

THE ANGEL OF

9

MERCY SERIES

# Things Not Seen

*Breanna's faith is strong...but will it save her?*



ALLACY

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T H E   A N G E L   O F   M E R C Y   S E R I E S

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# THINGS NOT SEEN

B O O K   N I N E

A L L A C Y

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*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen.”*

HEBREWS 11:1

# PROLOGUE



AMERICAN HISTORIANS HAVE properly dubbed Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) the “mother of modern nursing.” Miss Nightingale made her impact as a loving, compassionate nurse during the Crimean War (1853-56) between Russia and the allied powers of England, France, Turkey, and Sardinia.

As a child in England, Miss Nightingale nursed ill and injured birds, dogs, cats, and other animals. She was known even then as a person of warmth and compassion. These traits became more prominent in her as she matured into adulthood, studied nursing, and went on to make an indelible mark in her chosen field of endeavor.

Florence Nightingale stands out in medical history because she knew the public expected nurses to be warm, caring human beings. When she developed into a trainer of nurses and a reformer of hospitals, she taught student nurses already in the profession that kindness, compassion, and heedfulness for patients and their families were integral parts of being a successful nurse.

In addition to the aforementioned traits, Miss Nightingale believed a nurse should also be well educated in her field to properly carry out her duties. Indeed, she pursued an intelligent

and caring mission of service to humanity throughout her lifetime.

The intellectual acumen necessary to successfully practice professional nursing is rarely understood outside the realm of the medical profession.

In the minds of most people, Miss Nightingale's image was solely one of a mother figure bringing comfort to her patients. Few people know that she was also a renowned statistician who used epidemiological data to document the effectiveness of nursing practices. In 1860, the nurse who became a legend in the Crimean War, established a nursing school at St. Thomas's Hospital in London—the first of its kind in the world. In 1907, three years before she died, and by then a blind invalid, Miss Nightingale became the first woman to receive the British Order of Merit.

Since the days of Florence Nightingale, nurses have carried out medically delegated tasks. Successful nursing, however, involves working within a body of knowledge apart from medicine. The nurse, in carrying out her job, also diagnoses and treats human responses to present and potential health problems. With each individual she must make an assessment of how the patient is adapting to the effects of the illness. To do this, the nurse will seek to gain the patient's confidence so she can help relieve any burdens that threaten to impede genuine healing.

The successful nurse's investment in other people's lives is not without price. Often, the patients or their families will reject her well-meaning efforts and even test her mettle by exhibiting hostile behavior. Investment of self sometimes leads to heartache and emotional loss for the nurse. To deny herself this type of relationship so she can properly care for her patients is to miss the essence of nursing. Thus, the best of

nurses must make themselves vulnerable to patients and their families.

In our angel of mercy, Breanna Baylor Brockman, we have such a woman. She is warm, compassionate, and intelligent. Breanna has learned that life's investment as a nurse has a price. And as the reader will soon find out, she will be faced with that fact in *Things Not Seen*. But as always, our heroine is more than willing to pay whatever price she must to be a true angel of mercy.

# 1



WHEN DWIGHT MORELAND awakened, early light was seeping through the bedroom windows. He rolled over cautiously and looked at Pamela, trying not to wake her. She had experienced a bad night, and he wanted her to sleep as long as possible.

He picked up his clothes and tiptoed out of the room, quietly closing the door behind him. When he got to the kitchen he pulled on his pants and socks, then built a fire in the stove and put water on to heat. He moved out onto the back porch to get a glimpse of the sunrise.

The eastern sky was alive with pink fire, and a bank of fleecy clouds was turning a brilliant rose. As he watched, the pink of the sky began to fade as the day brightened. Before going back into the kitchen, he glanced to the west. The sky was still relatively dark in that direction, but he could make out the outline of the towering Rockies.

While he waited for the water on the stove to heat for his shave, Dwight went back to the bedroom and peeked in on his young wife. She was still sleeping, for which he was glad.

When he had finished shaving, he added wood to the stove to cook his breakfast, then pulled his boots on and slipped into his shirt. He returned to the back porch and gazed at the majestic Rocky Mountains. Even though it was midsummer,



the towering peaks still had their white caps. They loomed before him, standing as they had for thousands of years, silent witnesses to the passing of time.

