

Contents

BOOK I

	PAGE
Chapter One	11
Chapter Two	18
Chapter Three	28
Chapter Four	35
Chapter Five	41
Chapter Six	48
Chapter Seven	54
Chapter Eight	59
Chapter Nine	64
Chapter Ten	74
Chapter Eleven	79
Chapter Twelve	88
Chapter Thirteen	93

BOOK II

INTERLUDE

Chapter Fourteen	97
Chapter Fifteen	102
Chapter Sixteen	108
Chapter Seventeen	115
Chapter Eighteen	121

	PAGE
Chapter Nineteen	127
Chapter Twenty	133
Chapter Twenty-one	141
Chapter Twenty-two	147
Chapter Twenty-three	153
Chapter Twenty-four	159
Chapter Twenty-five	164
Chapter Twenty-six	169

BOOK III

Chapter Twenty-seven	175
Chapter Twenty-eight	184
Chapter Twenty-nine	188

Chapter One

MOST READY, HALF-PINT?"

The small nurse at the desk looked up from the report she was filling out, and smiled at the young man who was leaning over the high counter that enclosed the tenth-floor office.

"Just a moment, Andy. I've got to take these down to Dr. Schaeffer. Then I'm through. I'll meet you at the elevator."

He watched her as she hurried down the hall, then turned to the white-haired woman at the desk.

"Does she never get tired, Waters? She never walks if she can run, and she'd never run if she could fly."

The older nurse laughed. "She's so full of the joy of living that she can hardly keep her feet on the ground. We're going to miss her when you take her away, Dr. Lewis."

"I need her worse than you do. Anyway, I spoke for her first," he said with a grin. "She's so little and so mighty! It's sort of invigorating to us jaded oldsters just to watch her swish those starchy white skirts down the hall. Her brothers and I used to call her Miss Biggety. Well, so long, Waters! We're off for dinner on a dune. Wish you could come along."

"You do *not*. And neither do I. I'm too old to enjoy my meals served up with sand and chiggers. And I'm smart enough not to want to be a third party when you and Kay are together on a moonlight drive. You just run along without me. I love you both, but not that much."

He was waiting when Kay stepped from the elevator, and they hurried down the hall and out the ambulance entrance.

Then hand in hand they ran down the block to the lot where the doctor's car was parked. Inside the shabby coupe he kissed her quickly before he started the engine.

"Hey, you!" she protested. "That's not allowed. We said no love-making when on duty."

"I'm off duty now, and so are you. And nobody saw us except those two draggled sparrows on the wire yonder. They look half-asleep and completely disinterested. Now, where do we go from here? We'll have to buy some makin's if we dine on a dune."

"To my apartment, Jeems! I have it all in the refrigerator. I bought it last night when Jan and I were shopping. There's everything there from soup to nuts."

"Let's leave the soup behind. It might present problems. And let's eat the nuts as we drive. I am so hungry I could eat turnip greens."

At the apartment which she shared with three other nurses, Kay packed the sandwiches, salad, and a small pie into a hamper while Andy filled the thermos jug with a cold drink, and washed and wrapped the grapes and peaches. Then they were back in the car, and in a few minutes were mingling with the traffic which rolled unceasingly along the broad drive. On their right rose the broken skyline of the busy city. On their left the lake sparkled in the late afternoon sunshine. Overhead the sky was blue, and a warm breeze came through the car window, tossing Kay's curls.

"My hair will be a mess by the time we get home," she said, brushing it from her eyes. "But I love it when the wind blows like this. And I love the lake when the sun is getting low and the little waves are dancing. And I love that love song you are whistling under your breath!"

"A love song? What was I whistling, miss? I'd really like to have you name it."

"I can't. I never heard it before. But it was a love song, I know. I could tell by its 'atmosphere.' Nothing but a love song could be so—so—poignantly sweet. Right?"

"I wasn't thinking of what I was doing, but I guess this was it, wasn't it?"

He whistled a few bars, and then at her nod of assent he said, "That is a love song, but not the kind you think. There aren't any English words to it, though I have often tried to write some. It is an expression of what Jesus in all His loveliness means to a black fellow who has been released from the power of the demons that had control of his life. David wrote it and you should hear him sing it!"

