



SNOWSTORM

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ixteen-year-old Daniel pulled his wool coat tighter as he trekked up the mountain, his worn leather boots sinking into the deep snow. He carried a long-barreled musket, and his game bag fluttered in the wind.

To his surprise, the night sky had turned pale. *Shelter. I must make it before the storm.*

He grabbed his tricorn hat as the howling wind thrust the first snowfall at him. The flakes beat his face like thousands of arrows and numbed his fingers. Soon a wall of white encircled him and the incline steepened.

But am I on the path?

He paused often, trying to check his surroundings, but the snow wiped away his bearings. Shielding himself behind a tree, he put icy fingers to his mouth and breathed. Even his breath seemed to freeze. *I must reach shelter.*

Exposing himself to the wind, it blasted him with snow. His strength waned. *I cannot make it.*

Nearly all hope gone, he raised his head one last time. A light broke through the snowy barrier—shelter lay just a few yards ahead. With a final effort he at last reached the cabin, half frozen.

He burst through the door, struggling to close it against the wind. Collapsing at the base of the fireplace, he exhaled a long breath.

“Daniel! Thank God you have made it.”

“Robert,” whispered Daniel. He did not move for half a minute. Rolling over, he faced his eighteen-year-old brother. “Barely. How's your leg?”

Lying near Daniel's feet beneath a bundle of blankets, Robert grimaced. “It hurts frightfully.”

“I don't know what I can do. There are no towns close enough. It is amazing we even found this abandoned cabin.”

“We owe God our thanks for a warm refuge while my leg heals.”

Daniel sighed. *God did not keep you from that ravine.* He rolled onto his back. Cobwebs hung from the rafters fifteen feet above his head.

“Did you catch any game?”

Daniel shook his head.

“God will provide.”

After a quarter of an hour, the fire had finally thawed Daniel. He reached for the wood box and tossed on another log. *Only five more.* The wind beat against the door and rattled the windows. *I'll wait till morning.*

“How about some food?”

Daniel lowered his head. “You know it's almost gone.”

Robert frowned. “We haven't eaten today, and we need to keep up our strength. You can hunt again in the morning.”

Daniel nodded, taking the last hard biscuits out of his pack. Sitting next to the fire, the brothers consumed their meager meal.

He threw another log on the fire and laid by the hearth. With the wind groaning outside, he wrapped himself in a blanket and closed his eyes.

Daniel awoke, chilled, the fire reduced to glowing embers. The wind continued to roar. Crawling to the wood box, he took a log and tossed it in the smoldering coals. Once comfortable by the fire, he dozed off.

When he awoke again, the darkness had not left, but the storm had stilled. He fumbled for the tinderbox, lighting a lamp. In the hearth, A curl of smoke rose from cold embers. He went to the windows obstructed by darkness. *Cold fire, dark windows. How long will this night last?*

Stepping toward the door, he grew uneasy. *What if—* He jerked open the door. With unblinking eyes he gaped at a solid wall of snow. “Trapped! Robert, we’re trapped.”

Robert woke with a start. His jaw dropped when he saw the door. “But, Dan, it’s—”

“Snow—higher than the door. What will we do?”

Robert looked down, rubbing his face. His lips moved but without a sound.

“Robert!”

“Don’t worry. It may just be a drift. We will get out.”

Daniel exhaled, his eyes darting. He ran for the fireplace and poked his head into the hearth. “The light is gone.” He yanked himself out and clung to his brother’s arm. “The chimney is covered. We are buried alive.”

“Don’t panic. God is with us. We will make it out somehow.”

Daniel gripped Robert’s arms tighter. “Can’t you hear me? We are buried under fifteen feet of snow. Our food is gone and we only have three more logs. We are dead men.”

“We are not dead yet. Let us pray. God will deliver us.”

Daniel let go. “Can’t you see? God has abandoned us. We’ve had nothing but hardship this entire journey. We left Georgia to fight for our freedom. Now we are captive in this snowy wilderness, captive in the cabin that rescued us from the cold. What has this trip been to us? Sickness, horse thieves, your injured leg, and now this. And you say God will rescue us.”

Slipping away to a corner, Daniel slumped to the floor. With eyes closed and hands folded, Robert spoke a muffled prayer. Daniel wagged his head. The door blocked with

white, and an unreachable roof—how could they ever survive? *Escaped the storm to be trapped by it.*

“We can't give up,” said Robert. “We need to find a way out.”

“It is no use; the snow is too high and we have nothing to dig with. Even if we could escape, where would we go?”

