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Her  
Inheritance

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# Discovering Her Inheritance

Debra L. Butterfield



IGNITE YOUR FAITH

St. Joseph, MO USA

DISCOVERING HER INHERITANCE

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“LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.”  
Psalm 16:5a NLT



## Chapter One

“You will show me the way of life.” Psalm 16:11a NLT

The report of gunfire sent me diving off my horse. As I hit the ground, I rolled and began searching for a place to take cover. A small boulder next to a scrubby bush looked promising. I scurried over and scrunched my body as best I could behind the rock, then scanned the surrounding area for the shooter. Nothing in front of me or to my left or right flank. Where were my fellow Marines? I turned over on my back and checked out my six. Nothing behind me.

That’s when I noticed it.

Blood soaked my desert camo jacket. I’ve been shot? But I don’t feel a thing.

I ripped open my uniform and found the bullet hole in my now-red undershirt. I should be dead. How could I be anything but, having taken a bullet direct to my heart. Maybe I was. Yet blood continued to rapidly pulse from that gaping hole. That wouldn’t be happening if I was dead. This scenario certainly didn’t fit my idea of heaven or hell. I couldn’t be dead.

I watched, paralyzed, as blood saturated my undershirt.

Yet I didn’t feel anything.

I didn’t feel a thing.

Not a thing.

I bolted up in bed, my pajamas drenched with sweat. Using the sheet, I wiped my face dry and took several slow breaths. I threw the

DEBRA L. BUTTERFIELD

covers off, rose and peeled my wet pj's loose, then went to the kitchen for a glass of water.

Nothing about that dream made sense. I retreated to my favorite chair in the living room. My damp pajamas brought on a chill, so I pulled down the fleece blanket I kept draped over the back of the chair and wrapped myself in it. Then I grabbed my journal from beside the chair and started analyzing the components of my dream.

I was on a horse in the open prairie of Montana.

Inheriting 33 percent of a multi-million-dollar cattle ranch from Chase Reynolds Jr. back in August had baptized me into a world of luxury. Ten days on horseback, driving cattle across the open prairies of Montana had hypnotized me with the state's beauty and serenity. So being on a horse in Montana made sense.

But I was in uniform. And getting shot at made sense in that context because, after all, Marines in the middle of a war get shot at. But I should have been in a Humvee in the blistering desert of the Middle East, not riding a horse. Besides, I'd left the Corps over twenty years ago.

While I was at the Reynold's ranch, the foreman had attempted to kill me three times, one of which included a shot from a rifle. Everything about the dream spoke Montana.

Why was my head mixing up past and present events? If I'd had this dream back in August when the first attempt on my life at the ranch occurred, that'd be different. But now, nearly two months later? What was happening in my life right now that precipitated this dream?

Heavenly Father, are You trying to tell me something? If so, help me understand what it is.

For several minutes, I sat and listened for the Lord's voice within my spirit but heard nothing. Maybe I was asking the wrong question.

I turned my attention to the last element of the dream. Not feeling any pain from the bullet that had penetrated my heart plagued me more than anything else about the dream. Wounded and bleeding out. I should have been dead but wasn't. If I hadn't seen the pool of blood, I'd never have known I'd been shot.



## DISCOVERING HER INHERITANCE

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“Sally. Sally. Wake up.”

“Hmm? What?” I opened my eyes to find Abby, my twin sister, hovering over me. Gray streaked her wavy brown hair at her left temple, the same place as mine. I suppose hers was more pronounced because it cascaded past her shoulders and mine was barely an inch long.

“What are you doing in the living room?”

“I had a nightmare and came out here to think.” I shrugged and sat up. “Guess I fell back to sleep. What time is it?”

“Quarter to nine—”

“Quarter to nine! I’d better get my rear in gear if we’re going to be at Pendrake’s by ten.”

“If I’d realized you weren’t in bed to hear your alarm, I’d have wakened you sooner.”

“It’s not your fault. Maybe today’s meeting is what prompted my nightmare.” I stood, folded the blanket, and tossed it over the back of the chair. “The drive to Pendrake will take thirty to thirty-five minutes. I’ll get showered and dressed. Can you fix me a coffee to go?”

“Sure.”

