

**THE BLIND CALF**  
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The old man turned the black Mercedes north off Indiana 62 onto the Tennyson Road and eased to a stop on the berm alongside what he remembered as the Hendrickson farm. The tremors had intensified over the last 100 miles, and both hands shook when he removed them from the steering wheel. Caleb pulled a pill box from the pocket of his herring bone jacket and a small bottle of water from the center console and swallowed five of the pills. He sat looking at the stretch of road ahead, waiting for the Sinemet to kick-in.

Tennyson - One Mile - Population 300, he read on the roadside marker. The road was paved. He remembered it being of clay and gravel, taken from the Peterson quarry in the northern part of the county. He also remembered the first time he had walked this stretch into town.

“I’ve hoofed this trail a many a time,” his friend Bernard had said with the air of being a year older than Caleb. The two of them and three other Tennyson Kittens, who were in the seventh and eighth grades, had been deposited at the intersection by their coach, Woody Simpson, as Woody drove further west on Indiana 62 to deliver home the Dimmett brothers and Melvin Dotson.

Remarkably, Caleb now thought, in a town in a state where basketball ranked equally with politics and religion as most important of human concerns, Tennyson wouldn't have an indoor basketball court for another four years. And so twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, October to February, Woody would take his Kittens team eight miles to the Chrisney school gym which had been loaned to Tennyson for practices and for Tennyson home games against other Warrick county schools.

The Chrisney gym was a palace to the Tennyson boys. Nevermind that the sooty dressing room held the coal burning furnace which heated the gym and school rooms. Or that the baseline of the basketball court was only six inches from the building wall. A door to the gym was under one of the baskets, and a player driving for the basket would either crash into the wall or hit the door and find himself outside the building.

The trip to Chrisney was an adventure. Woody's pick-up had been outfitted with benches in the truck bed and a tarpulion, stretched over a homemade wooden frame, which protected the boys from wind and rain and snow but not from the cold on winter days. Even so, no matter how cold, none of the boys accepted Woody's offer to sit up front. They sat close for warmth and shared their stories of the day's practice, the long shot made from nearly half court, the bloody nose suffered during a scuffle for a loose ball, or the occasional visit by Chrisney cheerleaders who wandered into the gym to see the visiting boys and be seen by them.

Every Tennyson Kitten aspired to be a high school Tigers star. The school had a storied history in southern Indiana basketball. “Gymless Wonders” the team had been called in the late 20’s and early 30’s when in 1928 and 1929, the team was undefeated in regular season play against larger Warrick County schools with gyms. The team practiced outside, unless rain, snow or bitter cold made impossible running up and down the hard clay court which was carefully tended by students and teachers. And all games were played on the road. In those undefeated regular seasons, the team won the county tournament and in one year, the regional tournament in Evansville, some 30 miles away, playing in a gymnasium which could have held the populations of 10 Tennysons.

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Caleb slowly pulled himself from the car and walked to the edge of the cornfield. It was an overcast chilly October late morning. He heard the whistle of a Bob-white and then the flush of the covey which had gathered near where he stood. It had been a good crop year for the Hendricksons or whomever now owned the farm. The sturdy brown corn stalks stood tall and large ears hung at a 45 degree angle awaiting the corn picker. Instinctively, Caleb rubbed his hands, remembering the itching and abrasions from picking corn by hand in his father’s own field.

The Parkinson tremors had subsided, replaced by the dull abdominal pain from which Caleb knew there wouldn't be relief. He had done well in managing the Parkinson's. "The Parkinson's won't kill you," his physician and close friend, Dr. Cohen, had repeated over the years, but, on last visit, and tearfully, his friend had said, "the Pancreatic cancer will."

Caleb pulled from his pocket a small plastic bag and studied the metal object which it held for a full five minutes before returning it to his pocket. "A good day for it," he said softly, as he felt the chilly breeze in his face and climbed back into the car.

