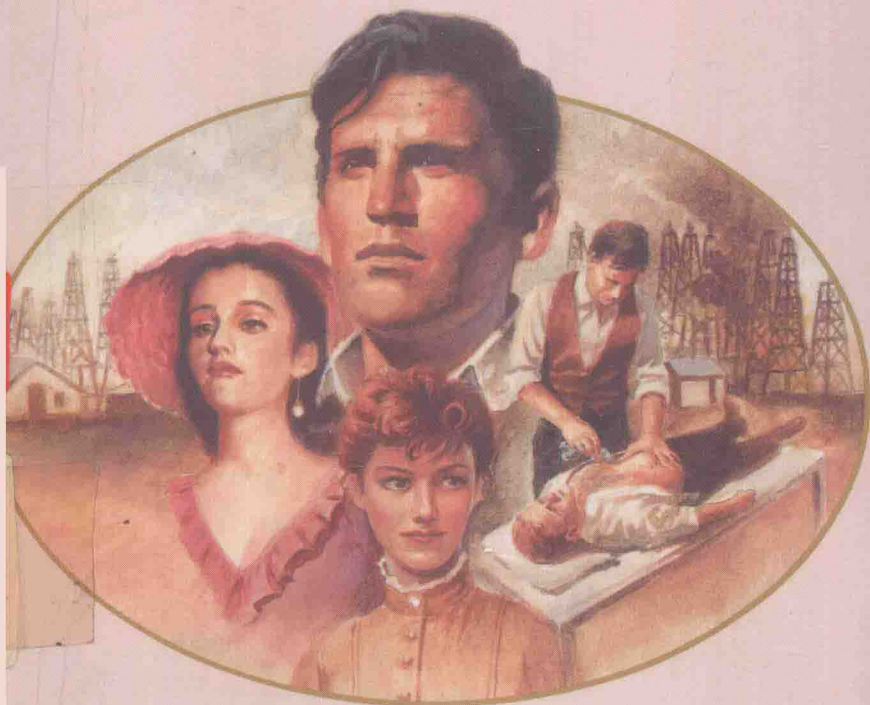


PURSUED BY MEMORIES OF HIS TRAGIC PAST AND BY A WOMAN WHO LOVES HIM DEEPLY, A FRONTIER DOCTOR IS SURPRISED BY A LOVE THAT OFFERS HEALING FOR HIS DEEPEST PAIN.

# TO MAKE THE BITTER SWEET

The Sequel to BEYOND THE DISTANT SHADOWS

PATRICIA DUNAWAY



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PATRICIA DUNAWAY



**BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS**

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55438

A Division of Bethany Fellowship, Inc.

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## CHAPTER 1



"Dr. Jarrett, it has come to my attention that your, um, discontentment with conditions here at Indian Camp hospital is causing some of the others, staff and patients alike, to be, um . . . discontented as well."

Adam Jarrett stared at the portly man who sat across from him. As chairman of the board, Jason Bledsoe was an important man. Adam knew that if he didn't say just the right things, his position at the hospital would be in jeopardy. But he could no more have stifled his reply than he could have stopped breathing. "Mr. Bledsoe, the word *discontented* is much too mild. Conditions here are intolerable."

"Intolerable for you as a doctor, you mean!" Mr. Bledsoe stated matter-of-factly, lowering his bushy brows in disapproval. He was almost bald, with a long, luxuriant brown beard reaching midchest.

"I can't deny working conditions here are the worst I've ever experienced, but that's not what I'm referring to—and you know it." Adam's black eyes probed, daring the man behind the massive dark oak desk to deny his statement.

Mr. Bledsoe couldn't deny it. He scowled and responded strongly, "We're doing the best we can with the funds available, and you should realize that, sir!"

Adam knew from the deepened tone of Mr. Bledsoe's voice that he was getting angry, but he continued. "Your best is pit-

ifully lacking. More than that, it's inhuman to treat sick people the way they're treated here."

"You were aware that this facility had certain . . . um, inadequacies when you decided to come here, Dr. Jarrett—"

"Mr. Bledsoe," he interrupted, "the population has grown from the original seven who arrived here in 1898 to sixty-two in the five years since, and there is no room for another bed anywhere. Two, sometimes three patients, are crowded into a tiny room not big enough for one. And to compound the problem, the incipient, advanced, and terminal cases are indiscriminately mingled together." Adam burst out of his maroon, velvet chair and placed both hands flat on the chairman's desk. He leaned forward slightly, trying to keep the anger he felt under control. "These conditions are a disgrace. These patients are heaving with disease, and there are no windows in the walls large enough for creatures of the wild to crawl through."

"Are you quite finished, Doctor?"

"No, as a matter-of-fact, I'm not. Has anyone told you about the hideous burns some patients suffered last winter? How some with the anesthetic form of Hansen's disease huddled so close to their small stoves they were burned and weren't even aware of it?"

"No one is saying leprosy isn't a horrible disease," Mr. Bledsoe said, attempting to defuse the powder keg before him. "But these things take time, and we—"

"My patients don't *have* time! Some of them are dying now, and they need better care than I'm allowed to give them."

Possibly feeling at a disadvantage because he was sitting down, Bledsoe pushed back his chair and stood. Unfortunately, he was a good five inches short of Adam's six feet. Nevertheless, he drew himself up to his full stature. "Sir, you force me to tell you that my colleagues on the board also question whether you are the man we need in this hospital."

"Really. Well, I wonder if your esteemed colleagues have any idea how far short this facility falls from living up to the name, hospital?" Adam asked, his face grim. "There is no adequate water supply, and often what we do have is abominably tainted. The so-called kitchen is a disgrace. There are no tubs for medicated baths, medical supplies are grossly insufficient, and I have no equipment to carry on the research that is vital if we

intend to beat this disease." He paused, recalling his own laboratory at Greenlea, all the supplies and books that had burned in the senseless fire those prejudiced maniacs had set. "Mr. Bledsoe, we don't even have surgical instruments!"