A year ago, newly wedded Dwight and Pamela Moreland had moved to Denver from the flat plains of Nebraska. They loved their new home and were excited about their soon-to-be-born first child, who was due in about two months. Dwight also enjoyed his job with the Rocky Mountain Construction Company, building roads and bridges.

He moved back inside and went about the kitchen as quietly as possible as he prepared breakfast. He was just finishing the cleanup job when he heard an expected knock at the front door. He hastened to open the door to his next-door neighbor.

Hilda Walz was in her late sixties. She and her husband, Tom, a retired railroad engineer, had been married forty-eight years.

"I hope Pamela had a good night this time," Hilda said as she entered the house.

Tom sighed as he gently closed the door behind her. "No, not really."

"More contractions?"

"Yes. But they're mild, and like yesterday, they're far apart."

"Are they constant?"

"No. She'll have them for about an hour, then not have any for three or four hours. She was awake till about four A.M."

"Probably false labor."

"That's what she says. She remembers her mother doing the same when her sister and brothers were on the way."

Hilda squinted at Dwight. "Is that a black eye you've got there, or are my eyes failing me?"

"Uh...well, yeah." Dwight's features tinted as he placed fingertips to his slightly puffy left eye.

“What happened?”

“Just a little disagreement with one of the guys on the job yesterday.”

“I didn’t notice it when you came home from work.”

“It...uh...it didn’t really start showing up till about bedtime.”

Hilda shook her head. “Not your quick temper again, was it?”

Dwight rubbed the back of his neck. “Well, I guess if I’d held my temper, there wouldn’t have been any blows swung.”

The silver-haired woman patted his arm. “Honey, you’ve got to learn to control that temper.”

“I know, I know. Pamela tells me the same thing...just like Mom used to.”

“What about Pamela’s back pain?”

“That’s why she didn’t get to sleep until about four. She just can’t seem to get relief, no matter what position she tries. It really aggravates her.”

Hilda made a clicking noise with her tongue. “Those pains had eased off by the time you got home from work yesterday. I was hoping she wouldn’t have any more last night.”

“Me, too,” said Dwight, turning to pick up his lunch sack. “Well, I’ve got to go. Thank you again for coming to stay with her. This makes four days in a row. If she isn’t better by tomorrow, I’ll take her to Dr. Carroll.”

“Try not to worry, Dwight, it’s probably just false labor. But if it keeps up, she should definitely be checked. The back pain might stay with her all the way until the baby’s born, but these mild contractions shouldn’t be happening in her seventh month. I’ll keep a sharp eye on her.”

“Thank you.” Dwight gave her a crooked smile. “Till you’re better paid, at least.”

Hilda chuckled. “You’re not paying one red cent for this, young man. Look at all the times you’ve come over and helped Tom work on the house and the barn. Turn about is fair play.”

As Tom took his hat off the hook by the door, Hilda said, “Just in case we should need you, are you still working on that bridge over the South Platte, up by Henderson City?”

“Mm-hmm. See you this evening.”

When the door closed, Hilda shook her head and headed for the bedroom, saying in a half-whisper, “Dwight Moreland, you’re such a nice young man. But you need to get a handle on that short-fuse temper.”

She turned the doorknob quietly and pushed open the bedroom door a couple of inches. Pamela lay on her side, sleeping soundly. Hilda’s lips moved in a whisper. “You sleep as long as you can, honey. Hilda’s here to watch over you.”

Back in the kitchen, Hilda glanced at the table and saw bread crumbs and a small puddle of coffee. “Men!” she huffed. “They’re all alike! What they call clean, no self-respecting sow hog would tolerate!”

Moments later, as Hilda was finishing her own cleanup job on the cupboard, she heard a high-pitched wail. She dropped the wet cloth and hurried down the hall.

Pamela was tossing and turning on the bed, gritting her teeth; then she called out her husband’s name.

Hilda leaned over her and took hold of her hand. “Honey, Dwight’s gone to work. Is it real bad?”

Pamela stiffened, then opened her eyes and managed a slight smile. “Oh. Hi, Hilda.” Her breath came in puffs from her exertion. “Yes. It’s the contractions. I...I think maybe they’re the real thing.”

Hilda sat down on the edge of the bed. “Let’s not panic, honey. Let’s see what they do for a while. Back hurting?”

Pamela nodded. "Down low, as usual."

