



*Waiting
for Mail*

Waiting for Mail

Everflow

PART 1

Chapter 1

The glass-pane window was thin, warped and weathered from 250 years of varying seasons. And while structurally maintained, to its time it remained true.

Mary, fifth generation to live in this home, sat with her chin resting upon her crossed arms that were placed gently upon the window seal. Her bright blue eyes scanned the landscape of the Partridge's 300 acre estate; flourishing fruit tree orchards, lush hill tops resting within meadows, and breathtaking mountains positioned perfectly in the background.

Mary saw clouds looming over the mountains, expanding in voluminous detail. Lightening struck, but the lightening alone was short lived for immediately following was a ripping sound of what she envisioned as the sky being viciously torn open by mighty and frightening hands... and then, a flooding of water falling upon the earth.

Mmm... I wonder if it will come today? I wonder if Betsy will make it out?

Mary muttered under her breath.

Betsy was a vivacious woman in her 80's who owned and ran the town's post office. She loved to deliver the mail herself. After becoming a widower, she held her other relationships quite close.

Because of the far reaching size of town, and the time it took to bring mail to every farm, the Partridge's mail was only delivered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Betsy took Sundays off.

It's the one day my Lord has set aside to worship and be with family and friends.

Betsy would say as they spent time together during one of her mail drop offs. Later, when Mary asked her mother what Betsy meant by setting one day aside for worship, she would simply say,

Betsy chooses to honor God in this way, and we honor her because she is pure in this.

Even though we are in relationship with Jesus every day? Shouldn't we say something?

Why, Mary?

Well, Jesus is our rest, he *is* our Holy day, and the day of the Lord is... well, now! Right??

Mary... why do you feel you need to tell her this?

Her mother, soft in tone, gentle in expression.

Mary's 14 year young self didn't quite understand what her mother was getting at, but it was one of those times where Mary knew there was something deeper going on. Her mother would say,

Love is not concerned with being right or wrong.

While Mary watched the glimmer of the sun fade beyond the darkening clouds, she sighed deep as she thought to herself, *Betsy isn't coming today. Oh well... next week I'm sure.* Down came the shades, and out went the table lamp to her right. Mary slowly walked to her room, pondering what may be arriving in her near future.

Chapter 2

The storm had passed and the sun was peaking up behind a jumble of old trees, who themselves reached high into the sky. This sight always sparked a chuckle within Mary.

As a small girl she would envision these tall and slender trees escaping the rich soiled ground they were rooted in, shooting off beyond the rising sun. Sometimes Mary would see these colorfully lush trees being plucked up by an invisible hand, gathered into a bouquet, and handed to her so she could surprise her mother. It was all so majestic. So real!

A warm smile filled Mary's face as she glanced out at these trees, reminiscing while awakening to the aroma of scrambled eggs filled with sharp white cheddar cheese and bacon. Oh how her mouth watered as the scent consumed her senses. She was also looking forward to her family's homemade iced peppermint mocha with fresh peppermint gathered from their own fields.

It remains a wonder to her as to how their peppermint is sustained through the drastically shifting seasons. A miracle amongst so many, too many to keep record of.

Mary's mom and dad decided she had reached the age to where she could now drink their family's delicious coffee, and so she did. Iced coffee every morning, snow or sunshine!

Mary settled her feet upon the ultra plush white vicuna rug. Then sliding her slippers on she ran out of her fantastically hidden bedroom, tucked within their newly remodeled attic. Oh the space was dreamy for a 14 year young girl.

Large windows, unusual for an attic of its time, were draped with warm white lights and mimicking window treatments resembling cherry blossoms. Mary loved to dream, write and imagine, so her father took their once cold four walls and high ceilings, and transformed them into a space of cultivation, adventure and timeless creativity. But for some reason, Mary still felt contained within...

The feeling of containment, like a shadow, followed her downstairs until a moment of hope refreshed her as she thought about what was coming in the mail. She trusted this would change her life, even while not knowing what *it* was.

Morning, Belle.

Amy, Mary's mother, released a warmth and beauty within a simple smile. Her presence always comforting, and the tone within her voice sustained a tender soundness, never fading. Amy expressed the life her words spoke of.

Hey Mom! Do you think Betsy will make it out today... because of the storm yesterday and missing all of us out here?

Well, I'm not sure Mary.

A hint of excitement flashed across her countenance.

But I do know that there is an old tree by the outer perimeter fence that needs some tending to.

Did Dad and Jim fix the fence after cutting the tree away? The horses almost got caught up in it all.

They did, love. And today, they will be tending to the project near the back of the property line. There's discussions of purchasing more land, extending the estate another couple hundred acres.

Even while living in the north for over 20 years, you could still hear a warm southern accent in Amy's words just itchin to get out.

Wow...

Mary sat on that, dreaming...

Mom, what do you want me to do with the tree? I mean, it's dead, right?

Not yet.

Amy brought Mary a plate overflowing with food.

After breakfast why don't you go take a look, I have a feeling you will breathe fresh life into it.