“Go for help.”

“Where? There is nothing around. No town, no doctors—nothing.”

“We don't know what is farther up the mountain. Someone had to build this shelter.”

“If I made it out, one step in that snow—I'd sink and be lost forever.”

“At least you can try. I would do it myself, but the pain in my leg is unbearable.”

“You said God will deliver us. Let Him get us out.” Daniel dropped his head in his hands.

Something scraped the floor. With a groan, Robert slid across to the wood box and back to the hearth. He stroked the ashes with his hand. “Where is the tinderbox?”

“You know there's only two more logs.”

“We have to stay warm.” Robert surveyed the cabin. “We can burn the shelves, then the floor. The table if we must.”

Daniel sighed. Sliding the tinderbox across the floor, he returned his face to his hands. Robert ripped a cloth then struck flint against steel. Soon he had a flame dancing in the hearth.

Robert dragged himself to the shelf and tried to lift it. He cried out.

“What now?”

“I need kindling to keep the fire going. But my leg.”

Mumbling under his breath, Daniel rose to help his brother. He spun around. Smoke gushed from the fireplace.

“The chimney!” screamed Daniel. “What are you doing? I told you it's covered with snow.”

“Open the flue.”

Daniel leapt to the fireplace, but the lever wouldn't budge. He choked on the smoke. Covering his face, he kicked at the fire. Sparks landed on the floor and ignited.

“Quick, the snow.”

Daniel dashed to the door and clutched snow with his bare hands. He emptied it on the flames, but the floorboards still burned. Across the room again, he snatched an upturned pot and filled it with snow. By the third trip, he had extinguished the flames.

Smoke still gushed from the hearth, but after a minute of fanning, the haze lifted and he could again breathe.

Robert coughed. “That was close.”

“What were you thinking? You trying to kill us both? As if we weren't about to die already.”

“Sorry. Perhaps we can try again later.”

“Later? Aren't you listening? We are dead men. Now we don't even have a fire. Why did joining Washington's army seem such a grand plan? We should have stayed home and fought the loyalists there.”

“Maybe so, but we didn't. I know it looks bleak, but I believe God will deliver us. We have to trust Him.”

“Trust a God who lets that king exact erroneous taxes and murder our families? What kind of a God is that?”

“The same God who does not destroy us instantly when we mock Him and transgress His commands. A God of mercy.”

Daniel stumbled away to his corner. Smoke clung to the rafters like a storm cloud. At least it left his airway clear. Robert's God had dealt another blow. No food, no water, now no heat. He wrapped himself in a blanket and sunk to the floor.

When he awoke, a hand rubbed against his arm. Robert offered him a cup. “Drink this.”

Daniel sipped cold water.

“I melted some snow. Dan, I know you want to give up. I know you don't see a way out, but I don't want to accept defeat. I think we can survive this, but I can't do it without you.”

“It's hopeless.”

“It is hopeless if we don't even try. I have a plan. Will you help?”

Daniel wiped the drowsiness from his eyes and exhaled. “Very well.”

“Excellent. The first step to our survival is a fire. It is still warm enough now, but by nightfall, it will get much colder. By then, we need to make sure the flue is open.”

“The trapdoor is covered with snow, remember?”

“We might be able to force it open. If we make a long pole and shove it against the door, perhaps we could push it open.”

“What pole?”

“The shelves, even the floor boards if we can pry them up. We can use sheets to tie them together one by one as we lift it up the chimney.”

“Seems unlikely, but I guess I'd rather die making an effort than dwindling away in this corner.”

“Right. You collect the poles; I will tear up the sheets.

At first it seemed useless. The poles Daniel collected didn't fit in the mouth of the hearth. Once he had broken down the boards and rods, he struggled to tie them together in the tight chimney. But slowly the pole extended upward.

“One more ought to do it.”

Robert handed him the required board and fabric to secure the final piece.

Daniel pulled the last knot tight. “Let's give it a try.” He shoved the pole against the metal trapdoor. Nothing gave way. He tried again, using all his strength. The pole snapped in the middle.

“It won't work.”

“Yes it will. Try again. Make the pole stronger and tighten the knots.”

Starting over from the beginning, Daniel tied the poles together with greater overlap, even tying two or three together in the weakest places. After an hour of painful knot-tying, he had enough height to try again.

This time, Robert wrenched on the flue lever while Daniel shoved the pole against the trapdoor. His back against the blackened hearth, straining his arms, Daniel's strength waned. With a crash the door flung open.