At the edge of town, Caleb recognized the one room cinder block meeting house of American Legion Post 463. The building sat near the baseball field, and he steered the Mercedes off the road onto the driveway leading toward the field. Tennyson had fielded a team in the Frontier League which included five other small town teams. Games were played on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m., respectfully after morning church services. Tennyson's team, like the others, was a collection of young to middle age men most of whom had had little or no formal coaching. The Tennyson players wore scratchy wool uniforms with a big red T on the back, made by Janie Springstun, seamstress and daughter of Doc Springstun. Ball gloves were sometimes patched together with binder twine and often were shared by

members of the opposing teams. At inning's end, a fielder would simply drop his glove at his position, to be picked up by the opponent's fielder.

The only paid person on the field was the umpire, who was customarily paid \$ 2 and who called balls and strikes from behind home plate or from behind the pitcher, if the umpire had no protection and the pitcher was known to be wild. Chicken wire hung on tall poles behind home plate to make a backstop. Two by eight feet boards were laid on concrete blocks to form benches for the players and also for the crowd who sat along first base line. Coke and popcorn were sold from the American Legion building.

Players tended to play for years. Noel Medcalf, the short, agile and nearly always reliable shortstop who could go deep in the hole for a ball and still throw out a speedy runner at first. The three Morris brothers, tall, lean, and athletic who roamed the outfield positions. And, Patty Patmore, who pitched into his mid-50's and was blind in his left eye. Caleb could still see Patty pitching from the stretch position with a runner on first, coming to set and resting his chin on his left shoulder as if checking the runner, everyone knowing that he couldn't see a thing on that side of the infield and had to rely entirely on the catcher to signal if the runner was going. Patty was beloved despite the fact that he had spent time at state expense when, after a night of drinking with the Morris brothers, he had tried to gain late night entry into the bank. Snow

was on the ground that night, and Patty's tracks led straight from the jimmed back door of the bank to Patty's home.

After a game, players and their families would picnic in the outfield. Caleb could almost smell the fresh cut outfield grass and after game fried chicken, and hear the crack of a bat on a ball sent skyward to deep left field.

Caleb couldn't tell if baseball was still played on the field because it was mid-October and the field was made over for shooting matches, another small town southern Indiana sporting and social event.

In smaller matches, competition was held in rounds, a dozen to 15 shooters per round, and the prize to the winner of a round was usually a live turkey. Turkeys were kept in wooden coops nearby, and after each round the winner would select his turkey and mark it with a leg band.

In bigger matches, the shooting wasn't in rounds. All boards were shot before judging took place. The number and quality of the prizes were determined by the number of entries, and a local butcher stood by for advice about what could be bought. First prize might be a quarter or even half a steer. Lesser prizes would usually include a beef tenderloin, a quarter or half of a hog, ribs, briskets, and hams. While the judging was underway, the butcher would arrive and, with great ceremony, lay the meat choices on a long table covered with wax paper for the shooters to admire. The judges would appear from their deliberation, announce

the winners, and distribute the boards. Then, in order, the winning shooters would approach the table, each proudly slapping his board on the meat piece he had selected.

The rules of a match were simple. Each shooter selected a board – 6 or 7 inches square, one inch thick, with a drilled hanging hole at the top. With a knife blade the shooter would make a cross someplace on the board and draw a circle around the intersecting cuts. A target runner would hang the boards on posts some 40 yards from the shooters, and a shell man would distribute the shotgun shells. After boards had been shot, the target runner would gather and deliver the boards to the judges.

The shells were bird shot, and the object was to land a shot pellet nearest the intersection of the cross on the board. Determining the closest could be difficult, and magnifiers and small calipers were used. If there was a tie, the winner was determined by a “shoot-off”.

Good shooting match guns were valuable and sought after. Caleb’s father had a prize match gun which he called “Long Tom” - a 12 gauge single barrel full choke with a 38 inch barrel, made by Iver Johnson, a Norwegian gunsmith who came to the U.S. and Massachusetts at the height of the Civil War.

