One

Our 1928 Willys-Knight had been climbing for at least ten miles, one hairpin turn after another, under a threatening sky. Though it was early September, the temperature was close to ninety degrees. There was a stillness in the air and a steady buildup of dark, lowering cloud banks to the east.

"Kenneth, the car's overheated!" Mother's voice was anxious.

"I'm aware of it," Father replied. Rivulets of perspiration were streaming down the back of his neck.

"Shouldn't we stop and let the radiator cool off?"

"I will, Louise, as soon as I can find a place to pull over." There had been increasing irritation between my parents ever since Mother, custodian of the map, had suggested some sixty miles back that the most direct road to Alderton was west on Route 30. Dad did not agree and had chosen Route 143, which approached Alderton from the northeast. A mistake. Route 143 was poorly paved and endlessly curving.

We were all on edge this late summer day of 1934. Four consecutive days on the road, seven-hundred-odd miles, four blowouts, five people jostled all the way from Timmeton, Alabama, to western Pennsylvania. Mother had driven most of those miles because I had yet to obtain my driver's license and my father was still having those attacks of malaria.

For most of the trip I had been shut up in the back seat with the animal energy of Tim, eleven, and Anne-Marie, nine. Every waking moment my younger brother and sister had wriggled and fidgeted, poked one

another, and me, and chattered incessantly. I felt bruised and battered, my clothes a mess.

In an effort to ease the tension, Mother began giving us a running commentary on what we would see on Dad's alternative route into Alderton. "We'll be going down Seven Mile Mountain now. The map shows a little village not too far ahead. Yancyville, it's called. Oh, and here's something interesting," she added. "A lake." She held the map to get a closer look. "It's called Lake Kissawha. Indian name, I suppose."

As she spoke, dark clouds suddenly blanketed the landscape. Then the sky emptied. There were no separate raindrops; rather it seemed as if giant hands had overturned cloud-buckets. Lightning and thunderclaps followed—eerie, terrifying. And at that moment white steam began to rise from the car radiator.

Anne-Marie started to cry softly. Hunched over the wheel, Dad searched through the downpour for a place to pull off. There was a bump; we skidded off the road and began sliding to the right. Frantically Dad twisted the wheel, fighting the slide. No use. We ended up with the two rear wheels in a water-filled ditch.

As Dad turned off the ignition, his hands were shaking.

"Now let's all stay calm," Mother said crisply. "Nobody's hurt. We'll be all right."

After about five minutes the deluge stopped and the sky lightened. Gratefully we rolled down the windows; the closed car had been like a steam oven. Dad started the engine but the back wheels only spun crazily, churning mud. Gunning the motor merely sank the heavy old Willys deeper into the ditch.

Then we heard a heart-stopping sound—a roaring, crashing noise from the steep slope just above us. Startled, we looked up to our right and saw a river of water pouring down the side of the mountain. It crashed onto and over the car, water gushing through the open windows, soaking us. Then it surged across the road, tore off a route marker, and churned down the asphalt surface for fifty feet before plunging over the side of the mountain to our left, sweeping along rocks and small trees in its path.

We sat silently in the car, paralyzed by our narrow escape. Then dazedly, almost like a film in slow motion, my parents began mopping up

the water in the front seat. Suddenly Dad's body slumped forward against the steering wheel. I could see a vein throbbing in his neck.

In a panic I clambered over Tim and opened the car door. "I'll go for help," I said, catching Mother's distressed eyes.

High school tennis had strengthened my legs. I ran back along the road we had traveled, avoiding the debris and the worst puddles. My eyes were searching the downhill side of the road, now to my right, for the building I thought I had glimpsed through the trees.

Yes, there it was, some kind of rustic lodge or inn near the shore of the lake. The side road I turned into was steep, slippery underfoot. As I ran, I spied in the distance the figure of a man in a green sports shirt emerging from the building.

At that instant my foot caught in a fallen branch. Down I went, sprawled on all fours—mud all over the front of my skirt, spattered on my blouse and face.

"I say, what a nasty tumble—"

The man was now standing over me, hand outstretched. He was younger than I had thought.

"My family needs help," I stammered, spurning his hand and scrambling to my feet. I pointed toward the road. "Up there."