Light invaded the chimney, blinding Daniel. Sliding out of the fireplace, he clasped Robert around the neck. “We did it.”

“Praise God.”

“Let's start a fire.”

In less than five minutes, Daniel and his brother sat by a blazing fire. Robert took a drink of snow-water. “We should keep the fire going as long as we can. Perhaps someone will see the smoke.”

“I can't imagine how anyone could. There is no one around.”

“We can hope there is.”

“How long do you think we can survive?”

“We have plenty of water, but without food—I don't know.”

“Aren't you afraid?”

Robert nodded. “But we will make it out somehow.”

Daniel examined the tinder box. “We have a good source of ignition. Perhaps we should let the fire die till we cannot bear the cold. Our fuel would last longer.”

“Good plan.”

When their water supply ran low, Daniel refilled the pot with snow and placed it over the fire. “We won't rid ourselves of snow very quickly.”

“We should try to dig ourselves out. It's the only chance we have.”

“What will we do with the snow? We can't drink it all.”

“Pile it in a corner and melt the rest over the fire.”

Daniel walked to the door. The wall of white faced him like an imposing foe. Fifteen feet of snow. Maybe more. He found another pot and scraped away at his prison walls.

After less than an hour, he collapsed by the fire. “I haven't the strength.”

“It must be strenuous on an empty stomach. If only we had food.”

“If only we were back in Georgia.”

“See, we have to survive so we can see our home again.”

“What's left of it once it's ravaged by the Tories.”

“The Colonists will not fail. God is on our side.”

“If we ever dig our way out of this mountain, I might believe you.”

“Rest up. Then see if you can find a better spade.”

Though the pangs of hunger still seized Daniel, he felt otherwise refreshed. Prompted by his brother, he searched the room for a more suitable shovel. His search seemed fruitless until he discovered something in a dark corner of a high shelf.

“Look!” he shouted, swinging a string of dried meat like a pendulum.

“Praise the Lord. But we must not eat it all yet. We must be prudent with what is now the last of our food.”

Daniel broke off two quarter pieces and handed one to Robert. Nothing felt better than sitting by a warm hearth savoring each bite of dried meat. Perhaps he could find more hidden treasures.

He made a thorough search, unearthing only a few tattered rags, sheets, and an old leather boot. Stones and earth couldn't have brought greater disappointment. He had indeed found the last of their food. Daniel slumped to the floor.

“The meat is enough,” said Robert. “We can make it.”

“It's hopeless. Let's eat the food and die.”

“No, we need to stretch it as far as possible. Do not despair.”

Daniel rubbed his growling stomach. “I can't help it.” He leapt to his feet and grabbed the string of meat.

“Dan, no.”

But Daniel had devoured a whole piece.

“Stop. We need to ration our food.”

“What's the use? We are going to die anyway. We might as well die with a full stomach.”

“But you will fill your stomach today and tomorrow you will be hungry again. Give them to me.”

Daniel pulled back and grabbed another piece. Robert slid across the floor and grasped his brother's leg. “Stop, Dan.” He made a pass at the meat, but fell back with a painful cry.

“You shouldn't move that leg.”

Robert grimaced. “I know that, but you cannot eat the meat. It is key to our hope of survival.”

“I don't see any hope. What have we got to live for?”

“Our friends, our home, mother and father—aren't they worth living for?”

Daniel lowered his head and relinquished the string of meat.

“What has gotten into you? This food should brighten your spirits, but all it's done is put you into a craze.”

“I dreamed we could find more.”

“Let us be grateful for what the Lord did provide. Do you want to die?”

Daniel stepped back. “Of course not. But what other choice do we have?”

“If my leg wasn't mangled, I would dig right out of that snow and go home. But I cannot do that. Don't you miss home?”

“Sure. I think of our home-folk often, but it only makes it worse since I can never hope to see them again.”

“We will. We must try to escape.”

“I’m tired.” Daniel stretched out by the hearth.

“Would you put a log on the fire?”

“We need to conserve wood, remember?”



Daniel tossed about in restless sleep. He awoke often, cold and hungry. Twice he restarted the fire, but still sleep escaped him. The hard floor offered meager comfort.

When he thought it to be morning, he arose to light the fire. Robert stirred, but did not rise. Daniel broke down the last of the shelving and fueled the blaze. Still his brother did not awake.

“Robert, wake up. Ready for another miserable day?”