Making a board and shooting didn’t take long, and most of the evening was given over to drinking, smoking, story telling, and playing Euchre. Caleb loved to go to matches with his father. The combined

smells of fired gun powder, whiskey, cigarette and cigar smoke, and freshly butchered meat produced an intoxicating aroma for a young boy, and Caleb wasn't sheltered from the foul language and sometimes shocking and wonderful stories of war, women, and politics.

The dull pain in his abdomen had become more severe, and Caleb drove away from the ballfield and toward the railroad tracks which split the town. The small white and now dilapidated building that had been Check's Barber Shop stood just 20 feet from the tracks, and Caleb pulled off the road in front of the building.

Chester Broshears had opened his shop in 1930, to fill the town's need for a barber and Check's wish to supplement his modest grade school teacher salary. After a two week course at Evansville Barber College taken during summer break, Check bought a barber chair from a retiring barber in Folsomville and barber tools through the Sears Wish Book, and built the one room shop and an outside privy on the lot adjoining his residence. For seating, Check bought two oak pew benches from the United Brethern Church. Each bench could comfortably handle four people, or "two of Mr. Beale" Check would sometimes say when describing the seating capacity and the size of Mr. Beale. And, Check kept a few wooden folding chairs in a corner of the room for use if more seating was needed. Heat was provided by a wood stove which stood in another corner.

On the walls hung pictures of Tennyson history. There was a picture of the seven basketball players who made up the 1928/29 “Gymless Wonders”. There was a picture of Mike Long and the large bass which he had caught in Tharp’s slough and carried immediately to Check’s for show and a photograph. Mike had gone on to become a county seat lawyer and state representative, working his way to Speaker of the House, and alongside the picture of Mike and his fish was a picture of his installation as Speaker. Check told time and again the story of young Mike running breathlessly into the shop with his big fish and bigger grin.

All of Check’s haircuts were the same. He didn’t ask his customers how hair should be cut, and no one criticized Check’s work. Few cared much about the look of the cut, but Check always held his mirror for the obligatory check of the back. And he always finished his work with a generous Vitalis douse and combing of the shiny slick hair.

Check only cut men’s hair. When a wife came into town with her husband, and her errands were completed, she usually waited outside the Shop in their car or truck. However, there was an important time when women did come to Check’s – a boy’s first haircut. First haircuts were ritual at Check’s. Typical was Caleb’s own first haircut about which he had been told over and over. He was nearly four when his mother, Ruth, was finally persuaded that the long blond curls should go. Joined by her mother and two sisters, Ruth brought Caleb to Check’s for the shearing.

First haircuts were usually frightening for young boys, and Check tried to bring fun to the experience. He sat the boy on a plank laid across the chair arm rests, promised a candy treat after the haircut, and compared the clipper sound to that of an airplane. Still, Caleb wailed through the entire process, and the women also cried as they watched the beautiful yellow curls fall victim of the clippers. The haircut ended with a splash of smelly “big-boy” after-shave skin freshener, the candy treat Check had promised, and applause from all present.

Wives referred to Check’s as the men’s “gossip house”. And men often stopped by, not for a cut, but to get or deliver news, and hear and tell stories of times past. Check’s became a clearing house for news and rumor.

All cash from the Shop and from his wife Geneva’s occasional sewing jobs went into a retirement savings account which Check and Geneva started at The Tennyson National Bank, located just across the tracks from the shop. With that account and what they had hoped would some day be a 30 year state teacher’s pension, Check and Geneva were anticipating a number of comfortable retirement years. They collected information about places they would visit – the Smoky Mountains, Kentucky Lake, and maybe even Florida.

Check didn’t make it to those golden retirement years with Geneva. In November, 1950, at age 54, he keeled over in his Shop

while cutting Johnny Garrison's hair. Some thought Check had had a premonition. Never the religious sort, he had joined the Little Zion General Baptist church in the Spring of the year he died. He was frank to admit that he hadn't taken up religion because of "seeing the light" but because he had reached an age at which he thought it was just a good idea to cover his bases. Check was buried in the Cemetery behind the Little Zion Church, and Geneva used part of the retirement account for an exceptionally nice black marble monument engraved with dates of birth and death and the oversized legend, "Tennyson's Barber".

