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PEARL HARBOR



Randall Wallace

 **HYPERION**

NEW YORK

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PEARL HARBOR

To my sons

Andrew & Cullen

with the fervent hope that neither they
nor anyone else's children
will know war

IN MEMORIAM

Thomas A. Langford

1929-2000

Teacher, Mentor, Pastor, Friend,
Man of God

Book One



INNOCENCE

Book One



INNOCENCE

Danny Walker could still smell the sweet scent of the pine wood where Rafe McCawley had bored two holes through the nail keg and run a rope between them, to tie around their waists like a seat belt. The two boys sat on that keg, its top barely bigger than a slop bucket but large enough for the narrow butts of two ten-year-olds living on the farm scraps of America's Great Depression.

But they had their own airplane.

It was a biplane, one of the first crop dusters anywhere in the South. Rafe's father had bought it after the spine of its fuselage had cracked and its engine was thought to be too worn to be much use to anybody. He had cannibalized it for spare parts. Now its wings were jagged stumps of splintered wood, ripped fabric and rusted wire; its propeller was a two-by-four Rafe had found on the farm, and its windshield sheltered a sparrow's nest. But it had once flown in the Tennessee air, and now it flew farther and faster than any airship had ever flown, in the minds of two farm boys.

"They're coming in from the left!" Rafe screamed,

and threw his shoulder against Danny. Rafe had lean ropey arms, a tall frame and the quick eyes of a pilot. Even at the age of eleven, Danny had noticed this quality of his friend's eyes: not nervous, not twitchy, just quick.

"I see 'em!" Danny called back above the imaginary roar of their plane's engine and the buzz Rafe was making with his lips as he jerked the broken broomstick that controlled the maneuvers he was making through the sky in his mind.

"Get 'em, Danny!"

"I got 'em, Rafe!" And his tongue tickled his teeth, unleashing a thrashing pulse of machine-gun fire. Danny loved it when Rafe called him by name, called to him like a brother. Rafe was the only one in life who called him Danny. His mother had called him Daniel, but she had died when Danny was four. The best thing his father ever called him was Boy.

Danny's hair was light brown, like his mother's had been, and he had her green eyes. At least he hoped his eyes had come from her. An image of the softness of her eyes as she once had looked at him, gazing at him in quiet love, blazed in his memory whenever he thought of her. But her life seemed so distant now, and he had begun to wonder if his memories were only the projections of his fantasies, and he saw her as Rafe saw their plane, soaring in the sky.

"He's behind us! Behind us! See him?"

"I see him, Rafe!" Danny hollered, and twisted in his seat to fire toward the ruptured tail section of their craft. But in truth Danny saw nothing but the barn and the plowed fields beyond, though they glowed for him in the pure joy of togetherness. Rafe, he was sure, could

see the Red Baron's biplane arcing down toward them. Rafe could see everything, could really see anything he could imagine. It was the most remarkable thing about being with Rafe. With Rafe, there was the world everyone else could see, and then there was the world that he could see, a world where old wrecks flew, and boys were pilots, and they were brave.

The only thing Rafe couldn't see was how to spell words. On the plank dashboard he'd rigged up for the plane's controls, he'd chalked the letters RUDR. Danny, winner of the Beaver Bottom Elementary School spelling bee the last three years running, had never been able to hear a word spoken without seeing exactly how to spell it in his mind. And Danny didn't just see words, he heard them sing and play with each other, he heard them rhyme or clash as they bounced around in his head. Still, Danny would've traded all his visionary gifts for Rafe's. In games like Dodgeball Rafe saw the ball's flight before anyone else—where it was bouncing, where it was heading; it was almost as if he could look into the future of the flight of a ricocheting ball. This made Rafe the better athlete when it came to things like batting or catching; and he had speed too, in his legs and hands as well as his eyes. Danny's big advantage on the playground was that he could fight. When he got punched in the nose, he never cried; he hit back, and always harder than he was hit. It was because of this that their friendship was sealed.

It happened one cold November, when the sky was slate gray and the mood of their teacher was just as dark. She'd given them the assignment of writing a page

about the meaning of Thanksgiving, and had then told the students to exchange papers with the classmate sitting next to them. It was a routine of hers. "Check each other's spellin'!" she'd call out, and the pages would rustle across the aisles. Danny had always sat beside Rafe; they would draw pictures of World War I air battles and whisper and snicker, and it was that very noise-making that had gotten them separated. So now it was Calvin Pearson sitting beside Rafe, and when Danny saw the papers exchange, he already felt cold in his stomach.

Danny made his new deskmate's corrections quickly—there was only one mispunctuation, and Danny picked it up instantly—then looked in sick fear at Rafe's face. Rafe had no idea what was wrong or right with Calvin's paper, but that was not the problem. Calvin frowned down at Rafe's paper, then smiled, and began drawing circles around words with his red crayon, and then before Danny or anybody else could do anything about it, Calvin held the paper up high and laughed and called to the class, "Lookey here at how smart Rafe is!" The paper was covered in red—but it was not as red as the humiliation on Rafe's face.

The teacher said sharply, "Give that back to Rafe, Calvin!" and left it at that.

But Danny didn't. At recess he raced out of the schoolhouse door, ran like a bullet at Calvin, slammed his forehead into Calvin's nose, then fell across his chest and punched him until they pulled him off, though Danny broke away twice to punch and kick him again.