Chapter 3

What... you're jokin, right?! Hah!!

Mary could hear Jim from across the field, through the tree line and into the thicket. Jim was as loyal as they come. So much more than an employee, closer than friend. His family was once the Partridge's closest neighbors, about a ten minute drive to the East. That was until their land was sold in a surprising undisclosed manner. No one ever talks about what happened, but many have wondered why Jim came to work and live on the Partridge Estate.

All he has ever said was,

I just feel at home, and that's that...

As loyal as Jim was, he was equally passionate, especially when he felt injustices were erupting all around him.

Geeze, I wonder what's happening...

Mary heard yells sounding more like murmurs by the time they reached her ears, the thrusting of trees by heavy machinery, and then... the gentle wind in the field.

Mary slowed, losing track of the commotion around her, escaping into the moment where the cool, crisp morning wind danced. Dressed well for this fall day, Mary's bright red scarf tickled her chin while her golden brown hair encircled her head gently, caressing her cool cheeks. She breathed deep as her slowing shifted into a pausing in her walking toward the newly broken tree. Here she peered upon the textures of the golden and purple fields. A giggle left Mary's mouth.

Purple, what a color for fields... and what an aroma!

Sometimes, late in the evening, Mary and her father would grab a blanket and head to the field which laid beyond the back of their home. Light pollution was almost non-existent above their heads, so their view of the galaxy was seamless and overwhelming at times. She would cuddle up to her dad, grabbing his strong and sturdy arm with her own, nestling the side of her face upon the top of his shoulder as he rested his head upon his other raised arm.

There was one evening where the wind came as a surprise and Mary tucked herself into his embrace. He spoke these words to her.

Mary... listen to the wind.

Daddy, I can hear it move the lavender. They're hitting themselves.

Laughter rolled out of Mary's small frame.

Mary, listen through the stalks... listen to the wind itself.

Mary slowed her laughter, listening intently.

Listen to her voice... hear through all other sounds. Deeper...

Mary suddenly heard from a different place. She couldn't quite grasp it with her thoughts, or ears for that matter. While resting in hearing, she felt a voice through all other sounds and an unexpected tear stroked her face, rolled down her cheek and fell upon her father's chest.

Mary was 7 when this moment transpired, and since then she has stopped in front of these fields to listen for this voice. Mary has heard her in whispers, through senses and nature... but for some reason, only when Mary is with her parents does she really find sustaining soundness and security in this Presence. The longing of her soul has peaked in these last months. Believing the mail that is to come to her will open up a door into her *own* destiny. So, she waits. More eagerly she has noticed, but still, she waits.

A look to her left reveals a stump, bruised and waiting. Waiting for her.

Chapter 4

Standing over the stump that was cracked and broken, bark shredded in all directions, Mary's gaze fell upon a single seedling that had sprouted directly from the center of this deteriorating block of wood. Wonderment consumed her as she reached out with her long delicate fingers toward the one green leaf, so small and tender.

Wow, little guy... how did you grow so fast? How are you even here?!

Over the years Mary has heard many stories of her family's land producing miraculous happenings.

Her grandfather shared often,

It's His glory, Mary. When received by us, nothing is impossible. You must believe, though. His glory is your glory, and He doesn't force Himself upon us, but is ready to show us.

Mary still attempted to wrap her mind around belief. She simply didn't understand. Maybe she will understand once the mail comes. So many questions filled her mind.

She took her thumb and finger and gently held the small leaf between them, rubbing carefully.

Too much water isn't good for you, little guy. We want you to grow big and strong. I wonder what you will look like...

Surprisingly, the leaf was stronger than anticipated, and when Mary examined the place where the root grew up and out of, it looked firmly established. Looking around, Mary saw the fence her father and Jim mended, and then she saw the remains of the old tree that once stood proudly in the place of this quaint baby sprout. The old tree was wide and tall, and even though Mary could see the rippling affect of decay throughout the bark, cutting deep within it's core, this tree looked to still have life within it. *So odd...* Mary thought to herself.

Well, how about I dry the area you are growing out of... hmm? You need a name. Umm... how about, Max?! Ya, Max. Sound good?? Now, I'll clean the surrounding area so you will have a nice place to grow out of. Okay, Mary, now you're talking to a tree...

But something was special about this newly forming tree so she felt quite comfortable speaking to it. She knew there was life here.

Mary took a trail that wrapped around the corn fields. Trailblazing some of it herself, she would cut through the woods making her way to the fields, always curious what was behind the next stalk. The clouds were parting and the sun was peeking. She began to dream of this little sprout, Max, considering what kind of tree it would be. She already knew it wouldn't be the same as the tree resting there before. Suddenly, Mary felt an affection for his small beginnings, and strong feelings of relating rose up inside. That's when she heard a quiet whisper within say, *don't despise small beginnings*. And from the depth of her soul a fresh melody found its way through her lips. Floating through the woods, she sang her new song.