His brother lay motionless. Daniel shook him, but to no avail. “Robert?” His arms and forehead felt warm to the touch. *Fever.*

Daniel uncovered Robert's pant leg. Red and swollen, the wounded leg emitted a fowl odor. *Infected.* Daniel circled the cabin in a frenzy, helpless. He stopped, running his fingers through his knotted hair.

With a jump he rushed to fetch some snow, recalling how his mother had laid a damp cloth over his feverish forehead. But was it too cold? He thrust it over the fire for a few minutes and tested it with his finger.

He laid a damp rag over his brow and placed another to his leg. “What do I do Robert? You always knew what to do, but now you can't help me.”

Daniel had no medical knowledge, but the wound told a desperate tale. Without proper care, he felt sure the infection would spread. Death would follow.

He sunk to the floor, nothing left to do but watch his brother die. A horrid thought, but what else could he do? *If only I had help. From the outside.*

Daniel leapt to the door and faced the wall of snow again. *If only I had done it when Robert said.* Seeing his only chance of saving his brother, he ripped into the snow like a lion clawing into its prey.

After a few minutes, snow covered the floor. He slipped beside Robert, out of breath. The leg seemed worse. He exchanged the rags for damp ones. “What can I do?”

With the pot, he assaulted the snow, but his strength depleted quickly. The pot failed him. He needed a shovel.

Coals smoldered in the hearth. With a loose board he pried up the flooring. He tossed in a few pieces when an idea struck him. Dropping everything, he rushed to fetch some rags.

After binding a few boards together, he had crafted a crude shovel. Now snow flew from the wall to the floor. At last he felt like he could do it—he could dig his way out. But the growing heap of snow filled the floor. He would have to start melting the snow.

Daniel dropped to his knees before the fireless hearth. He reached for the tinderbox, but found an empty box. On the table, the lamp exhibited a sickly light. He rushed to it and snatched it up. But as if struck by instant blindness, his sight vanished.

Blackness. Inky blackness held him stranded. Slouching, he felt his way back to Robert. His chest heaved, but his forehead burned intensely, the fever still ravaging his body.

Somehow Daniel's position had gotten even worse. His brother lay at death's footstool. Shortage of food. Trapped by a massive snowfall in an abandoned cabin, with no fire and utter darkness.

He felt for the tinderbox and dumped emptiness into his hand. The flint and the tinder had vanished. Had the

tinder fallen into the flames? He couldn't fathom how it had happened. The snow piled on the floor would make the cold even more painful.

Daniel wagged his head and palmed his face. "God, don't let him die. It's my fault. Just help us escape."

After a few minutes searching, he found the string of dried meat and broke off a piece. It had tasted better when he could eat it with Robert. *Will we do anything together again?*

Chills swarmed his body. Daniel slapped himself, standing to his feet. He had let himself fall into despair before, but he knew where that had gotten him. Now he must take action.

He dropped on his hands and knees, feeling around the fireplace. With minute detail, he combed the entire floor. Twice he thought he had found the flint, but pieces of wood had fooled him.

Finally, he came around to the fireplace again. He had already searched it, but he might have missed it. In one motion he brushed his hand over a stone. *The flint.* He took the precious stone between his fingers as a memory passed to his consciousness.

"How do you start a fire, Papa?" said Daniel when he was seven.

Gentle eyes studied his son with a smile. "Friction. The steel rubs against the flint and sparks." His worn hands took the metal and struck the stone.

"Why didn't it work, Papa?"

"Sometimes the tinder don't light. Just like people."

"People aren't tinder."

"People are lights. Some people. Most are in darkness, and only the Light can save them. Christ lights the world of darkness." Papa struck the flint again, sparks lighting the charred rag. "And He sends us into the darkness as lights—lights pointing back to Him."

"Like the tinder?"

“Like the tinder.” Papa tossed the burning rag into the hearth and ignited some straw. “See how it spreads light to the room? That's what we must do.”



With shaking hands, Daniel held the cold flint to his face. “God, let it light.”

He gripped the stone as he slid across the floor to find a rag. Striking his belt buckle against the flint, he got a spark. The rag didn't light. He sparked it again—three more times without success. Finally the fifth time, the rag ignited.

Overwhelmed with joy, he carried it to the fireplace and stuffed it with an armful of fabric. Adding bits of wood and floorboards, he nursed it till a full blaze filled the hearth.

He took stock of the wood supply, finding only one log, the table and chairs, and the floorboards beneath the pile of snow. Little time remained. Robert and the ever-consuming flames could not wait.