I rushed off to my bedroom. Was my proposal to buy Pendrake going to get shot down?

###

“This is nerve-racking,” I told Abby. After more than a month of research, planning, and writing a buyout offer, Abby, my potential business partners Jennifer Maxwell and her husband, John, and I now stood in the lobby of Pendrake Publishing, awaiting the meeting that would pronounce their decision on our offer.

“Relax and take a seat” Abby said. “They’ll say yes or they’ll say no.”

I stopped my pacing. I looked at Jen and John seated comfortably in the reception area leather chairs, John busily texting. Abby sat on a leather sofa sipping coffee. I took a seat next to her. “Good point, Abby.

I'm frustrated with this wait. We were told ten o' clock, and it's now ten-thirty. Is this their idea of a power play?"

"Maybe on Berkeley's part," Jen said. "Don't give him the satisfaction of seeing you bothered."

Jen and I had worked together at Pendrake's for fifteen years. We'd become like sisters despite her being eight years younger. I could always count on her to encourage me.

I looked around the lobby for Berkeley Snyder, the current CEO of Pendrake. It was Berkeley's micro-management and penchant for publishing erotica that had driven me to quit Pendrake.

"You're right, Jen." I cleared my throat and continued. "Before we go into that boardroom, I want you each to know how much I appreciate you and the work you put into this idea."

"It's been our pleasure," John said. "We want to see this happen too."

The perky receptionist approached us. A new hire, obviously; she hadn't been working at Pendrake three months ago when I quit my job. She looked sixteen. "The board is ready to see you now." Her high heels clicked rhythmically across the tile floor as she led us to the boardroom and opened the door for us to enter.

I had dressed in my best black business suit with a red shirt and white scarf in an attempt to display my self-assurance. In truth, it had deserted me several months ago when Pendrake's founder and my mentor died and Berkeley Snyder came aboard. To give me the confidence and boldness I needed as I entered the room, I imagined myself in my Marine Corps dress blues decked out with my military ribbons and awards.

The board members, all men, sat on one side of the conference table. It appeared they had already been conducting business. They reminded me of Marine Corps officers planning a battle strategy. Formidable.

Jen, John, Abby, and I took the empty seats across from them.

Jen, in a cream suit with a black shirt, sat to my right. Abby looked stunning, as always, in a soft pink pantsuit and sat to my left. John, the lawyer of our little group, was like the cherry on top. He looked dashing as ever in an iron gray suit, arctic white shirt, and beige tie.

## DISCOVERING HER INHERITANCE

He exuded aplomb—I hoped I did too. I had no doubt he kept the rapt attention of jurors during any trial.

Add the seven board members all dressed in black or gray suits, white shirts, and ties and you'd have thought the power brokers of New York had come to take over Kansas City. The chairman rapped his gavel and called everyone to order. After the board members stopped their chatter, the chairman turned to face me.

“Miss Clark, thank you for your offer to buy Pendrake. It's a decent one, but quite frankly, we like the increased profits Mr. Snyder has brought to the company. We believe those profits will increase considerably in the coming year. So, we're declining your offer.”

I glanced over at Jen and John. They kept poker faces. I tapped into my Marine Corps MP training in an effort to do the same. I'm not sure what I expected to occur at this meeting, but I most certainly didn't expect it to be over and done in less than five minutes.

I straightened my back and leaned forward. “Mr. Snyder's increased profits have come through publishing erotica. Is that the kind of reputation you want for Pendrake, Mr. Cockrell?”

“Profits are profits, Miss Clark. I can, however, extend the offer Mr. Snyder made to you back in August. To be the director of a new imprint that will focus on spiritual books.”

*Spiritual.* Today's buzzword that meant everything religious except for Christianity. I sensed a check in my spirit and glanced at Abby. The frown on her face communicated she had the same check.

“Sir, my faith and my conscience won't allow me to accept your offer.” I plastered on a smile and stood. “Thank you for your time and the board's consideration.” I reached across the table to shake his hand. I nodded to the other board members around the table, and then Jen, John, Abby, and I filed out of the room.

“That door's closed, in more ways than one,” I said as the boardroom door clicked closed with finality behind me. “But I'm glad it's over. I know it's a little early, but can I take you all to lunch? We can discuss our next option.”