"It's beautiful, and before long I hope to hear him sing it. Oh, Andy, do you realize that in a couple of months, maybe before, we'll be there?"

"No, I can't realize it, though I go to sleep every night to dream of it, and wake up every morning to think of it all day long. Even while I was operating this morning the thought was still there. 'Kay and Dad, Kay and Dad.' I'm saying it in my subconscious mind, no matter what else I'm doing. Poor Dad is getting so tired waiting. The old house on the hill needs a woman's hand in it. He can't get used, though, to thinking of you as a woman. He still thinks of you as the thirteen-year-old he knew when he was home the last time. He's going to get a shock when you start running his lab."

"I shan't run anything," she protested. "I'll be just a nurse there, the same as I am at Brainard. Waters says a nurse's first duty is obedience. And when I'm on duty, the Drs. Lewis will find me a *most* obedient helper. When I'm off duty—"

"That's where the funny business will come in. You'll do as you please and make the Drs. Lewis like it!"

"Well, if they like it, so will I, and everybody will be happy."

"You said it! Happy! Happier than I thought I ever could be. You and Dad and I working together in the little mud-walled hospital. That is all the Heaven I want for a good many years."

The sun was fiery in the West, and the clouds about it were

ablaze when they spread their food on a cloth on the clean, white sand. As they ate, they chatted of affairs in the hospital, of their plans for the soon severance of that relationship, of the weeks of preparation that lay ahead, then a short period of deputation work for Andy while Kay went home to prepare for the wedding. That would be the last thing before they left, so that the ocean trip could be their honeymoon. They talked of the news from their homes, hers in the southern part of the state, and his on an African hilltop.

As they cleared the dishes and packed them in the hamper, Andy hummed again the haunting tune that had come from the heart of black David. Then they sat side by side on the sandy slope of the tallest dune and watched the moon rise over the lake. He told her again the things that lay close to his heart and his plans for their work together.

"Dad wrote last week that it will be the proudest day of his life when he can say to the waiting nurses, 'Dr. Andy will operate today.' I feel the same way about the day I hand over his daughter to receive his blessing. He will probably come to meet us and make the trip inland with us. We always enjoy the reactions of the newcomer to the sights and sounds of Africa. And to the smells! Africa has a smell all its own, and you'll never forget it."

"What are the sights and sounds that are so unique?"

"If we go by ship, we will have to make a long trip by boat up the river. And I mean *long*. You will begin to think that you are going to spend the rest of your life on that slow-moving stream. It seems to just slide along between the green banks. Sometimes it goes through deep forests where the trees hang low over the water, and the monkeys and birds chatter in the branches. And again it goes through the plains where the jungle grasses grow high and hide the animals that slink among them. Once in a while you'll see a snake festooned from a limb, or a hippo taking a bath. And always there's the hot sun by day and the deep, star-studded sky by night. It's wonderful!"

"It sounds thrilling! But if I get frightened by it all, you'll stay close, won't you?"

"So—o—o close like a leach. And Dad will be there, and David, as well as the boys that run the launch and do the cooking. I think Dad will bring Nellie Brady with him, too. In fact, next time I write I'll ask him to do that if she can arrange to be away at the same time he is. Then you won't be the only woman on board."

"Who is Nellie Brady?"

"Senior nurse. The only white nurse at the hospital. She's a honey! She must be older than Dad, and she's still going strong. She has trained all the other nurses on the staff. Some of the younger nurses were born there, and have come back twenty years later to help Nellie, and to train for service themselves. Oh, Nellie Brady is an institution there, one we couldn't operate without. She and David are essential, as essential as—as aspirin is to Dr. Clark!"

They both laughed as they thought of the jovial old physician who believed wholeheartedly in the virtues of aspirin. Then Kay returned to the questioning of which she never seemed to tire.

"How is David essential? Is he a nurse, too?"

"No, he's the hospital pastor. Maybe I should call him the chaplain. By the time we get up in the morning every day of the entire year, the patients are coming in. Some of them have walked miles through the jungle. They come down the paths leading to the hospital, some limping, some almost crawling, and some 'borne of four.' They have to wait their turn in orderly fashion. David sees to that. As they wait in the shade of the porch or under the trees, he reads Scripture to them. They love it. The ones who can't read are fascinated by the reading. And those who have been taught are proud as punch when David lets them read. Then he moves among them, telling the Gospel story, praying with them, bolstering up the courage of the frightened ones, 'doing the work of an evangelist' in his own way. And it's a great way! I believe

David has won more souls than any other worker on the station."