Among the regulars at Check's had been Caleb's father, Lowell, or "L.T.", as he was called, his middle name being Truman. As had been his own father, L.T. was the Cashier of the Tennyson National Bank, a small bank which had been started with \$ 50,000 in capital contributions from five local men of means.

L.T. was ambitious in a small town way. In addition to his work as Cashier, L.T. operated a small insurance agency in the back room of the bank. For want of a real lawyer, he wrote deeds, mortgages, powers of attorney, and Wills, and updated title abstracts. He operated a small dairy of quality Guernseys on the farm he had inherited from his father. And, for a time, he drove a school bus to make some extra cash.

L.T.'s day began with milking, then driving the school bus, then to the bank and insurance agency until mid-afternoon, back to the school

bus, and then to evening milking. In cold weather, he went back to the office to remove ash from the coal stove and “bank” the fire for the night.

L.T. was respected and admired, a civic leader in this town of 300, a church leader at Little Zion, head of the local Democratic party. He counseled townsfolk having problems with money, marriage, and alcohol. Caleb was proud of his father and of his mother who worked equally hard alongside L.T. and supported him in all his endeavors.

As a result of work at the bank, L.T. had developed an interest in coins, and when books were closed each day, he examined the coins which had come through the bank for any of a collectable nature – Indian head or flying eagle pennies, liberty nickels, Morgan silver dollars. If a collectable coin was found, L.T. would exchange his own coin of equal face value for the collectable. Over time, the collection grew, and finding coins became L.T.’s obsession. He subscribed to a service for collectors and read carefully and saved each month’s newsletter. Later, Caleb wondered whether there hadn’t been some “taking of corporate opportunity” by his father’s practice, but none of the Bank Directors complained. A kind of employee perquisite, Caleb supposed, since L.T. didn’t have a big salary as Cashier.

When Caleb’s mother became very ill and required long hospitalizations and home care, the expense pushed L.T. to near

bankruptcy. He sold the farm, and the family moved to a smaller and easier place – but still with a few acres because L.T. was determined that Caleb experience farm life and hard work. He required Caleb to tend a large truck patch from which vegetables were gathered for the family and for sale. He kept a few of the good Guernseys from his dairy, and when he was 10, Caleb became responsible for milking a couple of cows morning and night, and bottling the raw milk in Mason canning jars for sale to neighbors who much preferred the non-pasteurized, non-homogenized milk from which cream could be skimmed and used for churning butter.

Caleb disliked milking, particularly in hot summer days, when the cow's tail slapped him in the face as it swatted flies, and in cold winter days when his fingers stiffened and milking was difficult. But he loved the animals. Charm was his favorite. A beautiful brown and white Guernsey - an excellent milk producer and always a purple ribbon winner in the county 4-H competitions. When Charm was bred, Caleb anxiously looked forward to the new calf, and when she was born, Charmaine had all appearance of being just like her mother. Caleb was very attached to the calf. But from the time she was born, it appeared that something was wrong. Charmaine had difficulty finding the place at which she nursed. She stumbled and walked straight into the walls of her stall. Although she learned to move around her stall, she was disoriented in any new space. When she was two months old, L.T.'s

suspicions were confirmed - Charmaine was blind. That fact and that she needed Caleb's extra care only made her more special to Caleb, and he spent hours helping Charmaine deal with her handicap. Caleb believed that, despite her blindness, or maybe because of it, Charmaine had an extraordinary animal intelligence and sensitivity.

And then came the awful day when Caleb was told by his father, "We have no use for a blind calf. I've given her to the Bartons."

Caleb was devastated, and for a long time, he hated his father and the Bartons.