“I've got to get back to work. I have court to prepare for,” John said.

DEBRA L. BUTTERFIELD

He leaned over and gave Jen a kiss on the cheek. “I’ll grab a sandwich on my way to the office. See you later, hon.”

We watched as John walked through the lobby and out the door.

“How about it, you two, you up for lunch?” I asked. “Besides being too nervous to eat breakfast, I overslept and didn’t have time. I’m hungry.”

“If I remember correctly, this new business journey started out over a discussion during lunch at Wendy’s.” Jen grinned and linked arms with Abby and me. “Let’s make it a tradition.”

To those around us, we probably appeared to be traveling down the yellow brick road as we giggled our way out the building and headed to lunch.

“I’ve got so many questions buzzing around my head.” I started the car and pulled out of the parking lot and into the typical wild rush of Kansas City’s traffic. “I’m disappointed the board turned down our offer, yet mostly I’m relieved. I admit I didn’t have total peace about it. That alone should have told me not to pursue it. Plus, I don’t want to stay here in Kansas City, and that alleviates the task of moving the business somewhere else.”

“And now the door to start our own company is wide open,” Jen pronounced from the back seat.

“Yes! We probably should have gone in that direction all along. God’s got something great planned. I’m sure. He hasn’t yet told me what it is.” I maneuvered the car through traffic and thought back to my nightmare. Was it prophetic about my buyout of Pendrake or did it have a deeper meaning? Maybe I wasn’t destined to go into business for myself at all.

“Abby, how hard is it to build from the ground up?” Jen asked.

“Starting any business can be challenging, and there are so many scenarios that could affect your success.” Abby paused and through the corner of my eye, I could see her tapping her lips as she thought. “I’m sure publishing books has its similarities to publishing a magazine, but I know nothing about book distribution. At the magazine, we know exactly who we’re trying to reach—ranchers—and where to find them. Can you say that about selling books?”

## DISCOVERING HER INHERITANCE

“I know acquisitions and editing,” Jen said, “but I’d have to pick the brains of our sales and marketing teams to learn about sales and distribution.”

We arrived at Wendy’s and I parked the car. It was barely eleven, so the usual lunch rush hadn’t quite begun. We placed our order and got our drinks. “It’s Friday, and a slew of people will fill this place in the next half hour. Let’s find a remote corner table.”

By then our orders were ready. We grabbed our trays and made our way to a table. We settled ourselves and I said a prayer.

“Sally, I know you’re not going to like this.” Jen frowned, then sighed as she sat down. “John’s having second thoughts about leaving Kansas City. He’s looking at a possible partnership with the law firm.”

“Really? That’s great, Jen! Good for him. When will he find out?”

“That’s the tough part. Not until January. I’m surprised Pendrake’s board decided as quickly as they did. Thanksgiving is only six weeks away. I figured they’d put the decision off until after the holidays.”

“On a side note. Are you going to quit Pendrake?” I bit into my spicy chicken sandwich.

“Yes,” Jen said adamantly. “I haven’t put in my two-week notice yet, but I’ll do that this afternoon as soon as I get back from this lunch. Like you, my faith and conscience have been prodding me.”

“What are you going to do instead?” Abby asked.

“I think I might start freelance editing.”

“Does John’s possible partnership affect the one you’d have with Sally? I detect a bit of hesitation on your part.”

“Not at all, Abby. I’m just not certain how well it would work with Sally in one place and me in another.”

“Yeah, I’ve had some hesitation about that myself.” I took a gulp of water to cool my burning tongue. “And at this point, I don’t know where I want to move to. I want to find something that offers more country living like what I grew up with and a ton less traffic.”

“The ranch at Great Falls certainly offers that.” Abby wiggled her eyebrows at me and then bit into a french fry.

“Yes, it does. But I love Missouri’s long summers.” I stirred the ice

in my drink. With every stir, my spirit swirled around as if caught in a tornado. My whole life had felt that way since back in late July when I first learned of my inheritance and that Abby was my sister.

“And the man that comes with Montana?” Jen teased. “Is he not enough of an enticement?”

“The man?” Abby tipped her head to the right and looked up, then it dawned. “Oh! You mean my brother, Chase.”

