the people invited had never been to the Tyler home and Leah and John were told over and over how beautiful it was. The patio and rock garden were breathtaking this late in the season and there were many oohs and aahs.

After the celebration, Leah led a quiet life until November 14th, when Robert James Tyler was born. Their son had his mother's light coloring and blond hair and the family of three became a family of four. Even Jackson was excited about the new addition and asked to hold the baby soon after he was born.

Thanksgiving and Christmas were a blur that year for Leah as she struggled to maintain their home while caring for the baby on very little sleep. Robert woke several times during the night to eat or to be changed.

They ushered the new year in with Winnie and Richard. They were at the beginning of a new decade; it was 1920 and business was still booming for John. He hired another handful of men to build homes for Tyler Building.

John wanted to hire a housekeeper, but Leah fought against it. It was *her* home and she would take care of it. Finally, her husband gave up the fight and told her to let him know if she changed her mind.

The years went by at a steady pace and before they knew it, Jackson was ready to leave the one-room schoolhouse. He was now almost 16 years old and wanted to join the Tyler Building Company crew. Over the years, John had brought him to building sites so he could become familiar with the

family business. It was the boy's goal to be a builder, to be a part of creating something families would enjoy for years.

John had taken this young boy under his wing and was proud of the young man he had become. The two of them left for work together each morning, lunch buckets in hand.

Robert was almost 4 years old and still quite a difficult child. He didn't sleep through the night until he was almost a year and a half old, and Leah began to feel she would never be rested again. Now, their little half pint was still into everything. He couldn't be left alone for longer than a minute or two without getting into mischief. He broke dishes, jumped on the living room furniture and scribbled on walls. Once, he headed out to the barn to hide and it took Leah almost an hour to find him.

As the years passed, Leah became convinced they would never add to their family. She longed to hold another baby in her arms and, at 28 years old, was still young enough to carry a few more babies. But despite their "practicing" as John put it, another pregnancy did not occur.

John, too, wished for more children. He'd built their home large enough to have five or six kids and it troubled him that friends and other family members were having large families when they couldn't.

All the same, they loved Jackson and Robert and counted the blessings they had.

Prohibition had been going on for a few years already in the state of Michigan. Stories of the speakeasies in Detroit filtered up to Avon Township with travelers looking for new places to settle. They told of many establishments having "back rooms" where a code word was needed to get in.

Alcohol flowed freely and it seemed there was more available now than before Prohibition started.

One gentleman passing through town even told of cars filled with bottles of rum and whiskey crossing over to Detroit from Canada on the Detroit River. From time to time, a car broke through the ice, sending its driver and its covert treasure to the bottom of the river.

The only sign of alcohol this far north was the occasional homeowner fermenting fruit juices, using pears or apples from the trees in their yard.

Robert started school in the one-room schoolhouse and Leah was relieved to have a few hours to herself each day while he was gone. The boy was a handful; not cheery or loving as Jackson, but rather the opposite. He didn't like to be hugged by anyone and never seemed content.

John could never understand him. As a family, they had so much; one of the more beautiful homes in Avon, a thriving business and, most importantly, each other. Jackson tried to be friends with Robert, but his actions were to no avail. Robert continued to keep to himself.

John worried constantly about him. Had they done something wrong? Why was he such a loner? He really had no friends to speak of and spent much of his time alone. Nothing could cajole him out of his moodiness.

John thanked God every day for Jackson. The young man was everything he could want in a son. He'd done well in school, then enthusiastically joined the family business. It was John's dream to give Tyler Building to Jackson when the time was right. He knew without a doubt the young man would continue to grow the company. But what of Robert? The boy never excelled at his studies but managed to pass from one grade to the next in the small schoolhouse.

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It was 1928 and Jackson turned 19 years old. The young man still worked with his father at Tyler Building and they continued to leave for work together every morning.

The company now had almost 40 men working. They came with all types of experience. Some were plasterers, others painted once the walls were up. Still more men did the actual nailing of the boards to create the structure itself. The company ran like a well-oiled machine.