Before Mary cut through the next bend in the trail she heard a movement, curiosity now dictating her steps. Mary's body followed her feet toward the sound. First, a stirring of brush filled her ears, then a whimpering. Before her eyes viewed any form, her heart swelled for the one she knew was hiding and crying. Mary assumed these were the whimpering cries of a woman, but *she* turned out to be an *elderly man*. He was zealously cleaved to a tree, so much so, that it appeared to Mary that this tree was embracing him in return. He seemed so frightened.

Excuse me, sir...

And with that, the man shrieked, frightening Mary who then screamed herself, and in no time at all, Jim was in their midst.

Chapter 5

While sitting at their informal table in the kitchen quarters, Mary respectfully sipped her tea while watching this strange man carefully swallow her mother's homemade chicken and potato soup. So warm, so satisfying to a chilled and empty tummy.

Miss. I am so very sorry I frightened you.

Looking into Mary with sensitive eyes.

You see, I'm unclear as to how I got into your woods, and in those moments it felt as though my mind were finding its way back into my head... which was quite uncomfortable.

He smiled a kind and silly smile to lighten the moment.

...and that's when you found me, scaring me outta what little mind I did have!

Laughter filled his mouth as he spoke.

But you're feeling better, now?

Better, yes. But still no recollection as to how I arrived here, child.

Mary... my name is Mary.

Something in Mary flared up when he called her child. But lowering what felt like prickly porcupine needles, she recovered softly.

Umm... you may call me Mary, if you like. That's what my friends call me.

He smiled again while nodding acceptance of Mary's invitation, finishing the soup that was before him.

Amy returned from the outer living room, with another blanket to warm their new guest's legs.

Here you are, sir. For your legs. Can I offer you some more soup?

Winking at her new friend, Amy kindly walked to the stove.

I have been told I should can this stuff up, it's that good!

Amy's infectious laughter filled the air. She sure had a knack at bringing value and purpose to everything in such a respectable and humble way. Mary watched her mom with fresh delight.

Oh, yes ma'am, I'd love some more! And why don't you call me Sam... until I can remember my name. Sam seems to fit well.

He chuckled while rubbing his stomach in a way that noted he was enjoying every bite, but getting full.

Sam it is... and you may call me, Amy. Mary, when Sam finishes his soup, please take him to the 1st floor guest bedroom...

Looking back toward Sam, Amy spoke again.

No need to worry about a thing, Sam. You rest easy and we'll let tomorrow come as it comes. You have a bathroom connected to your room, and the library is just across the hall. Mmm... you look like a man who enjoys to read.

Oh I do. I love to read the works of those who are yet to be known.

A twinkle filled his eyes.

It was Mary's turn to speak.

Wait... how do you remember *that* and not your name, and how do you read the works of anyone who isn't yet known? Do you mean newly published authors?

It's a beautiful surprise to come across new stories within the ones already written, but to find new beginnings before they are even penned... that is a blessing, a gift.

Ummm... okay.

A bit puzzled, Mary let it rest. They talked a while longer, and then Mary walked Sam to his room. What a day this has been... for both of them.

Chapter 6

A 1964 baby blue Ford truck, hastily made its way around the field, catching splatters of mud as it drove toward the Partridge's Estate. Mary was laying in bed writing... dreaming, when she heard from the wall speaker an all too familiar and comforting voice.

Mary, your mom told me to tell ya that Betsy is close to the house... she said yer lookin for somethin??

Jim always yelled through their families speaker system, which was placed in every room of the house. It's been updated over the years but he still spends a good 5 minutes or so noodling with the room numbers -while speaking at the same time- until he can find the right one. This always made Mary to laugh!

Eeeeeee... thank you Jim!! Thank you, thank you, I'm coming down!

An excited squeal flew out of Mary again, following her all the way down the next few floors of the house and straight into the library. She collided with the couch that hugged the wall which held the window that looked out to the front entry of their home. There, Mary saw a mess of mud and metal closing in.

Oh my goodness... she's really here!

As Mary turned to rush out of the room and onto the front porch, her eyes locked in on Sam's. With a startled gasp, Mary jumped back, hitting the couch from behind and falling back onto it. Sam let out a boisterous laugh.

Hey! That's not funny! You startled me.

But Mary couldn't contain her own laughter as she envisioned the display she had just made, Sam witnessing the entire thing while sitting there quietly reading.

The two of them laughed for a minute or so, until Mary remembered that Betsy was just about to enter the grounds of their home.

Oh my goodness, she's here Sam!

Who's here?

Betsy! Betsy, Sam!

And with that, Mary jumped back up and ran toward the door. Entering the hallway she ran down the corridor leading to the home's double doors. Art work and light fixtures were draped along the way, her hands gliding across them as she ran.

Sam chuckled under his breath and continued reading the book he had brought with him into the library. The pages were soft, some blank, some half full. A new glimmer filled his eyes as they traced the newly forming ink, witnessing fresh words take on life.

Chapter 7

As the door flung abruptly open, Betsy, with wide eyes, gasped, for she stood on the porch preparing to ring the Partridge's door bell.

