

CHAPTER ONE

The Boy Man

“I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting system through which God speaks to us every hour, if only we will tune in.” George Washington Carver

In the pre-dawn mist of a Tuskegee forest, an elderly man walked side by side with his beloved and trusted student. Only a few months away from his death, the frail Dr. Carver, dressed in his customary button-down cap and rumpled suit, bent his tall, lanky frame close to the earth.

“Here, Leopa,” he said softly. “Will you please hold this for a moment?”

He handed Leopa his leather cylindrical sample case as he gently cradled a pink impatiens with his long trembling fingers and whispered permission to pick the flower from its rooted home. He stood up again and gently fixed the flower into the slot of his jacket lapel. Leopa Williams had adored him from early childhood when she had first heard of the man who would become known as the Wizard of Tuskegee.

“Leopa, today is the day I wish to share with you the special secrets that have been entrusted to me. You are my one very special student who has truly heard the deeper truths cloaked in my lectures,” he said with a delicate smile.

The soft, high pitch of his unusual voice coupled with his gentleness of spirit touched Leopa in a way that made her feel that she was in the presence of an angel.

The sun created an early morning glow appearing at the bases of the darkened trees they were approaching. There in front of them was a beautifully formed spider’s web illuminated by the early light. Droplets of dew clung tightly side by side like eloquent jewels strung on all of the strands of the web.

“Come here, please, my dear,” Dr. Carver said.

He reached into his shoulder pack, pulled out a small blanket, and spread it out on the forest floor. He motioned for her to sit. She sat down, drew her knees up, and discreetly straightened her skirt.

“Do you see the marvel of the spider’s web?” he asked.

“Yes, sir, it’s very beautiful.”

“Do you see how all of the strands are connected, each depending upon the other to keep the framework of the entire web intact?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Well, what you are seeing is the physical manifestation of a web, my dear. But now look harder. It is not a finite structure. I want you to see how it joins with the greater web of life that is all around it.”

At first Leopa looked all around the web but then focused her gaze upon the web itself. With a sublime look on his face, Dr. Carver asked, “There, do you see them? Do you see the golden strands?”

Leopa looked more closely. “No, sir,” she answered, sounding a little worried. “I’m not sure that I do.”

He smiled again. The cataracts forming over his eyes could not keep his loving warmth from coming through.

“You will,” he said encouragingly. “Once you learn to talk to all of nature you will receive answers from her as clearly as you hear me. I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting system through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in. Nature, of course, is always tuned in. We must quiet ourselves because there is so much noise, outside of us and in our own thinking.” He gently stroked a wild chamomile plant as he spoke.

“First and foremost you have to start from a pure heart of love. Each plant can send and receive. It has its own frequency, and when we are quiet enough to allow our frequency to match that of the plant it is only then that we can truly communicate with it.” Leopa looked at him in wonderment.

“The plants will share their secrets only with those who come from a loving motivation. They can tell who the sincere ones are. Don’t worry, dear child, you are among the caring ones.” Leopa thanked him almost inaudibly.

“Now,” he said, “just close your eyes, listen, and tell me what you hear.”

Leopa did as she was asked. A little time passed and she suddenly opened her eyes.

“I hear it,” she said with some mild excitement. “It is a continuous tone.”

“That’s right, my dear, it is called the universal Aum. It is always expressing everywhere, but the noise I was telling you about has so dulled our senses that what was once a natural part of our perception is now something that must be sought with reverent purpose so that we can once again consciously experience our interconnectedness with this holy sound current.”

Leopa was and had been devoted to his every word since the first day she arrived on campus. She had never quite understood why she was so attracted to him with such filial affection. She had tried so hard not to be obvious, but, of course, Dr. Carver sensed it. She had become one of his only “girls.” He was known to have many “boys” in his Bible study classes and among white “converts” who had initially been part of “captive” audiences at white colleges where he had lectured throughout the south. A number of these young white men had sworn with racial epithets that they weren’t going to attend lectures given by a “colored” man, but several were almost brought to tears when they saw and heard the eloquence of his manner and speech. They would be friends with him for the rest of their lives. Of his brown-skinned “boys,” he loved them all with a paternal love and often quietly helped pay for a number of their school expenses, teaching them the importance of managing their money and paying back loans.

The boyish innocence was still in his demeanor from his days in Diamond, Missouri, when he had planted a flower garden he kept hidden in the brush a short distance from the house. A flower garden was thought of as foolish from where he came. Nevertheless, he became known as the “plant doctor,” as many farmers’ wives from around the area would bring their house plants to him in hopes that he would make them well. After a week or less in his “plant hospital,” he would return their plants, vigorous and healthy. He also helped many a farmer diagnose and correct problems they were having with their crops. When people asked him how he made the plants well, he said that he just loved them, talked to them, and asked for their help in finding answers to his questions.

“Come here, my dear,” he said kindly. He put his hands in front of the chamomile and told Leopa to do the same. “Can you feel the energy?” he asked

with childlike anticipation.

Leopa put her hands up next to his but wasn't certain she felt the energy.

"Don't allow yourself to feel inadequate, Leopa, just love."

"I believe I do love them, Dr. Carver," Leopa said.

"Of course you do, Leopa. We must be patient. Let's try again. Let me show you how to begin," he said with a tired yet compassionate smile. Somehow her face now reminded him of... He hesitated a moment and looked over his shoulder, remembering an event from his distant past.

The thunderous sound of galloping horses came on suddenly and deafeningly. Mary Carver was alerted, dropped her basket of wash, and scrambled to gather up her infant son George who was sleeping on a blanket nearby. In a panic she made a run for the cabin but was scooped up in mid-run by one of a group of bushwhackers. Screaming and kicking, she held on to her baby for dear life. Another rider came around from one side and with his claw-like hand pulled at the infant while shouting sneering words of hate from his clenched teeth. She held the baby tightly and refused to let go, but one of the other riders hit her so hard that she partially lost consciousness. Her grip loosened and the rider pulled the baby from her weakened arms.

"Georrrrrge," she screamed, reaching desperately for him in vain. Her voice echoed in the blood-curdling tone of an angered wildcat. Her eyes rolled backward and her mouth quivered violently as she turned from anger to great despair. She let out a wail of grief and shattered like a clay vessel into bloodied fragments.

Geoffrey awoke with a start, sweating, heart pounding, breathing heavily. He sat up in the darkness, trying to find the LCD display of the alarm clock. Three thirty-seven a.m.

"Whew, what is going on, Lord?" he asked in the silence. He sat with his head in his hands and eventually brought his pillow around to the front, hugging it and trying to relax. This was another in a series of dreams Geoffrey Collins had been having on and off for months. They all seemed to occur between three and four in the morning for some reason. He wasn't going to be able to go back to sleep, at least for now. As he often did after one of these episodes, he simply lay there in the dark, looking up at the ceiling and thinking about many things, so many things. His fiancée Eva once told him she felt sorry for him because his brain never seemed to rest. There was also the matter of the letter that had come yesterday.

It didn't make sense. These dreams were the only thing out of sync with his otherwise fairytale existence. After years of hard work and dedicated study and research, life was unfolding beautifully for Geoffrey. He and his dear Eva were engaged, and he was an up and coming botany professor at U Davis in California. Since getting hired to the faculty position the year before, all the pieces were now in place for Dr. Geoffrey Collins. He knew he was leading a charmed existence and was grateful for the amazing events that had been his life experience so far. After he had received his doctorate, his parents shared with him the secret they had kept since his infancy. His philanthropic grandmother had left money for him that grew over the years in a trust that would go to him when, and only if, he completed a doctorate degree in some area related to