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Alma Barton was another regular at Check's. Alma lived in the country and walked to town once a week, on Wednesday mornings, no matter the weather. On the first Wednesday of the month, if the weather was decent, his wife Carrie joined him, always a step behind Alma and taking two steps for each of Alma's.

The walk was a little over two miles. Alma walked slowly, in steady and measured strides, his sturdy right-hand hickory walking stick hitting the ground in time with his left foot. There was a sternness about him. Alma's back was rigid, unbending. Doc Springstun had speculated that Alma suffered from something called bamboo spine. Because of his poker straight back, Alma appeared even taller than his true 6'5",

and his imposing figure contrasted sharply with Carrie's diminutive 5'2" when they were together.

Alma always wore blue bib overalls faded from the sun and from Carrie's bleach washings, and a brown gunny sack hung by binder twine around his neck for anything he might bring to town and for the necessaries he would purchase.

Alma's walking stick also served to keep at bay Miss Reed's German Shepard. Zeus was not ordinarily a mean dog, but he had taken a dislike to Alma. And so, each morning, Zeus sat at road's edge intently staring down the straight dusty road for first sight of the small figure which appeared each Wednesday and grew larger as it approached. Teeth bared, Zeus came at Alma, who parried with his stick and yelled for Miss Reed, "Come get your damn dog," he would shout. If she was at home, Miss Reed would run from the house and grab Zeus by the neck. If she wasn't, Alma and Zeus would spar for 50 yards or so before Zeus retreated. Zeus paid no attention to Carrie, if she was along. She would simply drop back from the skirmish and then double time it to catch up.

When Carrie came to town, she went to the post office. The Bartons never had mail to send, and what little mail they received, including the all important \$45.00 monthly Roosevelt check, was delivered by rural mail carrier. But, the post office served for women

the same purpose that the barber shop served for men – a place to leave and pick up news and gossip through the postmistress, Vuriel Long.

Often, Alma would spend some time on the wooden bench outside Carl's Hardware, with the whittlers and tobacco chewers who were always there. Alma didn't chew but he carried a black bonehandle double blade pocket knife which he had purchased at Carl's and paid for in three installments. And if he had brought a piece of whittle wood from home or picked one up on the way, or if one of the other whittlers would share, Alma would spend some time whittling and talking.

Alma, Carrie, and their two sons, George and Sonny, lived in a small wooden structure which the boys and Carrie had whitewashed when the United Brethern provided a supply of lime and chalk.

George and Sonny were similar in appearance. Tall like their father and blade thin. But, apart from physical appearance, they were quite different. Sonny, the younger, was simple. He wore a wide grin and always had a cheerful if inapt message for anyone attempting conversation. He was permitted to advance to fourth grade, but after two classes had passed him, the school principal and fourth grade teacher politely suggested to Alma and Carrie that it would be best if they treated Sonny's formal education as having been completed.

On the other hand, George had above average intelligence. And, although his home environment wasn't conducive to intellectual

development, he had an early sense that there was a better life to be had. He had a natural athleticism, and he found opportunity for expression and recognition through basketball. He spent hours throwing a ball at a netless goal which Woody Simpson had given him and which George had nailed to the barn side.

There was no electricity but the Barton's had an ice box. During the winter, George and Sonny pulled ice slabs from the pond, and during warm weather, the ice man would visit the Bartons and others in the area without electricity.

The Bartons were able to get most of their food needs from the few acres they tended with the aid of a mule who pulled a plough and disk. In the spring, the family planted vegetables and field corn for the mule and cow. Potatoes were limed and stored in the barn. Carrie canned. Alma bought two shoats each spring from a neighbor and fed them through early December when they were butchered, the fat rendered into lard for Carrie's cooking, and the carcasses hung to cure in the smoke house.

The Bartons kept chickens, for eggs and for an occasional Sunday dinner, usually an old hen which was no longer a good producer. The boys took turns wringing the necks of their chicken victims. Alma recounted at the Barber Shop Sonny's first effort at dispatching a chicken. Instead of using the quick wrist action which was required to

separate the chicken from its head, Sonny used a full arm wind-mill motion. Around and around and around went the chicken until it slipped from Sonny's grip on an upward motion, and was thrown twenty feet into the air. The chicken died from the fall, Alma would say with a laugh.