"Is he an old man?"

"About forty, I think. He was about eighteen when he was saved. I can barely remember it. He suffered a lot of persecution after that. His wife and two children died, poisoned we all thought. But we couldn't prove it. There's more poisoning done in Africa than anyone dreams of. The blacks know of and use poisons that the scientists and physicians have never heard about. Twice David was carried off into the jungle and tortured and left to die. But each time he managed to get back, and the last time he brought one of his captors with him—brought him back and won him to the Lord. He's a prince of a fellow, David is! He made that song the week after his wife died. It came, as my father once said, from a heart heavy with sorrow but glorying in sins forgiven. He has a grand-opera voice, and when he sings that song—"

Andy's voice broke as he drew in a long breath.

"You'll see them all soon, Kay—Nellie, David, Meteke, the blind evangelist, and Dad. You'll love them all, and boy, oh, boy! how they'll love you! Oh, you're going to have a grand time as a missionary, honey."

"I'm sure of that. I'll have a grand time any place as your wife, Andy. There's something else I was thinking about today. Are you *sure* we won't have to stop in Belgium? I do hope we can go right to the field."

"The way that has worked out is a modern miracle. Dr. Vansteenbergh spent an hour with the consul this morning. It looks like it's all clear. If I weren't African born, and if Dad were not so highly regarded, and if we hadn't studied tropical diseases under Dr. Van himself, and if we couldn't speak French, we'd have to go to Belgium. But all the red tape of three countries has been cut for our special benefit. I hope you appreciate that. And I hope also you appreciate all the hours I've spent teaching you to speak French as she is spoke! And as she is wrote!"

"I do appreciate all that. I think it is a modern miracle that the Board accepted me at all. And to get us through on this special toboggan, zooming us right past Belgium, is something extra special in the way of miracles. But the thing that is the biggest miracle and fills my mind to the near exclusion of anything else, is the fact that after loving you to distraction for eighteen years I've caught you at last, and you're really mine!"

"I sure am."

He stood up and drew her to him. He held her close for a minute, then they ran for the car. The real significance of her remark failed to register on his happy brain.

Chapter Two

AFTER LOVING YOU for eighteen years."

The words sang themselves over and over in Andrew Lewis' mind as he drove back to his room after leaving Kay at her own door.

"After loving you for eighteen years."

Why, that would mean that she had loved him ever since that day long ago when he had first met her and her brothers in the front yard at Grandpa's farm. Could a six-year-old girl give her love to a boy, and steadfastly maintain that devotion for so many years? He doubted it, though he had to admit that she had been his devoted, and often abused, little slave from that first day.

What a funny little pigtailed mite she had been! And how abashed he had been by her open championship of his cause when her brothers had "ganged up" against him. He laughed to himself as the whole incident returned to his memory from the niche in his brain where it had lain hidden through the intervening years.

He had been a very lonely little boy as he had perched on the fence and watched Grandpa's two white roosters fight for the supremacy of the barnyard. In the house Mother and Grandma were doing the breakfast dishes and trying to tell everything that had happened since they had last been together. On the porch behind the screening trumpet vine, Dad and Grandpa were sitting more quietly. Occasionally he could hear

their voices in conversation, but often there would be long intervals of silence. He guessed that Dad and Grandpa felt just as he and Dad did when they sat together on the porch at home and didn't talk. Folks didn't need to talk when each knew how the other felt—happy just to be together.

The only person who wasn't happy was himself. He didn't like this trip to America at all. He felt strange and uncomfortable on this farm which was not at all like the home in Africa. And he could not feel happy at being kissed and talked about by all these people who seemed to have the right to do it. Until yesterday Grandpa and Grandma and a lot of aunts and uncles had been in the same class as the people in his books, very interesting but very unreal. He had heard quotations from their letters, and at Christmases and birthdays there had been boxes with gifts in them. But he had never thought of them as real people like Dad and Mother and Nellie and David. He wished he and Mother and Daddy could go back quickly across the ocean to the safe home on the edge of the jungle where everything was nice and comfortable, and he knew all the people. He wished he could take off these new clothes and go out and play with Samuel in his old shorts and sneakers. He thought of what Daddy had told him when they left home—that they would be away a year and a half. How long was that? He wished he knew how many days there were left. They had been away a long time now. Was a year and a half much longer?