"I know. It's been forty-two years since I bore my last child, but I sure do remember the back pain."

Pamela's face twisted, and tears surfaced. "Oh, Hilda, I hope the baby isn't going to come now. It's too early!"

"Now, now, honey. Let's not borrow trouble. Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Thirsty?"

"Yes."

"I'll get you some water. Be right back."

Hilda returned shortly, and Pamela drained the cup.

"Do you want more?"

"No. Not right now. That's fine. Thank you."

Hilda pulled up a chair beside the bed and sat down. "If you get hungry, you just tell me. You need to eat so you can keep up your strength."

"Maybe in a little while," Pamela said. She groaned through clenched teeth and drew her knees up for a moment.

Hilda watched the young expectant mother carefully. Pamela was right. Most babies who come this early don't make it.

The older woman began to relax when Pamela was quiet for a time, then suddenly a cry escaped Pamela's lips.

Hilda stood up and gripped Pamela's hand. "Is it bad, honey?"

"Y-e-s...bad," Pamela said through gritted teeth. The baby pushed hard against her once more, and Pamela jerked, then stiffened, gasping, "Hurts, Hilda."

She stiffened again, her breaths coming in short, raspy gasps. When the pains finally eased, she said through dry lips, "Water, Hilda, please."

As Hilda helped her drink, she said, "Honey, I'm thinking

we'd better get you to the hospital. I think this labor is real. You hang on, and I'll run over and get Tom. He'll hitch up the horses, and we'll get you to town in a hurry."

At Mile High Hospital, receptionist Madge Landis was in conversation with orderly Dirk Jacobs when her eyes shifted to an elderly man hurrying through the front door. Dirk heard the man's hoarse breathing and pivoted around, then rushed toward him.

"Is there a problem, sir?" he asked.

The silver-haired man sucked hard for air, "My name is Tom Walz. My wife and I live on the west side of town. We have a neighbor lady who's about to give birth to her first baby. She's only in her seventh month. My wife's with her outside in our wagon. Dr. Matthew Carroll is her doctor."

"What's her name, sir?" Dirk asked.

"Pamela Moreland."

Dirk turned and said, "Madge, get Alex. Tell him to bring a cart. See if Dr. Carroll is available. If not, we need a doctor to deliver Mrs. Moreland's baby."

Madge nodded, and headed for the hallway as Tom Walz followed the husky orderly through the door.

Dr. Matthew Carroll's head came up when Madge Landis rushed through the open door of his office and skidded to a halt in front of his desk. "Dr. Carroll, Pamela Moreland was just brought in by a neighbor. She's in labor."

"But she's not due for another two months!"

"I know, Doctor. Dirk and Alex are wheeling her to the delivery room. She's in a lot of pain."

Rounding the desk, he paused. "Do you know where Breanna is?"

“Yes. I saw her go into room seven with Stefanie Langan. They’re working on an elderly patient together.”

“Please go get her. Breanna’s delivered more babies in her traveling work than any nurse in this hospital, and I know she’s handled lots of premature births. I want her with me.”

“All right, Doctor,” Madge said over her shoulder as she took off down the hall.

As Dr. Carroll approached the delivery room, he saw head nurse Mary Donelson holding the door while an orderly moved past her with an empty cart. As Carroll drew near, she said, “I assume you’ll want Breanna to assist you.”

“Yes, Mary,” he said, without breaking stride. “I’ve already sent for her.”

“Good. If you need more help, I’ll get another nurse or stay myself.”

“I’ll let you know if I need more help,” he said over his shoulder. “Thank you.”

Dirk Jacobs was standing by Pamela Moreland, who lay on the delivery table. She was obviously in a great deal of pain. Carroll immediately took hold of her arm and squeezed it gently as he said to Dirk, “Who brought her in?”

“Neighbors. They’ve gone after her husband, but he’s working several miles away. It’ll be a while before he gets here.”

Carroll nodded, then looked down at his patient. “Pamela, I have nurse Breanna Brockman on her way. She’s the very best and quite experienced in delivering babies. She’ll be at my side every minute to help. You try to relax while I get my hands washed.”

Dirk leaned over Pamela and said, “You and the baby are in good hands, ma’am.”

Pamela nodded, her face distorted by a grimace.

Dirk excused himself and stepped aside as Breanna rushed through the door.