From early December until the end of February, George and Sonny set box traps for rabbits in the brush along the railroad track. The boys checked the traps each morning, and were thrilled to see a trap door down because that usually meant a fried rabbit dinner.

The Bartons were the poorest of the poor, and after L.T. gave Caleb's blind calf to the Bartons, it appeared to Caleb that his father had sort of adopted them. At butchering time, there was always a good piece of meat set aside for the Bartons. At Christmas time, L.T. had presents for each member of the family. Clothing ready for discard went to the Bartons for wearing or quilting. When L.T. took Alma and Carrie to the polls for their expected Democrat vote, he gave them two or three half pints of election whiskey, not just the one half pint normally allocated for a household's vote.

Caleb resented the Bartons, no matter how poor they were.

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L.T.'s effort to instill ambition in Caleb had some effect, and Caleb scratched his way through a two-year teacher's program at Oakland City Teacher's College and then obtained a law degree at Indiana University's evening law school in Indianapolis, working days as a bank clerk and living at a boarding house. Upon graduation, Caleb took a job in the office of a Law School alumnus in Cleveland. His work was his life, and he never married. Caleb was at the law office when he received the call from Doc Springstun that L.T. had suffered a heart attack and wasn't expected to survive. He was hanging on and calling for Caleb, and Caleb left immediately for Tennyson.

L.T. had insisted on remaining at home. Caleb's mother having died many years earlier, a neighbor, Pauline Shelton, had agreed to stay with L.T. to the end, and Pauline and her son Paul were with L.T. when Caleb arrived.

When Caleb entered the dim-lit bedroom, L.T. asked to be alone with his son. Caleb drew a chair to the bedside and took hold of his dying father's hand. In a voice weak but determined to communicate, L.T. spoke:

“Caleb, you've been as good a son as a father could have. I've been proud of you and the things that you've done which I couldn't.” L.T. began crying as he added, “Now I have to burden you with something that I've done and never revealed.”

He pointed to a corner of the room, and Caleb recognized the binders holding his father's coin collection. He asked for the top binder. Inside was a sealed envelope. "Open it," L.T. told Caleb.

The envelope held a bright gold coin, etched on opposite sides with a soaring eagle and liberty figure. In a halting voice, L.T. related the story which he'd kept to himself for so long.

It had been a warm Wednesday afternoon in August, 1944, when Alma came into the bank shortly before 3:00. L.T. was about to finish for the day, and he was annoyed when Alma asked if he could see L.T. in the back room. Before Alma sat, he pulled from his gunny sack and handed L.T. a large folded mailing envelope addressed to Alma and bearing a June, 1933, Philadelphia postal cancellation stamp. "I received this from my nephew, James Barton, more than ten years ago." Alma said. Alma and his older brother Joseph had been separated when Alma was 10 and their parents died from pneumonia. The boys were placed in separate foster homes, and Joseph was adopted by his foster parents who then moved East. Alma hadn't seen his brother thereafter, but Joseph wrote Alma on a few occasions, and Alma learned that Joseph had a son, James, who had worked for a time with a coin dealer in Philadelphia.

L.T. peered into the envelope and looked at Alma for permission to remove the contents. Alma nodded, and L.T. removed from the

envelope a handwritten note addressed to Alma and a number of coins which were affixed to a piece of cardboard.

“Dear Alma,” James had written, “we haven’t met, but before he died, my father told me he was sure you were an honest and trustworthy person. Please hold these for me. If anything happens to me, they’re yours.”

“Your nephew, James.”

The coins appeared unremarkable. L.T. recognized three Indian head pennies, a couple of Morgan and Peace silver dollars, and another round object, perhaps a coin, which was covered with an gum like substance which masked the object itself. Nothing of significant value, L.T. thought.