That fight marked Danny's public life in a way noth-

ing had before. He and Rafe were more than friends; they were brothers.

The boys both paused in their game as the engine sounds of the real plane above them grew louder and higher in pitch as the plane descended over a field lush with young plants. In the cockpit was Rafe's father, a Baptist deacon who raised his own crops, fixed anything devised by man, and turned other people's junk into useful machinery. The plane he was diving earthward in at that very moment was a crop duster he had assembled from parts culled from a dump outside a nearby military base, combined with those he had stripped from the wreck Rafe and Danny played in. He had painted the plane a ruby red, and its wings and spinning propeller flashed sunlight as it rushed a few feet above the plowed ground, released a trail of crop spray and climbed again, up into a crystalline blue sky.

Danny watched and thought how beautiful it was. *Like heaven* were the words that came into his mind. Then, for some reason he did not yet understand, *Volunteer State* sang after them. It would be years before he would write the line, in describing his home: "... Maybe it's not heaven; it's just Tennessee. But for as long as there's been an America, men have fought and died for this place—as volunteers." Then he would comprehend where the urge to express himself on paper had come from; now he looked at life, and peace, and felt its joy.

Rafe, pressed beside him on the same nail keg seat, watched the plane dip again, release a blossoming trail

of soft spray, then pop higher as his father pushed the foot control and the elevator flaps on the tail section bit the air, and Rafe felt it. Rafe felt everything. To Rafe McCawley, the world was an endless source of living stimulus, and he lived connected to it through the sensations of his heart. Movement, sound, sight, smell—all affected his emotions.

He was not thought of as an emotional boy; feeling early on that most people did not experience life as vividly as he did, he learned to keep his intensity to himself. Most people thought of him as quiet and inward. But to the ones with whom Rafe felt a real kinship—the ones whose spirit had a glow, a scent like fresh bread, a taste like cool springwater—Rafe was a volcano of life.

Rafe's heart locked onto those people, and stayed.

He knew he and Danny would be friends for life. Their differences, like Danny's ability with words, were not barriers; Rafe saw beyond the fact that written words made sense to Danny and were so confusing to him. And Danny was always ready to enter the world of imagination that two Tennessee boys could find on a spring day.

"Bandits at two o'clock!" Rafe yelled.

"Power dive!" Danny responded. And together they buzzed their lips in a flying noise and worked the controls, Rafe's bare feet on one pedal, Danny's on the other. The barn beside them, unpainted except for the hand lettering that said MCCAWLEY CROP DUSTING, remained firmly in its place, so the boys had to stare at the control cages chalked on their makeshift dashboard to see the world spin and dip around them. In their minds their overalls had become flight jackets, and their bowl-

cut hair was covered with leather helmets, the very gear for wearing when saving America from the aggression of the German Kaiser. Danny held his fists in front of his face and spat machine-gun sounds, then blew an explosion through his cheeks.

"Good shooting, Danny!"

"Good flying, Rafe!"

"Land of the free . . ." Rafe said, in holy conviction.

"Home of the brave!" Danny returned, as if he had said *Amen*.

But before they could turn their dreams to confront another challenge against the safety of democracy, a man's hand closed around the straps of Danny's overalls and snatched him from the cockpit.

Surprised as Danny was, he knew it before he saw: it was his father's hand, strong, battered and dirty, the way the hand of a man with but a single arm so quickly becomes. Cole Walker, Danny's daddy, was a veteran of World War I and had left one of his arms in the Argonne Forest and brought back lungs scorched with mustard gas, so he was not a man inclined to be sensitive to the concerns of those whose bodies were whole. He dropped Danny on his feet and let him go just long enough to spin him around and snatch him by the front of the shirt, lifting him half off his feet again and shaking him.

"You no-count boy! Johnson come lookin', said he'd pay a dime for you to shovel his pig shed, and I can't find you no place. I done told you, you spend time playin' with this stupid boy can't even read, you ain't never gonna 'mount to nothin'!"

With all the shame and fear that burned in Danny at

that moment, what came from his mouth was, "He's not stupid, Da—"

Before he could finish the word *Daddy*, his father slapped him off his feet.

Rafe, who had been smacked on the bottom by his father's hand and had even been switched once for swearing, had never seen a grown man slap a child in the face, much less hit him so hard as to knock him to the ground. He was so horrified he couldn't get a sound out.

Danny was not even surprised—but when his father snatched him up again, twisting the overall straps so tight they choked him, he struggled. It did no good; his father began marching across the plowed field, dragging Danny as he went.

"Da—" Danny gasped. "Daddy—"

But Cole Walker's fury made him blind to what he was doing—until something hard cracked across his back with such force that his arm went limp and he fell with his face between the furrows. He'd been hit at the top of the spine, where the neck and shoulders meet in back, and the impact had caused his mind to flash white for a moment and then go black. The world swayed like a porch swing, and then Walker pitched over, turning belly up, and his eyes found what had hit him—the two-by-four propeller, in the hands of Rafe McCawley.

Rafe held the board like a baseball bat, cocked, ready to swing again. "Let him alone!" he shouted.

Walker's eyes bulged in rage; he staggered to his feet. And Danny was screaming, "Rafe . . . Daddy . . . No!"

Danny's father had not shaved since the last time Danny had seen him, which was three days before. There were scratches on his face, the blood dried over,