Filling the two largest pots with snow he set them by the fire. With his makeshift shovel, he moved more snow. Breaking for breath, he found the snow by the fire had melted. An idea struck him. He dumped the hot water on the snow pile and smiled at the cavity it formed.

Motivated by this discovery, he repeated it. Without resting, he shoveled while the snow melted at the fire. When he needed a break, he fueled the fire or emptied the pots. An occasional piece of meat kept up his strength.

Long after fatigue set in, he continued nonstop. He broke down the two chairs and most of the table. The snow on the floor he maintained at a reduced heap. Prying loose more floor boards, he set them by the fire to dry.

Robert remained sweltering with fever. He tossed constantly, often saying something in delirium. Daniel kept

as many blankets over him as he could, changing the damp cloth as needed. His hope for saving him faded.

Mustering his strength, he plowed through the snow, working harder than ever. He carved crude steps in the snow and gradually brought the passage upwards. The snow seemed endless. When he felt he could go on no more, something threw him backward and extinguished the light.

For a moment he wondered if he had died. No, something cold pressed against his face. He tried to move but something heavy weighed him down. *The passage collapsed.*

He squirmed and wrenched to free himself from the snow. It budged a little. Heaving with all his might, he finally broke free and slid back into the cabin. He laid there for a few minutes with heavy breath. The realization crept in—he had done it. He had reached the outside world.

Rising, he entered the passage. Snow had collapsed over his steps, but it had opened the insurmountable barrier. The open sky. He had not seen it for three days. Night still spread over the sky— or perhaps early morning. He had no way of knowing.

The joy he experienced at breaking through the snow mixed with uncertainty. *What now? Where can I go? How can I get there?*

Daniel had no choice. For Robert's sake, he must venture to brave the snow and find someone to help them. He laid another blanket over Robert, wrapping himself in multiple layers. The fire would burn out—he could not avoid it. Placing as much wood in the fireplace as he could, he hoped it would be enough.

He stopped in the doorway. How would he traverse the mountain? A step in the deep snow and he would sink and never rise again. If only he had wider shoes. He remembered as a child his uncle visiting from the north,

who showed him a giant shoe with holes in it. “Snowshoes,” he called them.

Taking three narrow boards flat on the floor he laid two across each end, binding them with strips of cloth. They fell apart in his hands. Wrapping cloth tightly around the whole frame, he tied them to his own boots. He strutted around the cabin. They were heavy and awkward, but held together.

Daniel took a long look at his brother. “Good bye, Robert. I will return.”

Musket in hand, he climbed the stairs into the open air. The moon reflected off the blanketed landscape. Tree branches lay strewn on the ground, broken and weighed down by the snowfall. Barren and still, the snowy mountain had transformed into a wilderness.

He knew he would find no aid down the mountain. They had not seen a town or a living soul for fifty miles. His only hope lay up the mountain. Stepping forward, he tripped but caught himself. He must use caution. One misstep and his journey would be finished.

Despite his efforts to stay warm, the cold seeped through his clothes. He had not slept all day. He had barely even rested. His makeshift snowshoes weighed down his feet and drained his remaining stamina. Constant thoughts of Robert slipping away flooded his mind and pressed him onward.

With too quick of a step, his shoe caught in the ground, sending him sprawling in the snow. He tried to rise, but he hadn't the strength. Lying still for a few moments, the cold creeping in, it felt like the end. *No, I must go on.* He strained for his musket, trying to lift himself, but he sunk deeper in the snow. In a last effort he pointed his musket to the sky and fired.

The report echoed through the trees. He let the musket drop beside him. “God,” he whispered. “I can't go on. Save Robert—save him at least.”

The next moment a dog barked in the distance. Had he lost his mind? He lifted his head and tuned his ear. Silence. Then came the barking again, this time closer. Something ran up to him and poked him in the side. The dog howled again.

In another moment, voices sounded. “Hello, are you all right, sir? Get him up off the snow. Hello, are you well?”

Daniel groaned.

“Sir?”

“Can’t go on. Out of strength.”

“Help him up there. Let’s take him back to camp.”

“Must go back. Must help Robert.”

“Never mind, we’ll find him. You left a clear path. We’ll follow it.”

“In the cabin. Under the snow.”

“We will find it. Do you think you can walk if we help you?”

“I don’t know.”

The three men lifted Daniel to his feet. “Lean on me then.”

“Henry, take this man back to camp. Get him near a fire and go fetch a doctor. Moses will sniff out the other one. If we don’t come back soon, send a party after us.”

“Right. Just lean on me, sir. We’ll get you back safely.”