Alma then handed L.T. two other letters, addressed to Alma, and bearing recent dates, the first from the War Department, notifying Alma of James’ death in the Normandy landings, and the second from an estate attorney in Philadelphia. James hadn’t married. Alma was his sole next of kin. The letter stated simply that James had no assets beyond the amount necessary to cover debts and funeral expense and the lawyer’s fee. No action was required of Alma, the letter was simply a notification of what had occurred.

Alma knew of L.T.’s interest in coins. “I suppose they’re mine, now,” he said, “Are they worth anything? Do you want them?” L.T.

told Alma that he would study the coins and talk to him when he returned the following Wednesday. The next day, L.T. checked the coins against a price guide which was part of his subscription. As he expected, the Indian heads and silver dollar were not exceptional. Then, he began removing the gum substance from the curious piece, and there emerged a gold coin - which L.T. immediately recognized as a Double Eagle, a \$ 20 gold piece, perhaps the most beautiful coin ever minted. L.T. knew something about Double Eagles. He knew that they were first minted during Teddy Roosevelt's administration from the design of an artist who had also designed the President's inaugural medal.

It was odd that Alma's nephew and now Alma would have such a coin. Franklin Roosevelt and Congress had taken the country off the gold standard in 1933, and the President had ordered that all gold coins and gold certificates be turned in for other currency. L.T. had returned two Double Eagles himself.

He studied the coin more closely. It bore a Philadelphia mint date of 1933 - the very year of Roosevelt's action. Puzzled, L.T. searched through the coin literature in his files for information about Double Eagles. Included was an article that took his breath.

He read that, in 1933, the last year of production of the Double Eagles, there were 445,500 minted, but none had been released into circulation because of the President's actions that year. The article

stated that two of the coins had been given to the Smithsonian, but the remaining coins had been melted and formed into gold bars.

L.T. sat in disbelief. Was it possible that he held one of the rarest coins in the world?

During the days before Alma's return, L.T. agonized over what he would do. Of course, it was clear what he should do. The law required that the coin be returned to the U.S. Treasury. It wasn't saleable, at least not in the U.S. But, what a prize for the collection. And, Alma wouldn't appreciate the significance of the coin.

When Alma returned, L.T.'s rehearsed words were spoken and the offense committed. The coins weren't exceptional, but if Alma wanted to dispose of them, L.T. would take them. "How about a trade," L.T. said. "The coins for my son's blind calf?" Alma accepted immediately. He knew of the high quality of L.T.'s Guernseys, and the calf could take the place of the Barton's cow when she went dry. Alma was confident that he and his sons could deal with the calf's blindness.

"The swap was made," L.T. said to Caleb, in a voice conveying deep remorse. "Not only had I stolen Alma's coin but I'd taken from you the calf that you cherished."

"Since that day," L.T. continued, "I've awakened every morning with guilt about what I did. In 1950, I read that a 1933 Double Eagle had surfaced in England, and had been sold at auction for \$ 5 million.

And, later, after the ownership of gold again became legal in the U.S., another 1933 went up for auction in Philadelphia. The Government undertook an investigation, and brought suit to recover that coin as having been stolen. The Government claimed that the Cashier of the Mint had colluded with a coin dealer in Philadelphia to remove a few of the 1933's from the Mint before they were melted. But, the Government lost the case. There had been a short time in 1933, before the President's Gold Order was issued in April, when some of the newly minted coins might have been lawfully issued, and the Mint's custody records weren't sufficient to prove that, in fact, none had been issued. Suddenly, the Double Eagle had become legal and extremely valuable.”

“But, I did nothing. And, now, the problem is yours, Caleb,” the dying man said, ”I hope that you will set things right for the family.”

Caleb was stunned, his emotions alternated between grief for the imminent death of his father and revulsion for his father's actions.

L.T. died the following day. Caleb stayed on a few days to settle his father's affairs. He met with an attorney in nearby Boonville to discuss the handling of the Will, which his father had written himself, leaving everything to Caleb.