I shivered and my gut tensed at the mention of Chase. “That suggestion is scarier than Montana winters. Yes, I like Chase and he likes me—I’m so glad he’s only your brother by adoption, Abby—but I’m torn about a romance developing between us.”

Too many Marines had come on to me. They wanted sex on the first date. No thank you. I had risked my heart once and it got trampled on. I stared down at my half-eaten spicy chicken. Bad memories seared my heart the way that sandwich did my mouth. I shook the memories from my head and plopped a french fry into my honey mustard sauce.

“I’m more concerned about God’s direction for my life than what kind of relationship might develop between me and Chase. God threw me a real curve ball with this inheritance. It’s an amazing blessing, and I’m excited, but also floundering... a lot. I feel such a weight of responsibility. God brought this for a reason, and I want to be a good steward of this money.”

The conversation lulled for several minutes as we ate. I imagine Abby and Jen were contemplating how they might answer me.

Jen broke the silence. “I wish I had an answer for you. You could live a life of leisure if you wanted.”

“I *am* pushing sixty. I could retire, but I think I’d get bored with that. I might be fifty-eight, but I’m too young to sit around doing nothing all day. We all are.” We laughed and wholeheartedly agreed we were all still twenty-somethings.

“Have you considered offering something other than publishing?” Abby said. “Why not a partnership in an editing business. That might work better remotely than publishing. And what about writing? You have money enough now that you could write books full time. Maybe co-author with Jen.”

## DISCOVERING HER INHERITANCE

I leaned back in my seat and contemplated Abby's words. She sat grinning at me, her arms crossed.

"That's a terrific idea." Jen's eyes grew wide, shining with excitement, and her eyebrows rose. She put down her grilled chicken, wiped her hands on her napkin, then reached over to cup my hands in hers. "Open yourself up to the possibilities God might have for you. You inherited a lot of money, but maybe the *real* inheritance is the family He brought you. This amazing twin sister! Her brother. All those nieces and nephews. I know you, and you're so afraid of getting hurt, you can't see what a blessing that is."

I sat dumbfounded. I looked at Abby for confirmation, but was unable to read the message in her eyes. I opened my mouth to say something, then shut it again.

"Jen is a great friend to you, Sally. Cherish that. Wisdom resides in what she just said." Abby side hugged me and smiled. "God will show you the way. Don't make any major decisions until you're positive you've heard from Him. Where Chase is concerned, just be yourself. Whether that relationship is as brother and sister or something more, God will lead you."

I thought about Chase Reynolds III, Abby's brother by virtue of her adoption into the Reynolds family when she was a baby. He was only three years older than I was and ran the Double R Ranch of which I'd inherited 33 percent from his father. Back in August, Chase had told me he thought he was falling in love with me. No one had ever said those words to me. They shocked me. We had done nothing but spar with each other and had known each other only four weeks. How could anyone say they were falling in love after such a short time? To give him credit, he wasn't sure himself and he made that clear. Then and now, I struggled to trust the honesty of his proclamation.

"Listen, Sally, why don't you take the holidays and go visit your new family?" Jen withdrew her hands from mine and leaned back. "Spend time in prayer and seek God's direction. You know He has a plan. Have you asked Him what it is?"

"I have asked God about His plan, but I haven't heard any answers yet." A smile broke my lips. "But last night, Abby invited me to spend

DEBRA L. BUTTERFIELD

the holidays with her in Great Falls. So maybe your suggestion is a confirmation that I should go.”

“Well, I say you accept Abby’s invite.” Jen encouraged me.

“I second that,” Abby chimed. “You can rest, relax, spend time with God. You can stay with me in town, but I’m sure Chase would be fine if you stayed at the ranch. You know the solitude will rejuvenate you.”

“True.”

“And don’t forget about Sandy and all the other horses. They miss you.”

“That’s dirty pool, Abby. You know I love being with the horses.”

“That should tell you, you belong in Great Falls,” Jen said.

I sighed. Life had been chaotic, to say the least, since I learned about the inheritance and discovered Abby was my twin sister in the bargain. Lately, God had certainly made life an adventure. “Okay, you two, you’ve convinced me. We’ll see what God and Montana have in store for me.”