In March of that year, Leah came to him with good news.

“I’m expecting again!”

“Are you sure? After all this time?”

Leah was beaming. “I’m absolutely sure. I waited to tell you until there was no doubt.”

John hugged her tightly, his love for her as strong as ever. He had never regretted for an instant that he married her, despite the difference in their ages. She was his only love and this announcement just deepened his feelings for her.

They told the boys that night and their reactions were to be expected. Jackson had a wide smile on his face.

“Congratulations, Mom! I’m so happy for both of you!” He gave them each a hug. Robert’s expression never changed. “So, what does this mean?” he demanded.

John and Leah looked at each other, not sure how to answer.

“Well, it means you’ll have a little sister or brother,” his father explained.

Robert just nodded. “Okay.”

The rest of the family refused to let his lack of enthusiasm dampen their spirits. Leah spent hours and hours planning out the baby’s room and began making clothes and blankets.

Winnie and Richard were beside themselves with happiness. Another grandchild! They both offered to help with preparations in any way possible.

Business continued to flourish for John. More and more people were relocating to Avon Township from the Detroit area and, with World War I over, were open to spending their money on a new home, furnishings, a new car. It was a heady feeling for everyone and John rode the wave.

October came and Leah went into labor near the middle of the month. Her contractions were extreme and her husband became worried. Jackson was sent to fetch Dr. Miller, but the doctor was making a visit to a patient quite a distance from town. By the time he reached the Tyler residence, Leah had been in labor for hours and was in tremendous pain.

Finally, the baby came during the night, a little girl who was stillborn. The doctor came downstairs where John, Jackson and Robert waited in the living room.

“John, can I speak to you alone please?”

He looked closely at the doctor’s face, but saw no expression and led him into the kitchen where they could talk.

“John, I’m so sorry. You had a baby girl but I’m afraid she died in the womb.”

“What about Leah?”

“I did everything I could, but it was already too late for the little one.”

“What about Leah?” His voice grew louder as panic began to take over.

Dr. Miller just looked at him for a moment. “She’s lost a lot of blood, John. There’s nothing more I can do.”

Eyes wide, John raced from the room, taking the stairs two at a time to reach their bedroom where he found Leah lying motionless, eyes closed.

“Leah, honey, wake up. It’s me.”

She opened her eyes slightly and gave him a weak smile. “I’m just so tired right now, John. I’ll feel better soon,” she

told him. "Take care of the baby for me." Her eyes closed again.

The doctor came in and stood on the other side of the bed from him. Jackson and Robert stood in the doorway, frightened looks on their faces.

"Leah!" He took her hand and kissed it, kneeling on the floor beside her. Hot tears were pouring down his cheeks. "Leah!"

Dr. Miller walked over and put an arm around him. "I'm sorry. These things happen frequently in childbirth," he said quietly. "You have my condolences."

The doctor walked away from John and proceeded to clean up the room. There were sheets and towels with massive blood stains on them, but it didn't register for John. He held Leah's hand and put his head next to hers. She was only 31 years old!

His beautiful wife was laid out in the drawing room downstairs, their small daughter in her arms. She lay there for two days and on the third, they held a funeral. It was all a blur to John. He was aware that Jackson and Robert were upset as well, but other than an occasional hug, he could offer nothing in the way of support. He was numb, a man who had lost the love of his life and felt sure he would never recover.

They spent Thanksgiving and Christmas that year with Winnie, Richard and Madeline. All of them were coming to grips with their loss and it helped to be together.

It had taken John until after the funeral to begin grieving for the daughter they'd lost. He named her Elizabeth, after his own mother. He and Leah had settled on the name for a girl several months before.

Now, in the new year, he and Jackson returned to work and Robert to school. Although difficult, they had to try to find some normalcy.

It became apparent very quickly that a housekeeper and cook would be needed. They were three men fending for themselves and it wasn't going well. None of them could cook and the house was a mess.

