

Chapter 6

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!”—Luke 12:27–28

As the two classmates bowed their heads in prayer, Gremma began from Psalm 67, “‘Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you.’ But the Jaro people do not yet praise you, O God. Let them hear of your Son Jesus in a way that will connect with their minds and hearts so that they will worship you. For you, O Lord, are worthy to be praised. You are worthy to be worshiped by every people group on Earth because you, Jesus, were beaten so that we may be healed. You took on our sins so we can be forgiven. You died so that we might live. You were raised again so that we may enjoy your presence forever”

Carly listened as Gremma lifted up words of hope for the Jaro people. Clearly, Gremma’s passion solidly rested on what Jesus did on the cross. No sin was too big, no people too stubborn, and no one too lost to be rescued by Jesus. Carly tried to participate in prayer with Gremma, but she could only muster a few tired phrases. Of course, she prayed in church, but often Carly had mumbled empty words in a crowd, her heart far away, often daydreaming while reading words written by another. She just didn’t have the passion and the heartfelt words that Gremma had. How could she get there?

Carly loved her rural life near the waters of Eagle Pond, and she reminded her family often, “Don’t you dare move me into Greenview Terrace. I will escape, come to your house, and let the air out of your car tires!”

Family members took that threat seriously and kept a close eye on this Annie Oakley of Eagle Pond, fiercely independent and rumored by the local salesman to be quite capable with a 410 shotgun. When the representative for Greenview Terrace Retirement Center came calling to meet a solicitation requirement from his boss, he breathed a sigh of relief to see that Carly was too busy mowing her lawn to get a sales pitch. Her riding Snapper mower crunched sticks and spewed forth grass at high speeds. Carly considered sticks as fertilizer, and she happily did her part to break them down and beautify her expansive lawn. Stick destruction from the Snapper required frequent blade sharpening, but sons in the area kept her crunching away. Mr. Greenview Terrace cringed as the branches exploded and blasted from the Snapper, and he quickly returned to his car, not sure if that last loud crack emitted from the Snapper or the 410.

When Gremma visited Carly's farm, Gremma's grandson Jay loved to tag along. Ten-year-old Jay ran into the woods bordering Eagle Pond—a mighty explorer courageously discovering the wild. He sneaked up on deer, but his favorite adventure placed him in the driver's seat of an aqua rusting race car dumped among the trees by one of Jay's uncles. Jay imagined the roar of the engine as he and his Race Car #5 crossed the finish line to the checkered flag, barely defeating the rusty '57 Chevy and the Ford Galaxy 500 dumped nearby.

The Chevy had been out of service for many years, and now Carly loved driving her four-door Buick Skylark along the gravel roads bordering Eagle Pond. She counted the deer, and the number of the graceful creatures often led her report at the coffee conversations in Eagle Java with the widows who gathered there.

Carly's family hunted deer, but their passion was duck hunting. During his lifetime, Carly's husband, James, had been known for his ability to imitate the mating call of a mallard duck, coaxing green feathered fliers from the skies to glide downward toward the decoys floating happily below. James's wall proudly displayed a male mallard with two spit curl feathers and a band of steel on its leg that bespoke the journeys of its lifetime.

Not all birds were admired by Carly, though. A raucous gang of 20 crows claimed the tree right outside Carly's bedroom window, creating an obnoxious concert hall. A loud chorus of "Caw!" woke Carly at sunrise one time too many. After another rude awakening, Carly slid open the bedroom window and blasted away with the 410. Wisely, the surviving crows selected a new concert venue.

During the quieter moments on the farm, Carly felt God's presence as the sun rose and set, coloring the sky. Cool breezes brushed the coneflowers and blooming milkweeds while tiger swallowtails and monarchs jumped from blossom to blossom. Her favorite prayer to God was not an articulate, passionate recitation of Scripture, although she did love many Bible verses. Carly's most authentic prayer overflowed from gazing at her Father's creation: "Thank you, God."

Little did Carly know that an authentic prayer of thanksgiving wields great power to transform lives—a lesson about to be tested.