"Was there an accident?"

"Yes, our car slid into the ditch. I think my father's hurt."

"Should I call an ambulance?"

"I don't know."

"Let's have a look." He set off at a rapid pace, with me trotting to keep up, trying to get my tangled hair out of my eyes and wiping furiously at the mud.

"Beastly day for motoring. Tell me what happened," he tossed over his shoulder at me.

A clipped English accent, reddish-blond hair. He seems nice, I thought. "We were driving up from Alabama. My father's Kenneth Wallace, the new publisher of the *Alderton Sentinel*."

At the main road I pointed the way toward our disabled car. After rounding several curves we saw it. My father was still in the driver's seat, but I rejoiced to see that he was sitting upright.

The young man bounded forward. "I'm Randolph Wilkinson. Are you injured, sir? How can I help?"

Insisting that he was all right, my father climbed slowly out of the Willys. By now Mother too was out on the road to greet us, with Tim and Anne-Marie tumbling after.

"Julie!" Mother cried. "What happened to you?"

To my relief the two men became absorbed in examining the car as I explained my fall to Mother while wringing out my sopping skirt. *What a way to meet a stranger . . . fall on my face in the mud practically at his feet.*

Brushing aside Mother's protests, my father climbed back in behind the steering wheel, turned on the ignition, and began a gentle rocking motion—forward, back, forward. As the rocking pattern stepped up, the Englishman didn't hesitate to step into the water behind the car, flex his muscular arms, and at the right moment give a mighty shove. The heavy old Willys lurched forward from the ditch onto the road.

"By Jove, we *did* it!" Our rescuer shot one hand into the air while Tim and Anne-Marie whooped in triumph.

Dad set the hand brake and climbed from the car. "How can we thank you!"

"No need to." Mr. Wilkinson was looking at me again. "But I insist that you come back to the inn for a cleanup. Can't go on as you are."

"Thanks so much," Dad replied. "But I think we're all right now."

"Kenneth, please," Mother urged. "Let's accept the young man's offer."

"And Dad, don't forget the radiator," Tim put in.

My father grimaced. "I'd forgotten. Our water boiled over, Mr. Wilkinson."

This time the Englishman climbed behind the wheel. He drove several hundred yards down the mountain to what he called the back entrance to the inn. We wound through a woodland, then crossed over the top of a tall dam. To our right was an immense lake; below, on our left, water from the spillway formed a gurgling stream.

After we pulled up in front of a large building, the Englishman showed Mother, Anne-Marie and me to a powder room off the front entrance hall. One glance at myself in the mirror made me shudder: my wavy light brown hair was hanging in stringy ropes; mud spots on my

face gave the effect of chicken pox. I stared down at my filthy saddle shoes, my rumpled skirt and blouse, and groaned. I looked more like a lumpy twelve-year-old than almost eighteen. After cleaning up as best I could, I fled outside.

Lake Kissawha was larger than I had first thought. When we drove in, the far banks had been lost in mist. Now they were just visible, perhaps half a mile away. As I strolled down to the shore, I noticed that the steep face of the dam was a wild aggregation of loose rocks and boulders, with saplings and scrub pines growing out of the crevices.

Odd way to construct a dam, I mused. Then I turned and walked back to our car.

When our family reassembled by the Willys, the handsome Englishman was there to see us off. As I started to climb into the back seat he took my hand and held it for a moment. "I'm glad we met, Julie," he said.

Startled, I looked up into his hazel eyes. They were warm, sparked by a mischievous twinkle. Then, very slowly, he winked!

My eyes must have shown my confusion. I reddened, murmured something unintelligible and stepped into the back seat, aware that my legs were strangely weak.

Mr. Wilkinson then strongly urged us to go back a mile or so, where he said we would find a scenic spot called Lookout Point, which had a breathtaking view of Alderton and the whole valley. Though road weary and eager to end our long journey, we decided that a good first look at our new hometown would be well worth retracing our route.

A few minutes later, with Mother now at the wheel, we pulled into an asphalt parking area and climbed out of the car again. The dark angry clouds were now vanishing to the east. Through breaks in the overcast we could see the narrow Schuylkill Valley spread out below, surrounded by the towering Alleghenies, with Alderton on the valley floor.