In asking around, John heard about a young woman who had been cleaning for a gentleman in a large home in Avon. The man recently passed away and she was looking for employment. She was invited to their home for a meeting and John found her to be very friendly. Her name was Emily Swanson and she looked to be in her early 20's. She had long brown hair pulled back in a bun with pretty brown eyes and seemed full of energy.

Jackson walked in near the end of their meeting and John introduced them. After she left, he told his son he was going to hire her.

"She'll be here Monday through Friday to clean and cook for us. We can fend for ourselves on the weekend with leftovers."

Emily started work the following Monday and proved to be very efficient. John even found her one day helping Robert with arithmetic homework when he came in from work. Both his sons liked her, although Jackson in a different way. Every chance he had, the young man hung nearby while she cleaned or cooked dinner. One night, John walked in to find him peeling carrots and potatoes for their dinner, Emily putting a salad together, the two chatting away.

John smiled, remembering how exciting it had been when he met Leah. They could talk endlessly about nothing and he had been mesmerized. God knew Jackson deserved to have a woman in his life. He was almost 23 and many of his friends

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from school were already married, some with babies on the way.

John himself was 52 now and, since losing Leah, felt 92. He missed her smile, her gentleness and the warmth of her body next to him in bed at night.

After her death, he had their bed taken out of the house, both mattress and frame, and burned in the backyard. He'd paid a few of his crew to take care of this for him and he ordered a new bed from Detroit. He could never have slept in that bed again.

John's business continued to thrive. People weren't afraid to spend money and spent lavishly on homes they could enjoy for years. Tyler Building had now built over 30 subdivisions in Avon Township and John continued to reap the rewards.

One home, to surpass all others, was being built several miles away. It was to be called Meadowbrook Farm and was already in the process of being built by Matilda Dodge Wilson, widow of the auto pioneer John Dodge. She and her second husband, Alfred Wilson, a lumber broker, had been having their home built for the last two years. A company from Detroit was chosen to design and construct the home that would be 88,000 square feet and boast 110 rooms!

John wished he could tour the mansion. He'd heard it was Tudor Revival style and the cost would be about \$4,000,000 when it was completed.

John began to think about retirement. It was difficult living in the house on Morning Glory Lane without his beloved Leah. Jackson wasn't around much. He was either working or out with friends or spending time with Emily. It was just him and Robert and the house was feeling too large for the two of them.

His youngest son had come around, finally, after Leah had gone. Maybe he, too, realized how fleeting life could be. The 11-year-old began to open up more and that enabled father and son to become closer.

Working with a lot of different people every day, he'd met men from different parts of the country who had come to work in Avon. Several of them were from Florida, far south of Michigan. They told stories of 80-degree temperatures in March and April and it sounded wonderful to him.

By June of that year, John made the decision to move down to Palm Springs, Florida. He'd spent many years working and had a large sum of money set aside in his father-in-law's bank to take with him when he left. Now he just had to discuss his plans with Jackson and decided to have Robert there, as well, as this would affect him.

They sat in the living room as he laid out his plans to leave in January.

"But what about Tyler Building?" Jackson asked incredulously. "You're just going to walk away?"

"Of course not. There are over 40 men working now that count on me for a paycheck. I wouldn't just leave them hanging high and dry. Here's my plan. Jackson, I want you to take over the company. You've been working with us for almost six years now and I can start teaching you the business end of things. You would take over my office. My secretary, Shirley, would be there to help you as well."

Jackson's eyes were wide. "I never thought you'd leave. I figured you'd be out there working til...well, till you died."

His father smiled sadly. "So did I. But now.....I just feel I need to get away, start fresh. I have more than enough money to retire. Robert, you would come with me. When the time comes, you can decide what you'd like to do. Maybe go

to college, or come back here and work with Jackson. It'll be up to you."

Robert nodded, looking uncertain.

"What about the house?" Jackson said. "You built this for Leah. How can you leave it?"

"I want you to have it now, Son. If things work out with Emily, you can raise your children here. It would mean a lot to me to keep it in the family."

Jackson just stared at him, unable to find words. Tears in his eyes, he shook his head.

"I just can't imagine not having you and Robert here."