Mary met Betsy's eyes with bright eyes herself. Betsy threw her arm up in shock as the wind shook the remaining rain off her coat.

Mercy me, Mary! What are you doing, child?!

Betsy!! I'm sorry, I am just so happy to see you!

Well, that is a first... I mean, I know you love me and all, but... wait a minute. Do you mind missy?? I'm getting waterlogged out here!

Even though the rain couldn't reach her from here, Betsy liked to make a point, and make it she did.

Ohhh, yes, forgive me Betsy! Please, come in, come in.

Mary opened wide the door, grabbed Betsy's coat and offered her a warm robe that hung near the front entry way. Amy always kept robes and slippers near by for anyone coming out of the crazy weather that seemed to hit them more often than not.

Would you like some slippers, Betsy? Momma made a wonderful casserole, and warm apple pie.

Betsy would normally come in and stay for an hour or so, catching up over lunch. But this time she refused the slippers and offered the mail with a courtesy smile and warm hug.

You are too sweet, my dear. Bless your heart. Buuut unfortunately, I have too much running around to do today, and tomorrow. The storm caught me by surprise, and now I am playing catch up.

Do you need help with anything?

Mary asked gently.

Mary's innocence, even as a 14 year young, was one of the most charming aspects of who she was. And everyone saw this... everyone but Mary.

Maybe an apple, sweet child. Boy, you are growing up, aren't you?

Betsy followed Mary into a foyer where a replenishment of fruit was never neglected. And what a spread. It didn't matter the season of fruit, her parents grew everything on their land.

I suppose so, but it's hard to tell when I'm the one doing the growing. Anyway, I pray that you have something very special for me. This may be the one thing that will take me to this new place of discovering who *I* am.

Ahhh, that's why you're so excited to see me. I guess it is about that time. I remember your mother receiving her own *special mail* from a special Someone...

Honor and pride extended from within Betsy's wellspring of memories, straight to Mary's poised ears.

Yes, I suppose I was a bit too excited...

Mary spoke with a retiring sense, a bit shy all of a sudden.

Oh, chipper up little one! I don't blame you!

Colorful laughter filled the room.

I would be just as excited, myself!

Betsy, does the mail really come from... well, God? I mean how is that possible??

Well, how is a rain drop possibly? Or how does your vegetable garden produce veggies the size that they do, unlike anything we have ever seen?

Miraculous, I guess...

Miraculous... or maybe normal? If God wants to deliver a letter, God will deliver a letter. She's never late.

Chapter 8

Feelings of dread and discouragement swept over Mary. Coming in small waves at first, then a constant stacking on top of the other creating a wall around her. *God's never late...* echoed in Mary's ear, and that's *all* Betsy left with her as she drove away. The rain beat against the window in the laundry room as Mary sat atop the dryer being comforted by its rumble and warmth. Anytime Mary experienced trouble, even as a little girl, she would smother herself within a blanket and find comfort in this space.

Mary...?

James peeked through the door, poking his head in a bit further.

I thought I might find you in here.

At the sound of her father's voice, the wall building up around Mary crumbled quicker than a collapsing building. With cherry red cheeks and glossy eyes, Mary turned to look at her dad.

Ah, Mary...

And with that, tears streamed down her face as her father scooped her up, holding her close.

Time rolled by as the two of them sat atop the dryer together. Talking and laughing, James even brought in some chocolate bars from the candy closet.

Thanks so much, dad...

With a slight grin she took a big bite of chocolate. Mouth full of peanut butter and nugget.

I was getting kinda hungry.

Ya know... this dryer isn't going to last much longer if we keep having these pow-wows in here.

An eruption of laughter jettisoned what discouragement may have lingered.

Ya know... it's unbelievable how cloudy my thoughts become during my impatience in uncertainty.

Laughter faded and peace permeated the atmosphere.

I know kiddo, it can happen to anyone. You know your answer to confusion? Sometimes it's from a friend...

A sweet wink.

...or a father who comes to lift those eyes of yours when you can't see clearly and feel weary.

An image of Moses flashed before her.

Sometimes I feel like I need to know more, now. Do more, now. Like you and mom. And even when you tell me to be me, I still feel like, well...

Tears formed in her eyes again.

I'm... I'm just not enough...

Oh, sweet Belle. You are enough.

A bright smile lite up her father's face, and a hint of mystery in his eyes drew her in closer.

When we plant and tend to the garden's luscious fruits and veggies, telling you they are delicious, how do you know? Or if I were to build a home, using the best insulating material around and tell you this home will hold 50% more heat than any other material, how would you know it is true?

Well, I'd have to eat the fruit and stay in the house for a winter, I guess.

Belle, our journey seems to begin with a glimpse of what is true, like me telling you about the fruit or the house. You get to trust and experience, then understand. This will show you how you are already enough, that everything is already here, ready for *you*. You are already perfect, and perfectly loved.

A considerate pause from Mary quoted her space all the more.

Thank you dad...

With a slight sigh, she wondered more intently about this letter. Together, they left the room and headed to the library to play cards while watching the sun set.