I stood there fighting disappointment. Before leaving the flatness of Timmeton I had tried to visualize what it would be like living in the mountains. All afternoon we had been driving through glorious scenery, misty-blue peaks soaring over undulating ridges, each horseshoe bend opening a new and breathtaking vista. I could scarcely wait to see Alderton.

But spread below us now was something very different. Alderton looked pinched, hemmed in by the mountains. In many places the hills were denuded, the slopes pocked with slag heaps. The peace I had sensed in these mountain heights was gone. A dissident note had entered in—as if men and nature were antagonists.

We stood there in a tightly huddled family group, our eyes sweeping the landscape below us. For a moment no one said anything. I was feeling let down, betrayed, but dared not voice it.

Still, there was beauty mixed in with the ugliness. Just below us in the twilight Lake Kissawha was like a multicolored mirror. A sparkling stream, like a glistening strand of pearls, wound down Seven Mile Mountain to Alderton. Consulting the map, Mother reported that this was the Sequanoto River, that it was joined by Brady Creek just north of Alderton, and that the combined streams flowed through the center of town.

Father, pale and drawn, pointed out the two bridges spanning the river, including the railroad bridge built at the turn of the century. On his previous visit here, local citizens had described it as an architectural monstrosity because of its ponderous concrete arches. As our eyes searched the town, tongues of flame would leap from tall brick smokestacks, then die again. A thick sooty haze hovered above the scene.

"That's the Yoder Iron and Steel Works," Dad said, indicating the smokestacks. "Employs over twelve hundred men. Headed by Tom McKeever, a tough old man who runs this town, I'm told."

"Including the *Sentinel*?" Mother asked.

My father shrugged. "I don't think he'll pay much attention to us." He pointed again. "There's the Trantler Wireworks, a Yoder subsidiary. Makes barbed wire and such. Those and the Pennsylvania Railroad yards are the town's chief industries. See the yards on the east side of Railroad Bridge—apparently a major east-west transfer point." From where we stood we could see two roundhouses surrounded by glittering skeins of tracks.

"Just like a model train set!" Tim breathed excitedly.

"Sure looks that way from here, son."

Dad then indicated the residential areas, mostly tucked into the hills, and a section of drab gray houses east of town. "Workers' houses," Dad

explained. "They're called the Lowlands." The name fit; they were certainly the ugliest part of this industrial center of over twenty thousand people. Alderton was a stark contrast to quiet Timmeton, where our family had lived for almost nine years.

With sudden nostalgia my mind drifted back to those last days of our uprooting . . . packing boxes, crates and steamer trunks to be sent by rail, the last visits to my favorite places, the final good-byes.

Mary Beth. Sandra Lee. Merv, the boy down the street who was so sure I was to marry him someday. How could I start in, my last year of high school, to make all new friends?

There had been pain in leaving the setting, too: the huge century-old oak trees that arched over Macon Street like the green-vaulted roof of a cathedral. There are precious things that you can't pack and take with you, like the all-pervasive fragrance of the honeysuckle. Would there be honeysuckle in the North? I would miss the drapery of purple wisteria that all but smothered the old woodshed in our back yard.

I looked at my parents as they stared silently at the town below us. My father's tall frame was stooped, neck muscles still twitching, eyes clouded, hands clenched tightly together. In contrast were Mother's firm, patrician features, her determined manner. How did they handle a change like this? I had no clue and could not bring myself to ask. I had always had trouble talking about whatever meant most to me. Shyness? The fear of something important to me being belittled or made fun of? I didn't know—only that I had always kept my joys and doubts locked inside myself.

Like my fears now for my father. Could Kenneth Timothy Wallace, prematurely gray at forty-one, who had known nothing but the Christian ministry, really turn overnight into a newspaper publisher?

Certainly the decision to buy the *Alderton Sentinel* had not been made lightly. I had always known that journalism was Dad's second love, had sometimes suspected it was his first. Dad remembered with sentimental delight his two years of college newspaper work; he had written continually for church publications and local newspapers ever since. The *Timmeton Times* had printed his weekly column, built around the relevance for today of a selected verse of Scripture.