She gave the orderly a quick smile and went to stand beside her brother-in-law. "I came as fast as I could."

"We've got us a seventh-month baby to deliver."

"Yes. Madge told me."

"Let's get washed up."

Breanna leaned over the young woman, whose face was beaded with sweat. "Mrs. Moreland, I'm Breanna Brockman. I'm going to help Dr. Carroll with your baby's delivery. And believe me, you've got the best doctor in the country."

Tension mounted as Dr. Matthew Carroll and nurse Breanna Brockman went to work. It took only minutes to discover they were in a serious struggle to bring about a successful delivery.

When a half hour had passed and the contractions were coming on top of one another, yet the baby had not begun to show signs of coming from the womb, doctor and nurse realized they were in a desperate situation.

It was a warm summer day, and though the windows of the delivery room were open, there was little air stirring. Perspiration poured down the faces of Matt and Breanna as they worked.

Pamela, too, was perspiring heavily. Breanna gave her continual encouragement, telling her what she could do to help them. Suddenly, Pamela stiffened and arched her neck, making a gagging sound. Her body began to jerk and spasm uncontrollably.

Breanna cupped Pamela's face in her hands and said, "Doctor! She's going into convulsion!"

Carroll raised his head and blinked against the sweat in his

eyes. “The baby’s breech, Breanna. You’ll have to take over here. I know you’ve done these before.”

Breanna took the doctor’s place, and he went to Pamela’s side to keep her from swallowing her tongue.

Dr. Carroll was intent on his task and was unaware that the baby had been brought forth until he heard Breanna emit a tiny whine, and he took a moment to look up. The baby was a deep blue color and lay limply in Breanna’s hands. It was a girl.

“Is she all right, Breanna?”

Tears filled Breanna’s eyes as she shook her head and said in a low tone, “She... she was breathing at first, but she died in my hands.”

Pamela’s convulsion was over, and she was semiconscious. The doctor watched Breanna carry the baby to a nearby bassinet and lay down the lifeless little form, covering it with a small blanket.

With tears still rolling down her cheeks, Breanna returned to the table to stand beside Dr. Carroll. Pamela Moreland was unresponsive to anything going on around her.

Matt led Breanna away from the table and said, “We both knew the baby’s chances were slim, Breanna...even before we knew she would be breech. You’re not blaming yourself, now, are you?”

Breanna shook her head. “No. When I saw how blue she was, I knew her little lungs simply weren’t ready to leave her mother’s womb. She would have died, even if you had delivered her.”

“I’m glad to hear you say it because that is exactly so. Now let’s clean Pamela up. I’d like for you to stay until she comes to and I tell her that the baby did not survive.”

“Of course,” Breanna said, wiping her tears. “You watch her, I’ll do the cleaning up.”



When Pamela came to and was clear-minded, Breanna stood beside Dr. Carroll as he told the young mother that her baby had died only seconds after birth. As Pamela wept, Breanna bent over her and said all she could to give her comfort. Once the mother's initial shock had subsided, Dr. Carroll explained about her convulsion, and that he was busy trying to save her life while Breanna did the delivery. He made it clear that the baby's premature birth was what brought on her death. She simply had not been ready to leave the womb.

Dr. Carroll took his patient's hand and said, "Pamela, if I had been free to do the delivery, your baby still would have died. Babies in the womb become stronger during those last eight weeks, and they gain a great deal of their birth weight. Those last few weeks in the womb are also essential to build strength in the lungs so the baby can breathe on its own. Your little girl was born too early and didn't have that opportunity."

"I understand, Doctor," Pamela said weakly. She looked up at Breanna. "I know you did all you could, ma'am. Thank you for doing your very best to save her."

Breanna leaned down and kissed Pamela's forehead.

The door opened and Stefanie Langan came in. As she approached the table where Pamela lay, she glanced at the bassinet and saw the blanket that covered the little body.

"It's a girl," said Dr. Carroll. "She didn't make it."

"Oh," Stefanie said softly. "I wanted to see if there was anything I could do to help. I'm so sorry."

Dr. Carroll asked Stefanie to stay with Pamela until he sent the orderlies to take her to her room.

About an hour later, receptionist Madge Landis looked up from her desk to see a man rush through the door. He stopped

in front of her and said, “Ma’am, I’m Dwight Moreland. My wife was brought in about three hours ago to deliver our baby. Do you know if the baby’s been born?”