In his pocket were acorns he had picked up from under a tree in the yard. He wondered if he could hit the gatepost. One of his and Samuel's favorite games was tossing pebbles at a mark. He had better keep in practice so that he could beat Samuel when he got back. Hitting the gatepost had not proved easy. The acorns did not have enough weight to be good missiles. So he had slid from the fence, picked up a green apple that lay on the ground, and had thrown it with all his seven-year-old strength. To his amazement he had seen it land against the stomach of a boy about his own size. It

could not have hurt much for, as Andy remembered it now, the boy wasted no time in self-commiseration, but immediately picked up the apple and threw it back, then both he and a larger boy reached for clods and prepared for battle. Andy had not meant to hit anyone. He had not seen the strangers as they came out of the woods across the road. Their sudden appearance, his chance hit, and their quick retaliation so surprised him that he stood in shocked immobility, realizing they were going to attack but he was helpless to defend himself. Then, quick as a flash, across the road darted a little pigtailed fury. She flung herself against him, turning to scream at the boys.

"Don't you hit him! Don't you dare hit him!"

"We will too! Get away from him!"

"I won't."

"Then we'll hit you!"

"No, you won't. You know what Daddy'd do if you did. Here he comes now!"

The boys had turned guiltily as she spoke, and when they saw their father come down the woods path, they dropped the clods and sauntered casually toward Andy and the little girl. Daddy had seen the man and had run down the steps to greet him joyfully, the way Andy felt he would greet David when they got back to Africa.

"Come here, boys," said the newcomer. "I want you to meet this fellow. You can call him your Uncle Tom, I guess. He's the chap I played most with when I was your age. These are my boys, Tom, and this disreputable-looking little hoyden is my only daughter."

Andy had been introduced, and then the four children had adjourned to the lot back of the big log building that Grandpa called "the old house." Here they prepared to continue the argument that had been interrupted.

"You shan't fight him!" Kay insisted. "It's not fair for two to fight one."

"Just don't you worry," Andy had insisted, wishing she

would mind her own business. "I can lick both of them if they'll come one at a time."

"What makes you think so?" bristled the bigger boy.

"I don't think so. I *know* so. You keep away till I lick him and then I'll lick you."

His heart was pounding and his hands were cold, but he would not back down now, and when his opponent approached him he met him halfway. He wondered now, almost twenty years later, how that fight would have come out. But he would never know, for it was stopped before it began. Again the little girl was between them, and although her brothers ordered her away with dire threats of what would happen to her when they got home, she maintained her stand, and the prospective combatants grew weary of arguing with her. The fight was given up in favor of a trip to the creek to catch "crawdads."

The year that had threatened to be long and lonely had flown as if on wings as the three boys had played together in the woods and along the creek, or trudged to the schoolhouse at the crossroads. America and Grandpa's farm had become places of high adventure, and Andy's erstwhile antagonists his inseparable companions and friends. Always with them, in spite of their pleadings and commands to the contrary, was Kay, her pigtails bobbing and her face flushed with the effort of keeping up.

They snubbed her, they bullied her, they tried bribing her. Nothing availed. She was always with them, and whenever possible, at Andy's side. He had felt pretty silly about it and wished she would go away and leave him alone. Harry and Ray had teased him and he had hated it. But nothing daunted Kay. Even at school she was his champion, in spite of the fact that he did not need or want a champion. At last he ceased to be disturbed, and accepted her as a necessary evil. She cried so hard the day he left that she became sick, and embarrassed him in front of all the grown-ups. He was almost glad to be going away to be rid of her.