Then there had been all that trouble at my father's church, followed

by his illness. Apparently he had contracted malaria during a summer preaching mission in rural Louisiana. It became so bad that he had to be hospitalized for almost a month. Soon after that, the letter had arrived from Paul Proctor, one of Father's college friends, who owned a weekly newspaper in western Pennsylvania. Would Ken like to buy it?

For weeks my parents discussed the offer, both openly and behind closed doors. It came out that we had the necessary money in a savings fund—which had providentially survived the recent bank closings—a $15,000 inheritance from the estate of Mother's Aunt Stella. The money had initially been set aside to provide a college education for myself, Tim, and Anne-Marie.

All of us agreed that Dad should take a week's trip to Alderton to go over the facilities. If it seemed right, he should look for a place to live. When he returned, the decision had been made. My father felt he "had a call" to publish and edit the *Sentinel*.

But questions had kept rising in me and would not be put down. How could someone who loved people as much as my father did leave the ministry? What had gone wrong at his church? Had Dad lost his faith? Why had God let so many bad things happen to such a good man? This depression year of 1934 seemed a poor time to start a new business venture. Inside me churned the suspicion that even in the best of times, my father's skills were not really attuned to the business world.

One thing was certain: the Wallace family was being plunged into unknown adventure in this unappealing town, Alderton.

Two

I awoke the following Saturday morning in my still-strange bedroom in our new home to the sound of rain drumming on the roof. No matter. For over two years now I had enjoyed waking up early when there was no school, so that I could write down my thoughts.

Something about the hour of dawn intrigued me, drew me. In Timmeton it had been the quietness—silence so intense as to be almost palpable. Here in Alderton, the early morning calm was shattered by the distant clanging and screeching of engine whistles in the railroad yards.

My Timmeton classmates, all of whom slept late on Saturday, had made fun of my early morning rendezvous. This taught me that a person who is different can also be rejected. After considering this fact carefully, I decided that I liked being different and would accept the cost.

Five days in Alderton found me dazed by a kaleidoscope of first impressions—the ancient high school . . . new faces . . . the steep streets . . . the grime and soot on everything . . . the changeable weather. I turned on the bedside lamp and reached into the drawer of my nightstand for the lined notebook I had dignified with the name *Journal*. Propped up in bed, a robe around my shoulders, I wrote at the top of a fresh page: *Alderton, Penna. Saturday, September 15, 1934.* My pen went speeding across the page as I described the three-story white frame house Dad had rented for us on a short dead-end street called Bank Place, west of Alderton's business center. The house towered over a street so narrow there was barely

room for two cars to pass. I wondered why the builder had decided on a ten-foot, postage-stamp-size front yard, leaving an outlandishly long hundred-foot lot at the back. In Timmeton, broad front lawns had been the rule. Perhaps northerners expected snow and wanted to be close to the street.

The long back yard, however, did provide plenty of space for vegetable and flower gardens. There was also an old wooden garage sandwiched between a cherry tree on one side and a walnut tree on the other. The back of the lot ended in a gradual drop-off of stone ledges, leading to a narrow street below. Tim, Anne-Marie, and I had christened this area The Rocks. From there stretched a panoramic view all the way down the valley.

Next I tried to describe the disorder inside our house. Paul Proctor had arranged for the unloading of the moving van that delivered our furniture two days before we arrived; he had seen to it that our beds were set up and the basic furniture uncrated and positioned. Yet most of our things were still in barrels and boxes.

I got on paper the picture of our tall, willowy mother with her head almost buried in a barrel of china—brown hair disheveled, bits of excelsior clinging to it, beads of perspiration on her lined forehead, in her eyes a constant look of worry.

We were all scared about Dad. The long trip and the cloudburst episode seemed to have completely unnerved him. Not until our third day in Alderton did he make it to the *Sentinel* office.

I turned to a fresh page, a fresh subject: putting out a newspaper. Would I have a chance to make my oldest dream come true—to write something other people would read? Something that might change the world . . . no reason to think small! The world certainly needed to be changed. The man they called Il Duce in Italy and that new leader in Germany, Adolf Hitler, believed force was the way to do it. Could the League of Nations find no better way?

Finally I struggled to put down something about our near-disastrous entrance into Alderton last Sunday and that truly awkward meeting with Randolph Wilkinson when I tumbled into the mud almost at his feet.