Chapter 9

Here you go, Max... all dry. Boy, have you sprouted up quickly, and during this weather! You are resilient.

A chuckle popped out of Mary.

Who are you talking to?

Mary turned suddenly to see Sam standing about 5 feet behind her.

I was out taking a walk on the grounds near the house, and saw you over here.

Mary felt a little embarrassed, but it faded quickly, for her comfort toward Sam was increasing as each day passed. It's been a couple months, and much of Sam's memory has come back. But all that to say, he's from far away and still unsure of *how* he got here. He uses the word, *transported*, which is simply funny sounding to Mary.

Oh, hah, ya it's just this plant. Well, more than a plant, but a tree. Just a baby one still. My responsibility is to care for him, so I named him Max. Ya... silly, I know, but any other name or *it* didn't feel right.

There was a pause in silence.

We have a lot in common, you know.

You and Max?

Ya. Max is just a weak little baby plant, surrounded by an environment that could kill him and he doesn't even know it! Growing out of a massive tree that came before him. More similarities than I realized, I guess.

Is that how you see Max?! Goodness, he sounds like a victim of circumstances.

Well, when you say it like that, it sounds bad...

May I share what I see for Max? And by the way, it's not weird to name this plant.

Kindness filled his tone.

Thanks, Sam... and yes, of course.

I see a glorious environment filled with power, tenderness, all handled and maintained by a Creator who is good, protecting and watching over Max. I see a glorious tree that came before Max, ushering him into the same life that his father led before him. I see Max, small, but strong. Passionate, determined, tender. And what was the word you used... resilient?

Sam stooped next to Mary and Max, laid his hands upon the sprouting plant and the stump it was growing out of, and spoke.

Creator God, I bless Max and the life that is being formed. With great anticipation we thank you for the tree Max is growing into.

Sam laid his hand upon Mary's back and spoke again.

Father of all creation, I thank you for Mary, your daughter, your beloved. I praise you for how she delights you in every breath she breathes and in every moment she lives. Bless her in this day.

With his strong hand, he gently held the back of her head, smiling a reassuring smile of safety and belonging.

Oh, Sam...

Mary fell into Sam, holding onto him tightly. Sam was becoming more of a guardian to Mary.

A warm wind encircled them, increasing in warmth and felt presence. Sam raised his chin, smiling broadly as a song poured forth from him toward the heavens. Mary wept in his arms.

Chapter 10

Orange and red swirls painted the horizon, like cotton flurries floating about. From this view, Mary and Sam could see bursts of light escaping the morning sky shooting toward every shadow filled crevice. Such extraordinary beauty.

Wow... this is captivating, young Mary.

Heeey, I'm not that young.

With a sly smile, Mary poked Sam in the shoulder.

Haha!

Sam loved to laugh.

Oh, consider it a dear gift to be a youngling! The wisest of the wise are young.

I suppose...

More laughter danced in the early spring air.

I love to sit under this giant white willow tree and watch the sun rise. My family has been coming to this place for years. Picnicking, proposing, celebrating! It's been here so long that no one knows how its tree species found its way here. It's a special tree...

Mmm, I see.

And even when it storms or snows, there will never be a better place to view the marrying of mountains, hill tops, rivers, and all those beautiful fields our family has tended for generations. And the birds!! Oh, they are simply gorgeous, Sam!

Joy became the rhythm of the morning, and Mary nestled wonderfully into the innocent precocious girl that she was.

Our Maker has swept his hand across the plain, kissed it, and here we have it! He merely, laughs what is brewing within, and life erupts in glory!!

Sam was keeled over in exuberant laughter, a mirth filled countenance was his normal. Mary found tremendous safety in Sam. He shared wisdom, walked with Mary through experiences and cared for the rest of the family with the same honor and love he has received from Creator.

Well Mary, it's time I get down to those flocks. They won't walk themselves to the next pasture, ya know.

Sam, we have sheep dogs.

Awe, but this is so much more fun! The joy in experiencing the life God Almighty has created is without measure, far from inconvenience or complaint!

As Sam walked down the hill toward the sheep pasture, Mary heard a whispering from him...

Oh Master, this land truly is one of your precious jewels, isn't it? Honored and cared for...

Red speckled birds with long outstretched wings glided through the air above. Mary, leaning against the tree, was tickled by the tall grass as she shifted herself to lay down. Wonder took over as a voice from deep within sung through her thoughts.

Look! They bring me glory just as they are... this is worship.

Mary felt her heart race in excitement as her breath paused. Then a warmth and deep pleasure consumed her being. And what felt as natural as her very breath, in and out, Mary responded through softened tears of joy,

I love you...

Her voice trailed off with the dancing wind as she heard an affectionate response,

And this... this is worship.

Mary's eyes filled with exuberant wonder, diving deeper into the beauty that was within her.

Chapter 11

The town held approximately 1200 people. From folks living on farms scattered about for miles, to people living within the town. Most of them were business owners while the remainder were transient people finding refuge in their quaint town for various reasons.