Madge swallowed hard. “Mrs. Moreland is in room nineteen, sir. When you reach the hall, turn left.”

Dwight ran down the hall, his head swiveling from side to side as he checked the room numbers.

When he came to room nineteen, the door was closed. Without breaking stride, he shoved it open to find Pamela weeping while nurse Stefanie Langan stood over her. Stefanie said to Pamela, “This must be Dwight.”

The sight of her husband caused Pamela to break into sobs. Dwight rushed to her side and cupped her face in his hands. “Honey, are you all right? Where’s the baby? Is it a boy or a girl?”

“The baby’s dead, Dwight. It’s a girl, but she’s dead.”

Dwight turned to Stefanie. “What happened?”

“It couldn’t be avoided,” said Stefanie. “She was born too early.”

Dwight’s features reddened. “Was Dr. Carroll in charge of the delivery?”

“Yes.”

“I want to talk to him. Where is he?”

“I don’t know,” said Stefanie. “Go down the hall the other way until you come to the nurses’ station. Ask the nurses there. They’ll know where he is.”

Dwight bent over and held Pamela close for a long moment, telling her he was sorry about the baby. When he released her, he said, “I’ll be back after I talk to Dr. Carroll, honey.”

The grieving father hurried down the hall. When he

reached the nurses' station, the oldest of the three nurses said, "May I help you, sir?"

"I'm Dwight Moreland. My baby died in delivery. I want to talk to Dr. Carroll."

"Dr. Carroll is doing emergency surgery at the moment, Mr. Moreland. I'm head nurse, Mary Donelson. I'll take you to your wife's room, and—"

"I've already been there, ma'am. I want to know what happened...why my baby died. I know premature babies don't always live, but I'd like to know exactly why my baby died. Do you have any idea how soon I can talk to Dr. Carroll?"

"There's no way to tell. Would it help if you could talk to the nurse who assisted him?"

"Yes, it would."

"All right. Come and sit down in my office, and I'll find nurse Breanna Brockman for you."

Dwight entered Mary's office but could only pace the floor and sleeve away tears while he waited for the nurse.

When Mary came back, there was a blonde woman with her. "Mr. Moreland," Mary said, "this is Mrs. Brockman. She can answer any questions you have."

Breanna moved up to him. "Mr. Moreland, please accept my deepest sympathy in your loss. I know you are hurting, but you must be thankful that Pamela is still with us. We came close to losing her, too."

"What? She didn't tell me that."

"Come, sit down," said Breanna. "I'll explain exactly what happened. If you have questions, I'll try to answer them for you."

A shaky Dwight Moreland sat down on a straight-backed wooden chair, and Breanna sat on an identical one in front of

him. Mary circled her desk and sat down behind it, not wanting to leave Breanna alone with the distraught man.

Dwight listened as Breanna carefully told the story, giving every detail. When he heard her say that she had actually delivered the baby while the doctor was laboring over Pamela in the midst of her convulsion, his whole body stiffened.

“The baby was a deep blue color, Mr. Moreland,” said Breanna. “She only lived a few seconds after I brought her forth. Her lungs had not developed enough for her to breathe outside the womb. I—”

“Wait a minute!” cut in Dwight, his face flushed. “You’re telling me that you delivered my daughter? You’re not a doctor! You’re only a nurse! Why didn’t Dr. Carroll deliver her?”

Flustered by the man’s reaction, Breanna said, “I just explained it, sir. Your wife could very well have died while having the convulsion. Dr. Carroll saved her life. He could hardly tend to her and deliver the baby, too.”

Dwight’s eyes riveted Breanna, the pale hazel contrasting with the flush of his face. “Why wasn’t another doctor called in?” he raged. “Nurses aren’t qualified to handle what you did! It’s your fault my baby died!”

Breanna stood up. Her lips quivered as she said levelly, “Mr. Moreland, I did everything possible to save the baby’s life. Even Dr. Carroll said the baby’s death was not my fault. He said if he had undertaken to deliver her, she still would have died. And as for calling in another doctor, we didn’t have time to leave mother or baby. Every second counted.”

Dwight jumped up from the chair and swung a fist through the air. “A lot of good every second did with your blundering! You should never have been entrusted with bringing our baby into the world! Now she’s dead, and it’s all your fault!”