His youngest son was very still, staring at the floor by his feet.

"It's time," John said softly. "We'll keep in touch through letters. Don't worry. I'll always be available to answer questions."

He had hoped his sons would be more positive about the changes he planned to make, but they just needed time to get used to the idea of being apart.

Jackson began spending time every day in the office with his father to learn the ropes. Thank goodness, Shirley was there to handle invoicing and accounts receivable. She was a smart woman in her mid-60s who had lost her husband a number of years before and had been forced to find a job to support herself. John had a good feeling about her and hired her on the spot. He'd never regretted that decision. And now she would work for his son.

October 29th arrived and the day started out like any other. From his office, John heard the train pull in, then pull back out again, headed for Royal Oak, then Detroit. Soon after, he heard voices, muffled at first, then growing louder.

He and Jackson stepped outside to see what was going on and saw men running into the bank just down the street. The

bank where his father-in-law was president. The two men looked at each other in alarm and headed down that way. As they got closer, there was shouting.

“I want my money, Ramsdale! Every last cent!”

“Me, too!” demanded another voice. A cheer went up in the crowd.

John and Jackson pushed their way through the door. Dozens of men were inside the small bank, lunging at the window where Richard Ramsdale stood, looking very nervous.

“I’ll pay you what I can.” The man started counting out cash as the throng pushed closer to the window.

“What’s happening?” Jackson asked his father.

A man in front of them piped up. “You didn’t hear? The stock market crashed. You gotta get your money out now or you’ll lose everything!”

Panic ensued at his words and the men began shouting in earnest. Another man came out from the back room and joined Richard at the window. Richard was counting out money and the other man wrote down how much was given to each of them.

“What does this mean?” Jackson asked John.

“I’m not sure myself. But it can’t be good.”

The telegraph office, it turned out, had received news from Detroit saying there had been a stock market crash on Wall Street. It reported that some people had taken their lives after finding out they had been wiped out, all their money gone.

It took a while to get perspective, but it became apparent that people had been spending more and more as the banks were lending out more and more. Now the banks could no

longer extend credit and started to recall the loans. The people, who had spent their money on new homes and cars and everything else under the sun, had no money to repay the loans.

As time went on, people began to lose their homes, their businesses, everything of value. Stocks were worth nothing.

Tyler Building was in trouble, too. John had loans out for supplies and had no way of paying them back. The money he'd had in the bank for retirement was gone. But he couldn't wallow in his own problems, he had to deal with his employees. They were coming to him one after another. They couldn't make payments and were losing their homes. Their hard-earned money was gone.

It felt like the end of the world as he lost one employee after another. Some left to head back home to family out of state. Others he had to let go because no one could afford to build homes now. Finally, of the 42 workers he'd had, 4 remained, waiting for him to provide them work.

What had happened to his empire? Tyler Building Company had been a major player in offering employment to people in the area. Now what?

And what about Jackson? Would there even be a company to take over? At this point, it looked unlikely.

John sat in the living room on Morning Glory Lane one day, realizing for the first time that he wouldn't just lose his company. He would lose the house, too. Poor Jackson. He would end up with nothing.

John put his head in his hands and cried. He cried for all the people who had lost so much and he cried for his sons who would have nothing. He'd spent almost 30 years of his life growing his company, and now it was gone.

Most of the businesses on Main Street shut down. The bank, of course, was boarded up. Tyler Building was closed. The restaurant and pharmacy were still open, but not many people were going inside for business. It was a town of mourning. It was a country of mourning. John spent a lot of time thinking about what could be done. Should he stay in Michigan? What would become of Jackson? Would he be able to put Robert through college if he chose that route? As it was, he had no idea what to do.

The great depression followed and things went from bad to worse. John tried to shield Robert from all that was going on, but kids at school talk and he was hearing what his friends and their families were going through.

One night, as the three of them ate a dinner of fried chicken Emily had left for them, Robert spoke up.

“Dad, are we gonna lose our house?”

He looked at Robert, then Jackson and put his fork down.

“Honestly, I don’t know. People have lost a lot and we’re no exception. We may have to sell the house, yes.”