It had been even worse on the next furlough. She had

been scrawny and freckle-faced, with braces on her teeth, and a mop of hair that always needed combing. He must have been more adroit in those days, for he often managed to evade her. There were times, however, when there were quarrels that he could still remember. He thought now, with a twinge of conscience, that it must have seemed hard to the girl to be continually left behind. All she wanted was to go along and enjoy the fun, and all that they wanted was to get away from her. Her mother usually had settled the argument, and a sulky, disappointed little girl had been kept at home. Andy felt remorseful over this memory. How could he ever not have wanted Kay with him? He would make it all up to her some day!

That was the last time Dad and Mother had been back to America. When next he came, he was entering college. Dad was alone in the house on the hill, and in the little cemetery where he had often helped cut the grass on the graves of the little brothers and sisters, there was a new grave where he and Dad had prayed together the night before he left.

He was a lonesome and homesick freshman that evening in September when he attended the reception for new students. He had reached America just in time for the opening of school and hadn't even seen Grandpa and Grandma yet. Somehow he didn't want to see them or go back to the farm where two happy furloughs had been spent. That part of his life was gone. Ahead of him stretched eight dreary years of study. He hadn't wanted to come. He had wanted to stay with Dad and let him teach him how to be a doctor.

It was silly that Dad, who was the best doctor in the world, should not be considered able to teach his son enough to enable him to practice with him there at the mission station. Rather than come off here he'd have chosen to stay on at the hospital and help in any way he could. Nellie Brady could have given him nurses' training, or he could have taught in the native schools. But neither the Board nor Dad would consider it. If he worked there, he must prepare. He was

too old to stay on as a child. He must get ready for a man's life. So he had come. But his heart had stayed behind in the Congo.

He went through what seemed an endless reception line. He heard the names of the teachers under whom he would study. Then he was taken under the wing of an upperclassman and introduced to other newcomers. He hardly heard the names of either teachers or students, for his thoughts were too far away. At last, when the older youth turned for a moment to greet a friend, he seized the opportunity to escape from what was, to him, torture.

He slipped through a door and found himself out in the air, the warm, soft September that reminded him of evenings at home. He sat down on the top step and leaned against the pillar at his back. His lonesomeness and homesickness swept over him irresistibly. How *could* he endure it? It was a physical illness, a fever and a nausea that made him weak. All the grief he had felt at his mother's death swept back with intolerable ache. The separation from his father with its bitterness of feeling himself sent away from that beloved presence became a thing of poignant pain. He clenched his hands to try to still their shaking, but his teeth began to chatter, and he knew that he must get back to his room where he could be alone.

He had started to rise when the door behind him opened and there was the soft swish of long skirts across the porch.

"You're Andy Lewis, aren't you?" came a voice, low and a bit breathless as if its owner were nervous. "I saw you in there and thought I couldn't be mistaken. I've been looking for you."

"L—looking for me?" Who could be looking for him?

"Yes. I saw your name in the *News-caster* this morning. Pretty smart you are to get in the news the first week!"

He had noticed that the names of all students from foreign countries had been printed in the sheet, but he could not think who might be interested in him.

"You don't know me, do you?" the girl went on. "I'm Kay Putney!"

"Kay Putney!"

"None other."

"Miss Biggety?"

"Guilty."

"What are *you* doing here?" He started to laugh, then stopped and asked suspiciously, "How did you know I was coming here?"

"The conceit of you! I didn't know anything about you until I saw your name in the sheet. And I've just as much right here as you have. I'm going to college, Mr. Smarty."

"You—you aren't old enough."

"Oh, that's what *you* think."

"You're only sixteen. I know."

"Sure. Sixteen, but mighty smart! I skipped a grade."

"Teacher wanted to get rid of you?"

"Nope. Just so smart I was a hindrance to the rest of the class. So here I am."

She settled herself by him and went on to chatter of things down home. Gradually the tension seemed to go from him, and he leaned back in relaxation. He could not see her face, for the shade of the sugar maples by the walk held the porch in darkness. He wondered what the years could have done for her. She could have stood a lot of improvement, he thought, remembering the thin, freckle-faced girl who had made him miserable by her attentions.

"You see, I'm still chasing the boys," she laughed. "But I'm warning you now that this is the last time. Tonight is an exception. I promised Mom before I left home that I'd let the boys do the chasing."

"What if they don't chase?"

"I promised I'd still be a little lady."