Amy and Mary had driven into town this day to meet a friend for lunch. April owned and cared for a home where travelers came and rented out rooms for short periods of time. Mostly writers, artists, and a few families looking for time away. It always seemed odd to Mary that each person in this town felt led here. There was never an overly abundant amount of people, for this was definitely no traditional tourist escape. But the treasures here appeared to allure all... peace, was always found waiting for them. Creativity and hope.

Mom, what does April want to talk about?

Ya know, let's just see Mary...

Don't you have some idea?

Well... even when I know what's on the heart of another, in patience I look forward to hearing from them. There are always treasures waiting for us in every moment, every conversation, no matter the situation. I've come to a place where I want to honor the mystery!

Amy winked playfully at her daughter.

With a shrug, Mary responded.

Mmm. Well, I bet she has some great ideas to expand!! Her place is so cool, and I can just see it being filled with many more people!! Maybe more peeps my age... mmm??

Amy laughed at Mary's innocent, impetuous ways.

We'll see, Mary, we'll see.

More laughter escaped their partly rolled down windows as they finished their descent into town. Looping around the last bend, Amy drove from shadow into the cascading sun. The welcoming rays rested upon the massive stone entry, marking the land with, *Welcome to Patmos*.

Chapter 12

Christmas was over, Easter had come and gone, and now Patmos was preparing for their annual Spring festival. National beauty found a place of influence in the small town of Patmos. And while this beauty was expressed in many forms of creativity, they were highly celebrated for the exquisiteness of flower and plant life.

Patmos proudly contributed native homegrown species of plant and flower, but it was communities from around the world who shared their exotic treasures, blessing everyone all the more. Most Patmos farmers exported their goods throughout nations, and many of Patmos' transient artists and writers found their beginnings in this town, so there has been sweet favor developed through relationships and so experienced during the greatly anticipated Spring Festival.

As Amy and Mary drove toward April's place, Mary grew in excitement when she saw all the decorations and preparations unfolding throughout the town's businesses.

Oooo... I know, I know. April wants to talk to us about the festival!! Wait, why am I here again?? Oh oh, she wants me to help again. I wonder what she would have me do cause I'm a year older now!

Amy couldn't help but chuckle aloud, for she found such delight in her daughter.

Oh, Mary... you are such a delight! I love hearing you dream and ponder.

A proud smile filled Mary's countenance.

But as I said before, I'm going to wait to hear from April what's going on. But you keep guessing!

Amy turned her yellow Volkswagen Bug down 7th street and headed straight for the dead end. This was where April's Cafe & Boarding House, Creative Corner and personal cottage rested... Nestled within one of the dreamiest spots in the town!

Flowing naturally behind her property was a beautiful rushing river where wild life came to drink. And beyond that, lush greeneries made room between the tall tree line for a majestic, mountainous backdrop. The sun always set right between 2 of the largest peaks, and the shading of the sky captivated every wondering eye.

Amy pulled into a spot near the side of the cafe, toward a quaint bridge hanging to her left. She walked upon that bridge and along the path by the river many nights. Amy would tell Mary, *I'm just taking a few minutes with Papa, I'll be right in.* Mary knew her mama's time with Creator was special, even when not understanding it for herself... not quite yet that is. Suddenly, a picture of their mailbox flashed before her vision. She shook her head, attempting to shake the image out.

Are you okay, Mary?

Uh, ya... sorry, it's nothing. Look, April is here! I see her sitting at a table in the cafe.

Mary redirected the conversation, and while Amy was no fool and could perceive her thoughts and feelings, she honored her daughter and followed Mary's redirection toward April.

Well, we better get inside to her, huh?!

A kind smile brought comfort to Mary's insecure soul. She loved her mom.

Amy and Mary locked arms and strolled through the front doors entering into the cafe to their left. The remainder of the house was for boarding. And then there were two connecting cottages to the right. One was the Creative Corner and the second was April and Don's place.

Amy, Mary!

April raised herself out of her cozy chair, momentarily leaving the smoldering fire so she could bring them warm hugs and kisses of joy. April was deeply affectionate and unashamed to express it.

Come, please sit, I have so much to share with you two!

Chapter 13

How dreamy and warm this cafe was. Feeling more like a living room placed in an oasis hewn from many souls. It appeared that April was given sight into innumerable secret places. From these sights she prepared, crafting a space that captured every entering person. *Separation is an illusion*, April would say when Mary asked how she pulled all this together, cultivating an intricately intimate space.

Cohesive creativity. With Wisdom herself, we created a space where the reality of there being no separation was revealed and available for all. Peering from eternity in order to bring the desires of hearts to earth, all to reveal the Creator of All and so be inspired all the more!

April laughed and laughed, filling the room with tremendous bliss. Mary was stricken by April, desiring to be like her in many ways.

The hug extended for longer than a moment, and the ladies hearts swelled with anticipated joy.