They discussed the Indiana inheritance tax. Caleb reported that there was not much of value – a small home, \$ 500 bank account, a small collection of coins. Altogether, the values were below the

inheritance tax exemption. No appraisals required. No mention of the Double Eagle.

After the funeral but before leaving, Caleb visited Alma, then 90, at what was called the County Poor Folks Home between Tennyson and Boonville. Alma was very pleased to see Caleb, the son of his old friend. Alma told Caleb that Carrie had died many years earlier, as had Sonny. George had married and moved away. He called the Poor Folks Home a few times each year to talk to Alma. George had a son whom he had named Lowell Truman in honor of Caleb's father and for the kindness which he had shown the family. L.T. had been sending the Home \$10 every month for "extras" for Alma.

Caleb returned to Cleveland and his law office, put the coin collection with the Double Eagle in his safe deposit box, and went on with his life, visiting the collection once or twice a year, admiring the Double Eagle, and carrying the guilt which he inherited from his father. He sent \$ 20 each month to the Poor Folks Home for Alma's extras until he was notified that Alma had passed away.

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The sun was near setting when Caleb left what had been Check's Barber Shop and drove a mile north of Tennyson, to the Little Zion Church and cemetery. He stood briefly at the graves of his father and mother and then walked to the other end of the cemetery. Kneeling

before the stone marking Alma's grave, he dug a hole six inches deep at the base of the grave stone and placed in it the bag containing the Double Eagle. Covering the hole carefully, he returned to his automobile, and drove on further north, turning onto the Twin Bridges Lane which led to Pigeon Creek and a place where the creek divided into two branches for a distance and then reconnected. There were two bridges which crossed the two branches, thus the Twin Bridges. Caleb parked the Mercedes near the first bridge, took a small cooler and other gear from the car, tossed the car keys on the front seat and headed to a point just past where the branches of the Creek reconnected. A place which Caleb and his father had called Catfish Heaven. A deep hole, his father had said, where the big ones came, particularly in hot weather. It was just as Caleb had remembered, and he sat on the bank watching the gentle drift of the muddy brown creek water for several minutes before standing to assemble the cane fishing pole he had brought along. The Parkinson's tremors had returned, and the dull pain in his abdomen was excruciating. With difficulty he joined line to hook, attached a large red and white bobber to the line, and ran the hook through a fat earthworm from the cooler. He swung the line into the water near a patch of green and brown cattails and sat back on the creek bank. The tree leaves rustled from a cool breeze which wafted over him, and he heard the "belly deep" of a bullfrog in the shallows of the creek. All as it should be, he thought. Several minutes passed before he reached for Long

Tom. As he positioned the gun barrel and cocked the trigger, Caleb noticed the telltale movement of the red and white bobber, and he smiled. A big cat, no doubt.

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The sun was shining brightly on Memorial Day 1985 as Isaac Barton steered his Honda civic up the lane toward Little Zion cemetery. A recent graduate of Warren Wilson College, near his family's home in Asheville, North Carolina, he was the first college graduate in his family. He was to leave in a month for a two year stint in Uganda doing missionary work supported by the Presbyterian Church. He was considering a life dedicated to helping others.

For his graduation gift, Isaac's parents, Anne and Lowell Truman, had contributed toward his road trip to Southern Indiana in quest of learning more about his family history. Isaac had known little about his great grandparents Barton, other than that they had been poor, lived near a town named Tennyson and were buried in a small rural cemetery of the Little Zion Baptist Church. Parking near the small church house he walked slowly through the tombstones in search of "Barton". His heart lept when he came upon three small grave stones marking the graves of Alma, Carrie and Sonny. He knelt and prayed. And then returned to the Honda for the yellow rose bush he'd brought. He knelt again before Carrie's tombstone and with a trowel began to make a place for the

flower. The hard clay ground there was impenetrable, and he shifted to Alma's stone. In an almost inviting way, the ground gave way to the trowel, and with the last thrust of the tool, his life and the lives of those he would serve were changed.

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