"Equipment like that is not easily come by," Mr. Bledsoe defended, his bushy brows lowered as though he felt they were a defense against Adam's onslaught.

"But do you have plans to supply us adequately?"

The blunt question had to be faced. "Dr. Jarrett, we are doing the best we can! Why, think of the generous contributions made last year—"

"As best as I can calculate, those 'contributions' consisted of mixed nuts, baseballs, cigars, rocking chairs, sofa pillows, harmonicas, firecrackers, a billiard table, guava preserves, garden seeds, and a subscription to the *Pittsburgh Star*."

"Now wait a minute! Those are all useful things, given by people who care about these poor lepers—"

"I'll not deny that they were nice things, but what we really need are medical supplies, capable nurses and doctors who want to change the deplorable conditions of those confined here!"

Mr. Bledsoe took a deep breath. "Dr. Jarrett, I have been given authority to terminate your position by the board if—"

"You mean fire me? Won't that be a little difficult, considering the fact that I volunteer my services?"

Mr. Bledsoe rubbed a hand over his perspiring head. "I feel, that is, we all agreed if you and I could not reach an amicable agreement—"

"Not likely."

"—that it would be best for all concerned if you were to cease to offer your services here," finished Bledsoe in a rush, as though he knew he must say the words quickly or they might not come out at all. His expression was tinged with apprehension as Adam stepped against the desk which divided the two men.

"And how do you propose to replace me?" Adam's words were dangerously quiet. "Hollis Freman is a fine doctor, but he is young and his practice in Planquemine is flourishing. You'll pardon me if I don't believe it will be easy to find a reputable physician willing to come to this godforsaken place."

"Almost anyone would be better than you," muttered Bledsoe as he edged toward the door. Whether he intended to show

Adam out or merely wanted some distance between them was a tossup. "You have constantly stirred up the patients—"

"Who should be aware of their rights—or their lack of them. Here, they have none, and they're made to suffer the most inhumane medical treatment—if you can grace it with that term."

"The sisters do a fine job," stated Mr. Bledsoe with conviction.

"That's right, they work very hard. I never meant to imply they don't, but it's not enough!"

"You don't have the slightest notion about the processes involved in administering a facility of this kind, Dr. Jarrett." The chairman opened the big double doors and escaped into the foyer, his relief comically obvious.

"It's you," Adam said, following him into the hall, "who don't have the slightest notion of what it takes to run a hospital for the benefit of the patients—you and that board, wielding its almighty power like a club." Fists clenched at his sides, black brows low over his black, piercing eyes, Adam stared hard at the man. "You might stand correct on one point: maybe I'm not the best man for the job."

"A colossal understatement," agreed Mr. Bledsoe under his breath. A great deal more loudly he added, "At any rate, as of the first of August—that's tomorrow—" he said pointedly, "we will no longer require your services."

Adam bit back the angry retort that rushed to his lips when he saw three sisters standing nearby, their heads turned in great interest at the conversation between him and Mr. Bledsoe. Without another word, he walked out of the stately old mansion, glad to be in the open air no matter how hot and moisture-laden it was. They'd had rain several times that week already, and the gray afternoon sky promised more.

Adam Jarrett walked slowly, almost aimlessly down the brick walkway, unaware of the heavy, sweet scent of magnolia and the lighter overtones of honeysuckle. He felt so alone, so far from his native New York. When he came to the low hedge intended to separate the "pure, untainted" likes of Mr. Bledsoe from *them*, he stopped, fists clenched, the terrible injustice of it all filling him again with anger.

The very hedge at his feet was a symbol of that injustice. The bushes that were now low would grow and grow, broad-



ening the miserable distance between those with the dreaded disease and those without. He agonized at the thought of telling the patients who trusted him that he must leave. Another feeling crowded in, one that was unfamiliar to the self-assured, close-to-arrogant Adam Jarrett—regret. Regret that he had not kept his feelings in check with Mr. Bledsoe, that he had caused his association here at Indian Camp to be severed.

“Dr. Adam?”

Startled, he looked around and saw Rose, her pale-blue eyes wide and anxious. “Rose, what are you doing here?”

“I was watching for you to come out. I . . . we all knew you were talking to Mr. Bledsoe. You seemed so angry just now; did something happen?”

Adam stared down at her plain face, as yet unmarked by the disease that had brought them all to this godless place. Even now he balked at calling it leprosy. He had embarked on a personal crusade to educate people to call it Hansen’s disease, after the man who first isolated the hateful bacillus. “Yes, Rose,” he said gently, “something happened. Depending on how you look at it, I was fired, or I quit.”

As he’d anticipated, Rose’s face paled even more as she gasped, “But why?”

“Mr. Bledsoe and his hospital board feel I’m not suited to Indian Camp.”

“Who is?” she asked bitterly.

“Be that as it may, he told me my services are no longer wanted as of the first of the month—tomorrow.” He gazed at the tall pecan trees, their towering branches draped by gray moss. Beyond them he could see the marshy meadow, and nearby was the Mississippi River, invisible because of the high levee.

“But you can’t leave us!”

“It seems I have no choice. The board has decided I don’t belong here, that I’m not the kind of doctor they want tending you.”

“But it isn’t true! Don’t they know what you did for me, for Anson and Jimmy and the others? What you’ve done since we came here?”

Adam knew she was referring to his constant protests against the inadequate medical supplies, the unsanitary food preparations and living conditions. “What I do doesn’t matter,