Both boys held his gaze. What he didn’t tell them was that no one could afford to *buy* their house. It was one of the largest and most impressive in Avon, but that meant there wouldn’t be a lot of buyers with the current financial climate.

The 4 employees he still had were not working, but John had an idea. They would have to go into surrounding areas, but if he could buy some older homes and fix them up, modernize them, with the supplies he already had, they might be able to eventually sell them for a small profit. The homes had to be affordable, though. There weren’t many old houses in Avon, but he planned to start with those. There was some money left that hadn’t been in the bank at the time of the crash. It had been put into his safe at the office until he made it over to the bank. This was all he had left now.

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The homes that were being built on the morning of October 29 were no longer being worked on. No one could pay to have their house finished.

The next day, John drove through all of Avon and found a handful of homes that looked like they could use some updating. He approached two of them and spoke to the owners. He couldn't offer what the homes were worth, but told them what he could pay. Both families readily agreed and told him they would be out by the end of November. They seemed relieved to be out from under their house payments, but he wondered where they would go.

Next, he approached the 4 men he had left and told them he could afford to pay one of them to stay on, although not at full pay. The men talked about it and one who was single and had family near Detroit said he was thinking of heading home anyway and would give his resignation. Another said he was thinking of moving with his wife back to his in-laws' in Wisconsin. He also would leave the company.

The two remaining men, Henry Milford and Raymond Dickerson, were both family men and said they were in it for the long haul. Whatever money they could make for their families would help. John agreed to keep them both on and, of course, Jackson would stay.

John told them of his plan and they agreed it was worth a shot. If they couldn't build new homes, why not fix up old ones? Any profit at all was still a profit.

The new year rang in and everyone in Avon hoped 1930 would be a better one. John, Henry, Raymond and Jackson worked hard on the two houses he'd bought. They repaired wood floors and cupboards and put a fresh coat of paint on the walls of each room.

John had to decide how to price them, though, and that would be tough. He looked at what his profit margin would

be and worked his way back from that to be able to make a little money and still pay his three men. People purchasing these two homes would be getting a deal.

By February, both homes sold and he was able to pay himself and his employees. Now he approached 2 more owners of older homes. Neither was interested in selling. Several more agreed to sell, though, and in March they were working on those houses.

His men were living hand-to-mouth, but if they could keep buying and selling a flow of homes, they just might get through these depressed times.

John did his best to keep spirits up, but finding older homes with owners willing to sell was not easy, especially this far out from Detroit.

At the end of February, Robert approached his dad and brother with an idea. He didn't think he could bear it if morning glories weren't in bloom the following summer. As annuals, they had to be replanted every year, but the young boy was up for the task.

"I want to plant morning glory seeds so we can get plants into the ground in May," he told John and Jackson.

At their hesitation, he went on, his voice rising with emotion. "Mom loved them. We have to plant morning glories forever in this house. It's what Mom wanted!"

John looked at his eldest son and they both nodded before Jackson spoke.

"That's a great idea, Robert. I wish I'd thought of it."

The boy gave his older brother a big smile. "The pots Mom used are in the barn. I'll get 'em and we can put 'em in the sunroom to grow, just like she did."

He scampered off to find them and Jackson followed. John stood there for a moment, trying to swallow past the lump in his throat. He missed Leah so much! It was a

constant ache inside him. Maybe having the morning glories in full bloom would make her seem closer, like she was still there with them.

The boys spent the better part of a day adding soil to the many pots they owned and planting seeds. It didn't take long for tiny shoots to spring up. Robert's mission in life was to keep an eye on them and make sure they were watered as needed.

In May, the three of them spent Mother's Day transplanting the seedlings into the ground near the patio. They were planted right up to the white picket fence so they would climb. Twice now, it had been replaced when boards rotted, but Jackson rebuilt a new one when needed and whitewashed it as a labor of love for Leah. It seemed fitting that they would plant her favorite flowers on this day. The sun shone brightly overhead, making them feel she approved of their work.

