

Doctor Jameson's blue eyes scanned the rows of mangled bodies lying on the ground before him. Smoke from the now silent rifles filled the open field as an eerie reminder of the fierce skirmish that had just taken place in the normally peaceful countryside. Men in blue uniforms and men in gray uniforms, who just hours before struggled against each other for their lives, now lay dying next to each other on the Tennessee hillside.

These men weren't strangers to Doctor Jameson. As his eyes briefly landed on one young man in gray after another, scenes of their short lives flashed through his mind. These were men he'd delivered himself.

His gaze landed on Samuel O'Toole's pained face. He winced at the agonizing memory of little Samuel's birth. Samuel's mother, Mary O'Toole, was by far the most beautiful young lady Doctor Jameson had ever laid eyes upon. She grew up on the land adjoining his. He and his wife spent many nights entertaining with Mary's parents and many of the other families nearby. They watched the rambunctious tomboy grow into a beautiful young lady before their very eyes. Young Matthew O'Toole noticed the changes in Mary before any of the other boys in town had a chance. Of course, Matthew had his heart set on marrying that little fair skinned blonde since they were old enough to talk.

The pregnancy occurred a few months after their wedding. Mary's excitement over the baby grew even faster than her stomach did. Everywhere she went that overjoyed smile framed her porcelain face. She never complained to Doctor Jameson as some of the other women did. If she had, he might have sensed something wasn't right.

That horrible day, as it was later related to him, started out normal. Mary, who was a few weeks from delivery, cooked breakfast for her husband before he went out to the fields for a long morning of work. As they sat around the table enjoying their meal, Matthew noticed Mary seemed very distracted and distant.

"Mary, what's troubling you?"

"Hmmm? Oh, nothing Matthew." She patted his hand as it lay across the table from hers.

"Mary, I know something is troubling you. Please talk to me he urged gently."

"I'm feeling a little different today. Nothing to worry about Matthew. I'll have your meal ready around noon."

She rose from her chair and began clearing the dishes. Matthew plucked his hat from the table, placing it back on his head, as he proceeded to the front door. Looking back at his pregnant wife, he waved, and she smiled in return, her face glowing in the early morning sunlight slipping through the side window. Matthew later confided to Doctor Jameson that he would always remember Mary that way – standing there with that smile spread across her face.

When Matthew walked in the door for his midday meal, he found Mary lying on the kitchen floor, and ran to a neighbor's house to send for Doctor Jameson. The doctor arrived as quickly as possible, but no one knew how long Mary had been unconscious. When she woke up in her own bed with her husband, the doctor, and a multitude of neighbors lurking nearby, Doctor Jameson immediately knew she wasn't herself anymore.

Glancing at her husband a curious look came across her face, "do I know you?"

She squinted as if trying to get a better look.

"Of course you know me Mary. I'm your husband." He smoothed the blonde hair back from her forehead.

"Silly," she cackled at him in a child's voice, "I'm not married. I'm much too young to be married. Papa says so."

Matthew cast a helpless glance at the doctor. Escorting her husband out of the room, Doctor Jameson explained that whatever was causing the trauma inside Mary's body had affected her mind.

"Doctor, she'll get better. Right? Just tell me she'll be herself again," Matthew pleaded for the woman he loved.

"I'm sorry Matthew. These things are unpredictable. It may be temporary. It may be perma..." Doctor Jameson stopped at the sound of a bloodcurdling scream from the bedroom.

They rushed back in to find Mary lurching in the bed swinging wildly at the innocent neighbors trying to help her.

"She's in labor Doctor," one of them whispered to him.

"...and her mind doesn't understand. She's become a little girl again," Doctor Jameson

muttered to no one in particular.

"That baby's coming whether Mary is ready or not," he told Matthew as he reached into his medicine bag and removed four long pieces of rope.

"Strap her down," he commanded, handing the rope to a neighbor.

As her husband stood by helpless, Dr. Jameson tried to soothe Mary's fears as her contractions grew stronger. The screams coming from that room as her son emerged from her body would haunt Doctor Jameson for years. After the delivery he excused himself from the room and slipped back home. He couldn't forget the beautiful little blonde boy he'd just delivered. The way that baby looked at him melted his heart.

Matthew named his son Samuel O'Toole, after Mary's grandfather. Little Samuel was the light of his father's life. As Samuel grew, his mother's mind slowly began to return though she was never quite the same person she had been before that fateful day. Matthew, without complaint, accepted the primary role of raising their young son.

Through his childhood medical checkups, Doctor Jameson watched little Samuel quickly grow into a young man himself. At an early age he was the spitting image of his father, both in looks and disposition. Everyone knew Samuel had the brains and stubbornness to do anything he set his mind to, but no one saw Samuel O'Toole rushing off to enlist in the Confederate Army.