Was that the most embarrassing moment of my life to date? Surely it was! More so than the night I lost my place while playing piano accompaniment for Tibbe's solo—and before the whole school assembly. Or the evening of my first double date when, like a two-year-old, I knocked over the whole glass of chocolate soda into Smithy Jordan's lap.

Randolph Wilkinson excites me . . . not so much his good looks as that British charm . . . I love the clarity of his speech . . . And that goodbye wink . . . There's something magnetic in this man that I felt through my whole body. I wish I could have impressed him . . .

I climbed out of bed, removed my bathrobe and pajamas and looked at myself in the oval mirror over my dresser. The glass reflected large eyes—blue, almost violet—and an upturned nose, near-shoulder-length wavy light brown hair, fair complexion. But too little color in my face. I turned sideways and grimaced. Some nice curves—and some unnecessary ones. Why had I allowed an extra ten pounds to creep up on me? As a defense? Against what? *I am going to lose weight,* I resolved.

The delicious aroma of our customary Saturday breakfast—buckwheat pancakes with maple syrup and sausage—was wafting upstairs. "Some things do not change," I thought. "Mother will see to that." But I had taken too long writing; I should have been down there helping her.

The kitchen was large, with a big pantry on one side and on the other, narrow back stairs leading to the second floor. An icebox sat on a screened-in back porch.

"'Morning, Julie," Mother greeted me. "What held you up? You're almost too late to help."

Tim bounded in, with Anne-Marie, fourteen months younger, trailing him closely as usual. Tim had a cowlick on the crown of his blond head and a pug nose liberally sprinkled with freckles. Anne-Marie, a tomboy with cropped straight hair, was dressed in coveralls for Saturday. Father stood waiting for us; he was dressed in his dark blue serge suit, the one he had worn every Sunday during his last year in the Timmeton church. It was his good suit; the two others were threadbare.

After blessing our food, he turned to me. "So, Julie, are you ready for your first trip to the office?"

Mother frowned. "Kenneth, I could use Julie here today. There's no way I can do all the unpacking myself."

"I know, Louise." Dad seemed to be struggling for composure. "But to keep food on the table, I've got to get the *Sentinel* going. And Julie can help."

"Can I help too?" Tim piped up. "Will you pay us?"

"Me too, Dad?" Anne-Marie enthused.

Deliberately, my father took a sip of coffee. There was still a tremor in his hands, I noticed. "With our financial situation," he rejoined quietly, "we may *all* have to pitch in. And without pay." Mother said nothing more.

The decision of what to wear to the office was not very hard for me. With money so scarce, I made do with a wardrobe of three skirts and five blouses in mixable colors, a blue taffeta dress for Sundays, a rose-colored silk one for parties, several sweaters, and an old playsuit for dirty work around the house. Everyone wore saddle shoes to school—mine were brown and white. One pair of good shoes, assorted hats, gloves, belts and underwear completed the wardrobe. I needed more winter clothes, especially a coat, but could get by with my blue leather jacket.

It was a downhill trek to the drab gray business section. Since Dad was still a bit trembly, we walked the sixteen blocks to the *Sentinel* office slowly, stopping to look into store windows. I'd never lived in a town this large and was shocked at the untidiness: the sidewalks and gutters littered with bubble gum and candy wrappers, squashed Dixie cups, popsicle sticks, torn bits of old newspapers. At the Five and Ten Cent Store loud hillbilly music was pouring forth from a scratchy phonograph, penetrating the street in gasps as the doors swung to-and-fro. Against the building sat a beggar with both legs off at the hips, balancing himself on a platform on wheels and selling pencils.

Between the stores, dark entrances led up narrow metal-edged stairs to offices on the upper floors: *Dentist, Chiropractor, Insurance, Attorney-at-Law.* All surfaces were encrusted with the accumulation of years of soot. About seven feet up from the sidewalk there was a brown line on all the buildings—the high-water mark of the 1932 flood Dad informed me.

Unsteady on his feet Dad might be, but still he missed no opportunity

to introduce himself and me to the people we passed. "You are Sam Gaither, are you not? I am Kenneth Wallace, new publisher of the *Sentinel* . . . my daughter Julie." Warmed by my father's manner, the owner of Gaither's Clothing Store asked us to drop by some time.