John struggled to find houses they could refurbish. There just weren't enough homes to work on and the last one had taken a while to sell, even at the low asking price. If they were living in Detroit, there would be no end to the pool of homes needing to be fixed up. But this far north, it was different.

Finally, by the end of June, he sat down with Robert and Jackson and told them he was going to have to sell the house. With the money derived from the sale, they could move to Florida and purchase a small home where they would live.

Jackson dug his heels in. "I'm not leaving Emily," he told his father. "I want to marry her and we'll stay here. Things will get better before long. I have skills now and can work as a handyman until this depression is over. Emily can take in sewing to help make ends meet. We'll find a small home to rent in the area."

John understood his son's feelings and nodded his head. The young man was old enough to choose his own path now.

Robert was quiet, but understood his father had done everything possible to keep their home.

"It's okay, Dad. Let's go to Florida."

Now he just had to find a buyer for their beautiful home on Morning Glory Lane.

As many people in the area had done before him, John made it known his house was for sale. He had no idea if or when it would sell, but he needed to try.

Sadly, he had to let Emily go. The budget was tight and there was no money for a housekeeper and cook, even if she was about to become his daughter-in-law.

She and Jackson announced their engagement to much less fanfare than if a depression was not underway. Leah would have been thrilled and started immediately planning for an elaborate celebration. But there was no Leah and no money. They decided to have the minister at the Rochester Community Church marry them with only John, Robert and Emily's family present.

The wedding took place on July 11th of that year. It was a simple ceremony under the circumstances and Emily wore a pretty blue dress she'd made herself. They planned a honeymoon for the future when money wasn't so tight.

For the time being, the young couple moved into the house on Morning Glory Lane. When it sold, they would have to find their own place.

Emily immediately picked up where she left off several weeks before, cooking and cleaning for "her men" as she called them. John felt guilty about it. He had been paying her

to do this work and now she did it simply because she was Jackson's wife.

"Don't you worry about me," she told John. "If Jackson and I lived on our own, I would be doing the same things. Besides, I'm happy to help out."

They were indeed lucky and John felt blessed to have Emily as part of their family.

Many houses in Avon had gone up for sale. People couldn't afford to make their house payments. John worried about it at first, seeing it as competition in the market for his own home. But then he realized his home was much larger than the average one and someone with a fair amount of money in their pockets might be looking at his.

The house had been well-maintained and nicely landscaped, and would be perfect for a larger family. All he could do was hope the right person found them.

Not long before the stock market crash, John had purchased a Ford Model A automobile. The man loved his cars, but sadly, it might have to be sold, also, once they got down to Florida. A lot depended on what kind of work he could get once they moved.

One beautiful afternoon in late August, John sat on the patio with a book, looking up occasionally to drink in the beauty of the morning glories. Jackson, Emily and Robert were all out for the day when he heard footsteps behind him. Turning, he saw a man looking to be in his mid-60s coming toward him. He was dressed in a suit, hair slicked back and his shoes were spit-shined.

"Hello! I hope I'm not disturbing you."

"Not at all. How can I help you?"

The gentlemen shook hands.

“I’m Gregory Hudson and I was told in town that you were selling your place here.” He looked up at the house as he spoke.

“Yes, we are. My name is John Tyler and I am the builder and owner.”

Gregory’s eyes widened. “You built the place.” He gave a low whistle.

“Can I offer you some lemonade, Gregory? Can I call you that?”

“Certainly! And yes, I would love some lemonade.”

John told the older man to take a seat at the patio table and went into the house for a glass. Returning, he wondered if Gregory was interested in buying their place. The gentleman didn’t leave him wondering for long.

“I’m looking for a home like this,” he told John, sipping his drink. “My wife and I want a larger home with some property for when our children and grandchildren visit. They live in Detroit.”

“You must be one of the fortunate ones,” John commented.

“Why’s that?”

“You can still afford to buy a large home. Not many can do that these days.”

Gregory took another sip and set his glass down, leaning forward across the table.

