

three miracles

AT

TRINITY TRAILS

DR. WANDA SUE

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding.
Acknowledge Him in all thy ways, and He will direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6*

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prologue

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West Virginia

“Breathe! C’mon, honey—breathe!” She pressed her clasped hands firmly into his chest . . . one . . . two . . . three . . . Her head quickly lowered over his airway. She listened intently for any sound. Nothing. Looking down, she noticed the diamond-studded watch Michael had given her for their anniversary just three days earlier. It had been eighteen minutes. Surely, the paramedics would be here soon. She resisted the urge to cry. She had to be strong; Michael needed her. She was beginning to tire, but doggedly refused to give in. With skilled and methodic rhythm, she placed her mouth over his, forcing life-breath into his lungs . . .

one

FEBRUARY 14, 2001,

Florence, California

Marilyn Masters gazed at the digital glow of the alarm clock by the bedside — 4:43 a.m. Throwing herself into the horse ranching business seemed like the right thing to do now although it was a heck of a job for a woman to tackle alone. She grasped a handful of bedcovers and flung them back as she folded her lean, athletic legs over the side of the bed. She might as well get up. The horses would be awake anyway.

She ambled into the kitchen. Sometimes the silence was deafening. She reached for the clock radio to switch on some tunes and reached for the nearby coffee pot. *Pity caffeine doesn't come in an intravenous form.* A couple of cups of joe followed by a brisk shower, and she would be ready for the day. She was excited to get out to the barn to check on the mares ready to foal. Peering out the window, the

moonlit darkness would not allow her to make out more than the outline of the old barn.

The coffee had cleared her head and it was time to get out of the house. The brisk morning air felt good on her face. She zipped her Columbia windbreaker a little higher as she headed down the dimly lit pathway to the barn. Blu, her young canine companion scurried past her with his nose to the ground.

“Blu? Where ya headed, boy?” *I hate it when he runs off while it’s still dark— Why does the dark make me feel so alone? Grow up, Marilyn. Seriously? Every morning we have this same talk. But why does the stinkin’ dark make me so much more aware that I’m alone?*

The faint glow of the buggar light at the far end of the barn had begun to cast shadows in her direction. The indoor light switch was just a few steps ahead. Blu barked. Just then Marilyn heard a rustling in the brush near the sound. *That dog is gonna be the death of me.* Determined not to run the last few steps, Marilyn resolved to walk each step yet picked up her pace. Blu brushed against her leg as he scurried past her to the barn. She felt a knot in her throat as she quickly stepped forward and leaned in to flick on the light. Nothing. *Dang it! I hate being such a scaredy cat. There’s no reason to be afraid. Come on, M, you can do this.* She reached into her pocket and pulled out the small flashlight as she pushed the heavy barn doors open to let in any remnants of outside light.

As she ambled toward the tack room, she felt a tension in her gut. Something just didn’t feel right. She knew the breaker box was on the back wall. Shining the flashlight around the perimeter of the room, she made her way toward the back side of the twelve-by-twelve space. There was a noise above her head. *Focus, Marilyn. It’s probably just*

mice. She opened the cover and shined her light up and down the panel. There was the culprit, a half-thrown breaker. She flicked it off and back on again. Lights! She sighed with relief and rolled her eyes at no one. *Why can't I be braver?* A moment later she paused and smiled while glancing upward — *thank you, Lord.*

Regrouping, Marilyn stepped back in the hallway to a myriad of heads peering out the stall doors. Sweet Sunny was the first; she smiled. Of the twelve in the barn, Sunny was her favorite; probably because she'd raised him from a colt. She looked down the line. *Wait a minute. Where's Prissy?* Prissy would be the first to deliver, but she was still about five days out. Marilyn picked up her pace and headed toward the mare's stall. When she got to the door, it was clear why Prissy wasn't looking out. She was down on the stall floor. For a moment, Marilyn flashed back to Michael on the ground again and how she had failed him. *Stop it, M! This is not Michael, and Prissy needs you.*

"Girl, I thought we still had some time."

Quickly, Prissy sat up and then stood. She began to swish her tail and paw at the ground; one pacing circle, and she went down to the floor again. Marilyn knew all of the birthing signs and quickly threw off her jacket running back to the tack room. She grabbed her stethoscope and some rubber gloves. By the time she'd returned to the stall, Prissy was laying broadside with her legs straight out and stiff; the embryonic sac was exposed, and two tiny hooves were making their way out. Marilyn stepped around to Prissy's head and began to stroke her neck gently.

"You're okay, Priss. You can do this, girl. *We can do this . . . Keep pushing.*" Prissy's long neck was wet with sweat. "Almost there, girl." Marilyn leaned forward on one knee to see more clearly. The horse strained a bit in her pushing.

Marilyn waited and watched. Once more, the horse's midsection tensed, and she raised her head slightly as she pushed again. They both looked rearward hoping to see the foal's head.

No progress. Marilyn delicately stroked Prissy's muzzle, trying to comfort her while looking at her watch. Prissy's head dropped again; her breathing was labored. *Don't panic. Mother Nature's got this.* She listened to Prissy's rapid heartbeat . . . *The baby will be here any minute.* Another unproductive push. *Time for me to help.*

"It's okay, girl. I'm here, I'll help." Prissy's raised head fell to the floor once more as Marilyn moved toward her rear. Down on a knee, Marilyn gently grabbed the baby's front legs. As the next wave of contractions hit, Marilyn lightly applied a bit of traction. And there was the head.

"Almost there, Ms. Priss ... it's a beauty, Mama. Come on, girl, you can do this." She continued to apply soft traction so the baby's head would remain out. Prissy relaxed for what seemed an eternity. Marilyn realized she was sweating as well. Her barn entering jitters had quickly evaporated as she'd moved into action. *Another set of hands would be nice, but you can do this, girl. Just believe.* "Come on, Priss, give us one more good push, and you're home free." In a moment, the shoulders presented, and the rest of the foal slipped out quickly. *The miracle of life.*

Prissy raised her head again and looked to the rear. Within minutes, she was on her feet, nuzzling the wobbly, new mass. Marilyn quietly checked the foal's heart rate. *This is what I was born for.* A broad smile crossed her face. She moved away from the tiny filly to give Prissy time and space with her new bundle, a beautiful little red roan with three socks. *Life is good.*

She walked out of the stall and brushed her hair out of

her face. *Whew! Amazing!* She peered back. *Simply amazing. Okay, lady, there's more work to be done.* She walked over to Sunny's stall to tell him about the new addition. His golden-brown head and white blaze peered out the top half of the door. She reached to stroke his face. He gently nudged Marilyn with his soft, dark muzzle. It was as if he approved of a new baby in the barn.

"Hey, boy. We got a new baby girl on the farm, and she's a beauty." Marilyn mused over telling a *horse* about the new filly. She'd have to call her lifelong buddy, Lisa, when the hour was reasonable to share the exciting news.

End of Preview.

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