Dad gave an equally hearty greeting to some chambermaids going to work at Haslam House, Alderton's main hotel. They giggled as we shook hands.

We stopped to talk a minute with Mr. Ted Gillin as he opened Gillin Auto Supply.

Then there was stout Mr. Salvatore Mazzini, who owned the shoe repair shop. Mr. Mazzini's response was a hearty handshake that made the corners of his handlebar mustache twitch. *What a way my father has with people,* I thought. *In no time at all he'll know everyone in town.*

As we turned the corner from Main Street onto Canal, I asked him, "Dad, you haven't told me what I'm to do at the *Sentinel*."

"I haven't told you because I don't know. This is all so new to me."

My father was already immersed in his own crash course on newspapering. He had been flinging around terms like "learning the case," "justifying a line," "loading the chases," "logotypes" and "printer's devils." It was another language, all right! For instance, how to guess that "accumulating boiler plate" had nothing whatsoever to do with furnaces or even pieces of metal? He had explained at dinner one night that this meant acquiring a supply of fill-in material to be used whenever news items ran short.

A few more strides and there it was: the *Alderton Sentinel* painted in curving gold letters on the plate glass window. The *Sentinel* office occupied the first floor of the three-story corner building on Canal Street and Maple. The second floor was an Eastern Star recreation hall, used mostly at night. The third floor was a storage area.

As Dad pushed open the door to the office, a mixture of unfamiliar smells greeted me. Later I sorted them out as new paper, printer's ink, machinery oil, hot metal and dust. We walked into a large room, forty feet wide and ninety feet long, with walls that begged for a fresh coat of paint. To the right of the door sat a scrawny woman well past middle age, at what looked to be a large kitchen table heaped high with papers. When my father had bought the almost-defunct *Sentinel*, he had also inherited

the elderly Miss Cruley, whom he described to us as "riveted to the floor of that place as firmly as the old Babcock press."

"Miss Cruley, my daughter Julie," Dad said cheerily.

"Very pleased to meet you." Upon my father's entrance she had popped to her feet. The words coming out of her tiny mouth were as clipped as a bird's pecking. In fact, Emily Cruley was birdlike in every way, with her nervous, quick movements, her pipe-stem arms and legs. A dark green apron filled with pockets covered a cotton print dress, while a matching green visor sat firmly on top of her close-cropped gray hair.

"There is something I wish to speak to you about, Mr. Wallace," she chirped.

"Yes, Emily?"

"You've simply got to hire another person. I've never handled all the machine work. Never! Mr. Proctor always had Jake do that."

"I understand how you feel, Emily." Dad's voice revealed the strain he was under. "But I have to remind you that Mr. Proctor did not make a go of the paper financially. It was all but bankrupt."

"I know nothing of that. I was not privy to Mr. Proctor's bookkeeping."

"The point is," Dad persisted, "we must keep costs down. Jake has been offered an excellent new job in Boston, and I simply cannot afford to replace him." Dad paused and took a deep breath, his face twitching slightly. "He's assured me that you can handle the linotype."

Impatience fluttered through every line of her narrow body. "Of course I can. Composing is no harder than typing. But did you ever see a machine that didn't get out of whack every few days? When the linotype got squirts or a roller had to be welded, Jake always knew what to do." Miss Cruley's bony forefinger was pointing to the big ungainly machine at the back of the office. "That old Babcock needs a mechanic to handle it."

Dad's shoulders sagged. "I promise I won't expect you to be a mechanic. Jake has already taught me a lot about that press. Please don't worry. I'll master it before he leaves."

He moved away from her and motioned me to follow him to the rear of the building. Dad's private working space was a thinly partitioned room, about six by ten, in the rear right corner. He pushed open the door and smiled wanly at me. "Enter the Publisher's office." I closed the door

and sat down in a wooden cane-bottomed chair, while my father sank into the swivel seat in front of a long flat wooden desk. A bare spot had been scuffed into the linoleum-covered floor beneath the swivel chair, with grime caught in the edges of the torn linoleum.