Sitting cozily in their seats of choice, their spirits settled into this unspoken communion. Mary always loved the lavender overstuffed bean bag chair where she sank in at just the right depth and was always able to get out. A mauve colored, buttoned high back victorian chair held center

position, and in this chair April sat. Even the fabric, while vintage in nature, was held together by a strength that was unseen, giving off a translucent shine. Amy plopped into a wide colorful chaise resembling a soft sky-blue butterfly. Specks of gold and swirls of green topaz were infused within many strands of thread. Every facet of the girls' beings were held in pleasure.

Amy, I have seen the future and it's much nearer than I ever dreamed! Where I once believed this was impossible for now, I now see it's not!

Are you speaking about the classroom? And isn't there something else, as well?

Haha, yes! Nothing moves by you so easily does it? I saw you in the evening while I was visiting a friend in Heaven. We were together on a beach, worshipping, when I was suddenly absorbed in your classroom.

Mary sat there, quite confused. Her mom didn't have a classroom, and was never a teacher. Amy was a writer, a farmer, and she loved people...

Mom, what are you two talking about?

We believe that the fullness of Life is being awakened in humanity, and that Haven and Earth are awakening as One in all of our consciousnesses. Amy stepped into one of my places within the Father, as well as the future...

I sensed you April, while I was teaching-sharing.

A quaint smile crossed Amy's face, and she continued.

What is Daddy showing you? And will you share about Mary?

Mary perked up at the mention of her name. Her gaze swept from Amy to April, leaning intently in, in order to hear more clearly.

Yes, share about Mary, share about Mary!

Excited, Mary provoked April with the innocence that was her.

Mary, Dan and I are expanding the Creative Corner, transforming it even further. We believe you will be a wonderful participant with us, if you'd like!

Really?! Oh wow... yes, yes!! Mom, can I?

Of course, Mary!

Giggles filled the air as the ladies talked for hours. Mary nearly forgot about her incoming mail. Nearly...

Chapter 14

The drive home was quiet and yet dreams and visions of reality swirled around Amy and Mary. Both, connected in Spirit and content in silence, allowed their imaginations to race with possibilities.

Until this afternoon, Mary had no idea how deeply her mother walked in the spirit. She didn't perceive the maturity God had taken her mom through, and still is... probably because she was so focused on herself. In one afternoon, Mary had grown up in what she felt was exponential. And this growing up was a matter of waking up, embracing the unknown. Embracing child-likeness and leaving limitations. Mary wasn't very certain of what happened, but she knew something had shifted in her. It was like waking up in a dream; this being more real than what she ever knew to be real. The dream *was* reality.

Suddenly, Sam popped up in her consciousness... a new awareness of how he came from spiritual places. Mary always had a lingering wondering, somewhere deep inside, but never went beyond that. She began to witness, like a movie screen, many aspects of her life where Sam suddenly appeared. At times in different forms. This collection of memories and awareness continued the entire drive home. Mary looked over at her mom who was driving silently over hills and through country roads. Her eyes were closed part of the time and the ease in her being was reflected by light in her face. Mary could feel the peace around Amy.

When arriving to their estate Mary spoke gingerly.

Mom. How come you haven't shared all that's been happening with you?

Timing, Mary. Presence was all that mattered for you.

But don't you think all your experiences would have encouraged me... or helped my faith?

And with a smile that glowed, Amy responded ever so kindly.

No, Mary... I don't. I love you belle.

I love you too, mom.

Amy and Mary held one another close, arms wrapped soothingly around the other's waist. Mary leaned her head closer into her mother's chest, resting with eyes closed, trusting that her mom was leading the way.

That evening James, Amy, Jim, Mary and their new friend Sam, sat in the Family Dinning Hall. Scented candles were lite up along the walls, casting images of splendor as they glistened. It felt as gold surrounding them. Two magnificent fire places stood proudly on each end of the room. As a child, Mary would race her cousin around this massive room, from one raging fire place to

the next. They would leap over chairs and crawl under tables, as the chamber filled with life and laughter. James and Amy always broke away from the duties of their estate to play and Mary noticed with each passing year, how honor and joy for one another ushered in Heaven in greater ways than she could describe.

Each moment of bliss was laid upon the previous one, and a divine blanket of atmosphere filled this room, along with every other room in this home. The Partridges' Estate was an emblem of Love. And as this diverse family gathered around their Family's Table, laughter, conversation and joy filled the air. And food... they *really* enjoyed experiencing new foods together!

James, Amy... wow, this was delicious. I must say, simply delicious.

Awe, thanks Sam. You're pretty handy with that carrot peeler, I must say.

Kind laughter swam through Amy as a wave.

Oh, these bumbling hands?

A soft sigh left Sam, casually, as he continued to speak.

I didn't realize how much fun it is to be in a kitchen.

Wait, you've never been in a kitchen before?

Mary asked curiously with a gleam in her eye.

I *have* been in a kitchen, just never cooked before!

Well, I welcome the help anytime, Sam. Ya never know, you may have a cookbook in you that you never knew was there.

James and Amy winked at one another.

I have an idea...

James piped up.

How about tomorrow night we put on the *blind deaf mute baking challenge*?