"Humph!"

"How expressive! How complimentary! For that I'd like to bop you. But, being a lady, I can't."

"You chased me out here. Is that ladylike?"

"I told you tonight was an exception. You looked lonesome, and when I saw you sneak out I followed. I wanted to tell you how badly we all felt about your mother. I—I cried!"

"Thanks. She—she always liked you."

"She was sweet, and I know how you'll miss her. That's why I came out. I thought you'd be lonesome."

"I am—was."

"Thanks for changing the tense. That compliment offsets the other. It's the first one I've received since I came yesterday. Now won't you come in with me and get some of the best fruit punch you ever tasted. It's straight from Mt. Olympus, I think."

In the light of the reception room he stole a covert look at her and blinked twice to convince himself of reality. The years had indeed made a change. The freckles and braces were gone. Kay Putney was, he assured himself, easily the prettiest girl in the room. Later he amended that judgment to "in the school," and by the end of the first semester he confidently believed her the prettiest in the world.

At Christmas time he spent two weeks at the farm with Grandpa and Grandma, and renewed his friendship with Harry and Ray. For the first time since coming to college he really enjoyed himself. He began to believe that with Kay Putney in the same school, he might find his college years quite enjoyable after all.

All through the four years her friendship was a solid thing that he knew he could always depend on. There had been no talk or thought of a more serious relationship, for long ago he had decided that he would not marry an American girl and take her to the Congo. If he ever married he would choose one of the girls who came out to the field alone. There were plenty of them for, somehow, the young men seemed deaf to the call. He did not want to be responsible for what the Congo might do to a woman. Apparently Kay understood his attitude, for the friendship was a casual one on

both sides. Occasionally he had a mental picture of the future and Kay was at his side. But he put this away from him. She was a wonderful girl, a good friend, and he would always remember her. But she belonged in the gracious setting of a wealthy home in this land of plenty. He was dedicated to a needy place where life would always be hard.

It was pleasant, however, to have her here. And for four years they had studied and played together. Just a few weeks before commencement, the Foreign Missionary Fellowship had charge of chapel, and a veteran missionary who was having to retire because of approaching blindness, spoke to them of the needs of the mission fields of the world. Andy seemed to hear again his voice as he pleaded for volunteers to fill up the ranks on that battle front. His voice broke again and again as he told of the greatness of the need and the scarcity of workers. About twenty of the young people responded to the call, and the last one to go, when the old man had sat down and the choir was softly singing, "Anywhere with Jesus," was Kay—a subdued, white-faced Kay with tears streaming down her cheeks.

When they came out of chapel, Andy took her arm and led her down the walk, past the gym, and into the little park where the evergreen hedge hid them from view. They cut classes that day, but something more important than anthropology and science had to be considered between them. Even now, more than four years later, Dr. Andrew Lewis felt a thrill as he remembered that hour and how they knelt together for a few minutes by the park bench behind the shrubs before they went back to the world outside.

That summer Dad had refused to come home on furlough because there was no other doctor to take his place. It had been a good year on the farm, and Grandpa and Grandma had sent Andy back to Africa for a wonderful two months' visit. What a glorious time that had been! Dad's joy in his companionship was made greater by the knowledge that when Andy came the next time, Kay would be with him, and the

old house of sun-dried bricks would again have a mistress.

The next four years passed quickly to the young people. When one is in love, and the loved one is at hand, the time goes unnoted. To the tired, lonely doctor waiting in Africa and wondering if he would be there to greet them when they came, it was long. Kay had graduated from Brainard Hospital Nurses' School, and had stayed on for a year of laboratory work under Dr. Vansteenbergh, the Belgian specialist in tropical diseases. Andy had finished his medical course and interned at the same hospital. Brainard was the accepted medical center for several missionary boards, and always had on its staff one or two doctors who had served on a mission field. It was a highly regarded school for the training of young missionary doctors and nurses.

Now those years also were past. The future lay ahead, bright with promise. In a few months Dr. and Mrs. Andrew Lewis would sail for the Congo.

"That has a wonderful sound, 'Dr. and Mrs. Andrew Lewis,'" said Andy with a grin. "All right, Dad. Get the house ready. Dr. and Mrs. will be there before you know it!"