Henry half carried Daniel as he stumbled along with his rescuer. A strange peace overcame him, even a renewed strength. They had delivered him. Soon they would find Robert, and everything would be righted.

Before long, he caught a whiff of smoke. A warm fire awaited him over the next slope. Shelter, food, and a soft bed captured his imagination. It seemed like a dream.

He reached the rise, a fire and cabin opening below him. Finding a sudden impulse of strength, he let go of his guide and descended to the cabin. When he had nearly reached it, he collapsed, overcome with fatigue.

A gruff face met him when he opened his eyes. “Who are you?”

“Name's Clive. I warmed you up some stew. Have you got a stomach in that scrawny body?”

Daniel nodded. The cabin surrounding him appeared larger and more refined than the abandoned cabin. A fire crackled in the hearth. Four other beds lined the walls, a table and chairs centered in the room. Besides his rough-looking host, he found the room empty.

“Henry's gone to fetch a doctor.”

“And Robert?”

“They've not come back yet. You've only been out a few minutes. Eat this.”

Daniel took the bowl swelling with tantalizing aroma. Warm meat and vegetables in a savory stew revived his senses. Questions nagged at him, but the man said to eat and he gladly did. When he had finished, Clive pointed to the bed beneath him. Somehow the man knew what he needed most. He closed his eyes, confident when he opened them again, he would see Robert.

In the still of the morning he awoke, a fire blazing in the hearth. Heaps of blankets filled three of the beds. He couldn't tell if Robert lay among them. One bundle stirred. “Ah, you're awake,” said a man he recognized from last night.

“Where's Robert?”

“The doctor took one look at him and told us to take him into town.”

“Will he be all right?”

“He didn't say.”

Aroused by the dialog, Clive and a third man emerged from the blankets.

“Can I go to him?” said Daniel.

“I thought you'd want to. They hitched Moses to a kind of sled for your brother. Afraid you'll have to walk.”

“How far is it?”

“A good fifteen miles.”

“Can we go now?”

“You'll need breakfast first,” said Clive.

Daniel did his best to explain the misadventures of his journey, and how he and Robert had survived the blizzard in the cabin. Clive handed him a bowl of steaming stew. Nodding his thanks, Daniel turned to the other man. “How did you find us?”

“Not much to tell. We were hunting when we heard your shot. Some men call us fools. We like to spend the winter hunting in the forest, sometimes at night. Built this cabin so we don't have to trek up the mountain so much. Guess you found our old cabin.”

“You saved our lives.”

“I hope so.”

The man's words brought a chill. *What if Robert wouldn't survive? What if too much time had expired, the fever taking his life?* The guilt gripped his heart that his inaction had caused his brother's death.

The hunter rose. “Hadn't we be going? We have a long hike ahead of us.”

Glum thoughts set the mood of the journey. The hunters tried to engage him in conversation, but Daniel ignored them. At the time of his rescue, he had clung to the hope that Robert would recover. But that hope slipped away. The doctor saw such gravity in his wounds that he could not treat him in the wilderness. *What would become of him?*

For three hours he trudged down the mountain till he came upon a town. The hunters led him to a house with stately pillars securing the roof. He rushed inside and found seated on a couch one of the hunters from last night. “Where is he?”

“The doctor is with him in the next room.”

“I must see him.”

“Wait a moment.”

The man went to the next room and returned after a few moments with an aged man with a gray ponytail. He removed a blood-stained apron from his dark clothes.

“Doctor?”

“He will live.” His serious eyes lowered for a moment. “But I had to take his leg.”

The last words instantly pierced his joy. *Robert is a cripple. Because of me. If I had snapped out of it and found him help, I could have saved him.* “Can I see him?”

“He is weak, but he insisted on seeing you in the parlor, dressed and looking like himself.” The doctor blushed and left the room.

How can he look like himself with only one leg?

After a few minutes, a pale figure entered, leaning on two men, his right pant-leg hanging loose. “Hello Dan.”

Despite the pain of finding his brother a cripple, he embraced him, overwhelmed with joy. “You’re alive. I’m sorry, Robert. I should have—”

“Don’t blame yourself. I fell in the ditch and got my leg mangled.”

“But I could have—”

“No, it’s over now. God was with us all along. You asked how God could let us suffer, but He sent us help when we needed it most. I ask you, how could God show us mercy?”

That night, Daniel stepped outside and breathed in the cool air. Standing under a fir tree, he turned his head to the clear sky, the stars glistening in extraordinary brilliance.

The End