Really, dad?! We haven't done that for so long!

What is the *blind mute*..., ummm...

Oh, it's a game where three people come together and bake. One person is blind folded, one person has music playing in headphones(so they can't hear), and the third person can't speak or make a sound. Together, you work out what ever it is you're baking. It's sooo funny, Sam!

Hey babe, what about brownies?

Ya, that's great idea, Amy. Any qualms Jim? I know how much you *hate* brownies.

You're jokin right?

Oh Jim, dad knows you *love* mom's brownies.

The five of them talked, laughed and dreamt up ridiculous scenarios of what could possibly go down the next evening.

After another hour or so of plotting, Sam excused himself. Mary noticed he was a bit quiet toward the end so she silently left while Jim and James bantered back and forth, and Amy began to clear the table.

Hey babe, why don't you give me a hand here.

I'm commin love. Alrighty Jim, tonight, outside... we'll see who can throw it the furthest.

Oh ya we will buddy!

Oh, you two...

Amy bumped James' thigh with her hip and kissed him on the cheek.

Lots of love for you too, Jim. *I'll* be seeing you in the morning, though.

Nite, Amy.

With a warm smile Jim spoke again, he had a soft place for Amy.

Thanks again for dinner.

Ya, of course.

Amy cared for Jim in a way that was like having a close brother always near, even while she knew Jim cared for her in ways that, at times, differed from a close sister.

Mary could hear Jim and James laugh and poke at each other as she made her way down the corridor and into the great room. She hesitated when walking past the piano. Mary felt someone lingering, but didn't hear a sound. She paused to listen. She listened intently... nothing. Mary kept moving.

Suddenly, Mary saw a stretched out shadow move in front of her vision. This startled her to such a degree that she instantly felt sick.

Oh God...

Was all she managed to speak. Mary felt like she was in some type of scary movie she always wanted to watch but was never allowed to. She talked herself out of creepy possibilities and forced herself to walk. Mary felt another movement around her, and this made her run through the great room and into the corridor leading to the library and guest bedrooms.

Sam!

And straight into Sam, Mary ran.

Mary, Mary... calm child. Everything's okay.

Oh God, Sam... I felt something! I saw something. By the piano! It flashed before me, and I swear it wanted to hurt me.

Why do you say that, Mary? Why would this want to hurt you?

Well... wait, what?! What are you talking about?! What kind of response is that??

Well, a fine one I would say.

Sam smiled almost sheepishly.

Sam, I'm not joking, there was something shadow-like in the great room and it moved in front of me!

Mary, come sit with me. Slow your breathing and relax a bit child.

Okay... okay.

Together, Mary and Sam made their way into the library and sat near the window seat where a cozy seating area nestled nicely between rows of wooden book shelves.

Now, are you ready to talk?

Ya, I am.

Mary responded with an almost infantile annoyance.

Why do you feel what you saw would ever hurt you, Mary?

WHY do you act like this is normal, Sam?!

Mary's raw fire rose up, and when this happened she didn't consider how she responded. Some would tell her to think before she spoke, but her dad always encouraged her to be herself in every moment, and check in with herself after. *Maturity comes when we are safe and authentic. Your heart is as pure as water, Mary. Believe in yourself and you'll never let yourself down.* But as she grew, Mary couldn't help but notice how her raw emotions did affect others, so it was a challenge for her to *just be yourself*.

Mary, how long have I been with you? With your family?

I dunno, months now. Seems like much much longer though.

It's true, Mary.

And that was all he said.

What's true?

I *have* been with you much longer. This is why you are so comfortable around me. Why you know you are safe with me...

Chapter 15

The following evening while Jim gathered supplies for the baking challenge, Amy violently bust through the door.

Hurry! Hurry, come with me! I can't carry him alone!

Jim's head jolted up, entirely surprised by this moment. He was usually the one busting through doors, demanding action before offering any word of explanation.

Amy, calm down... what's up?!

No time, come on!

Amy and Jim ran to his truck and raced off in the direction Amy had just come from on foot. Where she took trails and forested byways, they would have to drive around.

What is going on? God, Amy... is that blood? What's going on?!

Yes! It's Sam... I'm not sure what happened, but he's out there alone. We have to get to him, quickly.

I've never seen you like this, are you okay?

I don't know, Jim... I'm not, I mean, I am. Honestly, I don't know what is going on inside of me right now.

Well, just sit tight, ya here? Everything will be okay.

While driving another couple of miles, Jim noticed Amy rubbing her hands together nervously. He wasn't sure if she was trying to get the blood off, or just didn't know what to do with herself.

Right there, right there! Stop, Jim!

Ya, okay, I see.

They pulled off on the side of the road where a maintenance entrance intersected with their property and city's highway.

Park here. Follow me.

Though they drove all the way around, Amy knew these woods very well and retraced her steps. She had found Sam laying against a tree as she was taking her usual pre-dusk walk through the woods along their property line.

While she took this time to commune with her Friend, she was also checking things out. This time she found something that what would devastate her entire world...