Breanna's face pinched and she struggled to hold back tears. She was trying to find her voice when Mary Donelson stepped up to him and said, "Mr. Moreland, I know you're upset, understandably so, because your baby died at birth. But you have no cause and no right to speak to Breanna this way. As she told you, Dr. Carroll said the baby would have died even if he had delivered her. Now, you just calm down."

"Calm down?" he blared. "My baby's dead, isn't she? And who was given the job of delivering her? This woman! She is not a doctor and had no business doing it!"

"What's going on here?" came the deep voice of Dirk Jacobs from the doorway.

"This is Mrs. Moreland's husband," spoke up Mary. "He's blaming Breanna for the baby's death."

A scowl captured Dirk's square face. "How can he do that? Everybody on duty in this hospital knows it wasn't Breanna's fault. The baby was simply born too early."

Dwight stomped up to the man who stood a head taller than himself. "Oh yeah? What do you know about it? You're just a cart pusher!"

Dirk saw the lines of inward pain in Breanna's face. Inching closer to the angry man, he said, "You're out of line, mister! Now you get quiet!"

Dwight's jaw jutted and the fire of his temper grew hotter. "Don't tell me what I am, pal! And I don't have to get quiet!" As he spoke, he stabbed Dirk's chest with stiff fingers. "My baby's dead, and this woman is to blame!"

Dirk's powerful right hand caught Dwight's fingers in a grip of steel. Squeezing hard enough to make him suck air through his teeth, Dirk said, "Now, you calm down. Breanna is more experienced at delivering babies than any nurse in this hospital. And we will all speak for her ability."

Dwight winced in pain and said, “But...she...isn’t a doctor, and she...shouldn’t have been...delivering...my baby.”

Dirk squeezed harder. “Just calm down, I said. Why don’t you keep your judgment to yourself till you can talk to Dr. Carroll?”

Mary and Breanna saw Matt Carroll angling across the hall from the nurses’ station. Two nurses had alerted him as he came out of the surgical ward.

“He can talk to me right now, Dirk,” said Carroll, drawing up. “Dwight, the nurses have overheard what’s been said in here, and you must lay hold on your temper. I understand you’re accusing Nurse Brockman, saying it was her fault your baby died at birth. Is this correct?”

Dirk still held Dwight’s fingers in a steel grip. Through gritted teeth, Dwight said, “Would you make this ape let go of me?”

“You gonna settle down and act decent?” Dirk said.

Dwight nodded.

When Dirk released him, Dwight rubbed his fingers.

“Mr. Moreland,” Carroll said, “there was absolutely no mishandling of the delivery by Nurse Brockman...and for you to accuse her of it is dead wrong. The baby died because she came too early. Her lungs were not developed enough to live outside the womb. Now, you’ve got to understand that and act appropriately.”

“Okay, okay,” said Dwight, still showing temper. “I’m going to Pamela. She needs me.” With that, he shoved his way between the doctor and the orderly, paused long enough to give Breanna an accusing look, then hurried down the hall.

Breanna covered her face with her hands and trembled as she wept.

“Don’t let him get to you, little sis,” Matt said as he laid a

tender hand on her shoulder. “He’ll get over it when he has time to cool down. Nothing’s changed. You are not to blame for the baby’s death.”

Breanna took her hands from her face and blinked against the tears. “Thank you,” she said quietly.

Matt squeezed her shoulder. “You’re the best, Breanna. They don’t come any better than you.”

“We all feel that way, honey,” said Mary.

“We sure do,” said one of the nurses standing at the office door.

“And if it means anything, coming from a cart pusher,” Dirk said with a chuckle, “I believe you’re the best, too.”

Breanna smiled. “Cart pushers are very important people around here. It means plenty coming from you.”

Mary gave her a quick squeeze and said, “Honey, I’m not telling you anything you don’t know, but I’ll say it anyhow. What you just experienced is one of the prices you have to pay for being a nurse.”

Breanna thumbed more tears from her cheeks. “I know. But sometimes it gets pretty tough.”

“But it’s still worth it, isn’t it?” asked her brother-in-law, Dr. Carroll.

“Of course,” she said, then drew a deep breath. “Well, we have patients who need us. Let’s get back to them.”