“You might say I was just extremely lucky. I bought a copper mine in Copper Country in the upper peninsula a few years back, hoping to bring in a huge haul. Nothing happened. Oh, a little bit of copper here and there, but not much. Then, a week before the stock market crash, my men hit it big. I had more copper than I knew what to do with. I paid my men and cashed it all in. Before I could get it into a

bank, the crash hit. I lost everything I had with the banks, but none of that money from my copper haul.”

John just shook his head, eyes wide. “Timing is everything,” he lamented.

Gregory gave a low laugh. “I still can’t believe it. Part of me feels awful; people are on the streets of Detroit scrounging for bread and I’m set for life. I’m able to help my son and daughter and their families out so they can get through this depression.”

John nodded sadly.

“Oh, no. That’s why you’re selling, isn’t it?” The older man’s voice was low and his face showed concern.

“Afraid so.” He told him about his construction company, all the subdivisions he’d built and how he’d tried to refurbish older homes as a last resort. He even told Gregory about Leah. The man was easy to talk to.

“Rough luck, my friend. I’m sorry for you.” The man shook his head. “But I’d like to see your home if I could. If it’s what we’re looking for, I’ll pay you fairly. What are you asking?”

John quoted him a price and showed him the entire house. Then they went out to the barn, where Gregory gave a low whistle.

“You’ve got some setup here. I really like it. Can I bring my wife through to see it?”

“Of course.”

“We’re staying in town at the motel. I’ll bring her right back if that works.”

Gregory returned an hour later with his wife, Adrienne, and John was amused at how quiet she was. Her husband could talk the leg off a horse, but she followed him through the house with little or no emotion and he wondered if she wasn’t feeling well.

The woman had brown hair tied back in a severe bun and a very plain, wan face. John couldn't help comparing her to his beloved Leah and remembered her excitement at going through the house for the first time.

The tour ended on the patio out back and, at last, John saw her eyes widen at the rock garden and morning glories.

"So beautiful," she breathed.

"Thank you. The flowers are planted in memory of my wife. She loved them so much and enjoyed sitting out here."

Gregory asked if he might have a few minutes with his wife alone and John returned to the house to get another glass and a pitcher of lemonade. Peeking outside, he saw them deep in discussion and took his time preparing a tray. Almost 30 minutes later, they sat down at the table, staring out over the rock garden, taking in the beautiful trees that dotted the property. John headed back outside and poured out three glasses, then joined them at the table.

"Tyler, you've got a nice place here and we'd like to buy it. I'll give you the price you're asking."

The younger man was pleasantly surprised. The price he'd asked was not exorbitant by any means, but it was assumed Hudson would make a counter-offer. He was a kind and generous man, John decided.

He told Jackson, Robert and Emily over dinner that night that he'd sold the house and explained about Gregory and Adrienne Hudson visiting. Everyone was quiet, deep in thought about what this would mean. They would never live together as a family again and John and Robert would leave soon for Florida. But his youngest son's response surprised him.

"What about Mom's flowers?" he asked.

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“Flowers?”

“We won’t be here to plant them next summer.” Robert’s voice raised with emotion.

The adults all looked at each other before their dad spoke.

“We’ll plant morning glories in Florida. In fact, we can plant perennials down there that will bloom all year long. We’ll find a small house and build our own rock garden, all right?”

Tears rolled silently down his younger son’s face. “But it won’t be the same. Mom loved the rock garden and her flowers. What if the Hudsons plant something else there?”

“Bud, we can’t tell people what they can and can’t plant. When they buy this house, it belongs to them. The rock garden included.”

His youngest son looked miserable and they finished the meal in silence. That night, as he sat in the drawing room with a glass of sherry, John had an idea. He didn’t know if it would work, but it was worth a try.

The next morning, he called the Avon Motel where the Hudsons were staying and asked if they could stop by sometime that day. They were heading back to the upper peninsula to pack their house up and would be back in a month’s time to take possession of the house. Gregory said they would stop in before heading out of town.

It was just after noon that the couple showed up and John led them to the study.