As a publisher's office it wasn't much. Paul Proctor had left on the walls some old campaign pictures of political candidates, a couple of Alderton flood scenes, a few colorful theatrical posters and a faded picture of a billowing American flag cut from some magazine.

I felt a sudden pang of fear for my father as he faced this new adventure. Could he do it? I studied his thin, lined, still-handsome face, brown eyes dulled by anxiety, hair turning from brown to gray. He had always had a lively sense of humor and a ready smile that revealed white, even teeth. Lately the smiles were uncertain and infrequent.

"Actually," he murmured, more to himself than to me, "Emily's right. I *am* going to have to find some help, at least for press days—Wednesday and Thursday."

"What day is the paper delivered?"

"Friday. It's hand-delivered locally. Mailed to subscribers in the surrounding communities."

I wondered if now was the moment I had been waiting for. Ever since Dad had purchased the *Sentinel*, I had seen it as my opportunity to become a journalist. If only my father would realize that I was no longer his little girl but a young adult with a brain and at least a degree of talent. But even as I was deciding how to put my question, Dad pre-empted me.

"Julie, you've always gotten A's in your English courses— would you be willing to give me some afternoon time for proofreading?"

Hastily I reduced my lofty thoughts. "What's involved?"

"Proof sheets are pulled, as they say in this trade, by Monday afternoon. It means reading them carefully to catch any printing errors, misspellings or mistakes of the sort that would embarrass anyone. Actually, it's a big responsibility."

I wondered if Dad was trying to make proofreading sound more important than it was. "I'll be glad to try," I told him cautiously. "I'm not so hot at spelling, though."

There was a tap on the flimsy door and Miss Cruley stuck her head

in. "Someone to see you, Mr. Wallace. A Mr. Dean Fleming." As I relinquished the cane-bottomed chair, an older man appeared in the doorway. He had a sunburned bald head, a leathery face, and wore a plaid shirt and corduroy pants above thick-soled worker's shoes. As he moved toward Dad, I noticed that he dragged one leg behind him.

"Came by," I heard Mr. Fleming inquire, "to see if you'd print some handbills for my union, the International Machinists."

"Happy to. Do you have the copy with you?"

"Right here." He pulled a folded paper out of his breast pocket. As the two men sat down together at my father's desk, Miss Cruley took me on a tour of the outer office. The Babcock press took up the rear left corner of the room, close to the back door, which led out to an alley. Next to the Babcock was the cutter, then came a platen press for small job work. A long make-ready table was positioned in the middle of the room, cases of type on the opposite wall. There was a sink under the staircase leading to the second story, where, she primly explained, separate men's and women's toilets were located. I wondered where I would do my proofreading.

The men emerged from my father's office. Dad nodded toward me: "My daughter Julie, Mr. Fleming. She will be helping us with the newspaper."

Mr. Fleming gripped my hand in his work-roughened one. The most striking feature of this homely man, I thought, was his penetrating eyes. When he had gone, I noticed a strange look on my father's face as he stared after the departing visitor.

That night at dinner, Dad seemed more relaxed than usual. "It's been a good day," he luxuriated, pushing his chair back from the table. "Louise, a man named Dean Fleming came by the office. Union man. Wanted a print order, some handbills. Guess what he said to me just before he left?"

"I can't imagine," Mother answered.

"Made me an offer of his time for two hours a day, five days a week, as maintenance man for our printing equipment. Insisted he would take no payment for this."

"Why would he do that?"

"He said"—here Dad groped for words—"he said that he had an 'inner guide' who told him to come to me because I needed help."

"Did you take him up on his offer?"

"He didn't leave me much choice."

"But is he any good?" asked our always-practical mother.

"I can't tell yet. He seems to know quite a lot about machinery. He told me he worked thirty-five years as a machinist for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Hurt his leg in a train wreck and retired a few years ago. A widower. Has a farmhouse in Yancyville, where he lives with his sister, who's nearly blind. She keeps house for him."

My father paused a moment, then chuckled self-consciously. "He knows that I left the ministry. Gave me a little pep talk about holding on to my faith."

A machinist who was both a union man and a preacher—what a strange combination. I didn't think I was going to like this Mr. Fleming if he was going to use his volunteer status to force his philosophy of life on us.