“Something has come up and it’s troubling my son. It troubles me, too, truth be told.” He hesitated, not sure how to go on. Gregory looked at him curiously. “I have a request to make. I’m asking if you would plant morning glories in the rock garden each year in memory of my wife.”

There. He'd said it. Gregory and Adrienne just looked at him and then she smiled.

"I know your wife loved them. As a matter of fact, I told Gregory last night that I would like to continue the tradition of morning glories because they're so lovely. You've done a wonderful job with the garden."

"So you wouldn't mind doing this for us?"

"Not at all," Adrienne said and Gregory nodded.

John smiled. "Thank you so much. My son has been very upset. I think he's going to miss the rock garden more than the house. To be honest, it gives me peace of mind as well. I know it sounds strange, but it somehow feels like she'll live on if...well, if you do this."

The older man came over and clapped him gently on the shoulder.

"It must be tough, my friend. She was so young. We would be proud to carry on the tradition."

His voice was sincere and John felt himself tearing up, not just because of the flowers, but because he was selling their beloved home to a couple that would love it as he and Leah had.

The Hudsons shook his hand and left soon afterwards. John relayed the news to everyone that night.

Robert, especially, was happy about the flowers. After dinner, he came up to John and gave him a hug. "Thanks, Dad."

It was early October and the days were getting chillier. The house had been packed up, most of their belongings in a moving truck that would meet them in Palm Springs. John carried the rest in his car and Jackson had taken as much as he could fit into the tiny cottage he and Emily were renting.

MORNING GLORY

Jackson and Emily hugged them both, tears in their eyes. Before getting in the car, John came back over to them.

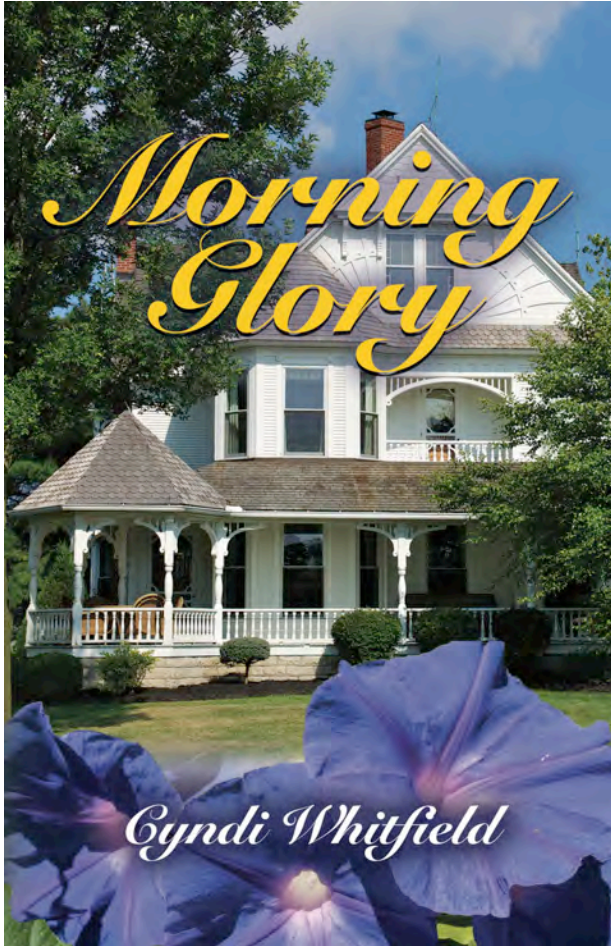
“Son, I wish more than anything I could have left you the business and the house.” His voice broke and he stopped.

His eldest son threw his arms around his father. “That doesn’t matter. This depression will end and I’ll get back to working for a building company. Maybe I’ll start my own someday like you did.”

John smiled through his tears. “You do that. You know the business end of things now. We went over everything.”

There was another round of hugs before father and son climbed into the car and slowly backed down the driveway. Memories came flooding back of meeting Leah for the first time, of proposing, their wedding, the first time he led her through their dream home. It should have been their house forever.

They pulled out of the drive and waved before heading down Morning Glory Lane for the last time.



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