When the call for volunteers went out across Tennessee in early 1861, Samuel answered. Only seventeen years old, he felt invincible. He'd stood proudly in his gray uniform at the edge of town as he and the rest of the brave young boys he grew up with prepared to march away to a quick fight. They weren't ready for the brutality of war that awaited them.

Dr. Jameson stayed up to date on the whereabouts of every single boy in town over the next year. Their parents would drop in for a visit to proudly inform him of their respective son's latest military exploits. Matthew was overjoyed at the news that the boys would be marching only fifteen miles from the O'Toole's home, and that they had received three days furlough to visit with family. He planned the largest barbeque that part of Tennessee had ever seen. Everyone within twenty miles of the O'Toole plantation received an invitation. Doctor Jameson was en route to the celebration when a malnourished man in a bloody gray uniform staggered

in front of his buggy.

"Doc Jameson," the man gasped. "Doc Jameson, you got to help us!"

"How do you know my name?" Doctor Jameson questioned.

"Doc Jameson, you're known me my whole life," he pleaded, but the doctor showed no sign of remembrance, so the young man continued, "I'm Jacob Johnson; John Johnson's oldest boy."

Doctor Jameson stared in disbelief. Jacob Johnson stood before him a shadow of his former self.

"Are you okay Jacob?"

Doctor Jameson jumped down from the buggy and rushed over to help. "Where were you shot?"

"In the arm. It's nothing Doc. There are men with worse injuries where I came from."

"Jacob, let me examine the wound," Doctor Jameson urged once more.

Jacob obediently nodded, and the doctor proceeded to unfasten the two remaining shirt buttons. Opening the fabric and lowering the sleeve, Doctor Jameson wiped the blood away with his handkerchief. He squinted, moving his head closer to Jacob's injured arm. With no visible bullet entrance or exit found, the doctor could only assume the shot hadn't penetrated the boy's body. After applying a bandage to the wound, they both climbed into the buggy. Jacob provided directions to a field five miles away.

"They surprised us. We were marching nearby, getting ready to start on furlough. We didn't know there were any Yankees around these parts Doc. We were just laughing, sharing memories of home, when we heard a shot come through the woods. Then another shot, and then another one. John O'Leery crumpled to the ground, and we all scattered and ran. Men were falling so fast that there must have been hundreds of them Yankees. When it finally ended, I started out to find help. That's when I found you Doc."

"How many men are wounded?"

"Hundreds, Doc. There are hundreds of them."

Doctor Jameson nodded, but didn't put much stock into it. Everyone knew Jacob Johnson had an overactive imagination. Even as a child, he could spin some of the most

unfathomable, yet slightly believable tales that anyone ever heard. It wasn't until they arrived at the sight of the carnage that Doctor Jameson realized the story Jacob had described simply must have been true.

He jumped from the buggy and ran to the fallen soldier closest to him. The man held both of his hands over his stomach in pain. Doctor Jameson's gaze briefly met the soldier's; then he forced himself to break eye contact and gently removed the man's hands to reveal a gaping wound peeking through the remains of his blue Federal uniform. Replacing the shaking man's hands to their original position, Doctor Jameson moved on to the next soldier.

The next one was even more severely wounded than the first one, though the doctor hadn't thought that was even possible. The young Confederate soldier was bleeding from multiple stomach wounds. The doctor shook his head in defeat and rose to move along. He felt a tug on his pants leg and looked down to find the young soldier grasping at his ankle.

"Please, have mercy sir. Just make the pain stop," the soldier begged.

The doctor looked down at those pleading brown eyes and nodded. He knelt down next to the young man, reached into his bag, and pulled out the small bottle of chloroform. If this was the only comfort these men would know in their final hours, Doctor Jameson felt it was his duty to provide it.

He moved through the next row of men providing an escape from the pain of a slow death where he could. One after another, he treated boys he'd watched grow up in front of his very eyes. It was as he stood surveying the rows of familiar wounded faces that he spotted Samuel O'Toole lying silently on the grass.

Rushing over to Samuel, Doctor Jameson felt a surge of fear. Little Samuel couldn't be dead he told himself, not after all of the trouble he had bringing that little boy into this world. He dropped down next to him, sobbing at the sight of the mangled leg attached to Samuel's frail body.

"Why are you crying?"

Doctor Jameson nearly jumped out of his skin at the sound of Samuel's voice.

"Samuel," he whispered. "I thought you were..." his voice slowly trailed off.

"The pain's unbearable," Samuel grunted slightly shifting his body to get a better view

of the doctor, "so I closed my eyes and thought about home." He paused for a moment, "I am going to go home, right Doctor Jameson?"

"Of course Samuel." Doctor Jameson muttered unable to look him in the eyes, "of course you'll make it home. Let me just examine you."

Doctor Jameson treated multiple minor wounds on Samuel's body before casting his attention on the young man's injured right leg. He knew immediately that Samuel's leg needed to be amputated. Within a matter of hours gangrene would set in, and the boy would surely die.

"Your leg needs to be amputated Samuel," Doctor Jameson began gently.

"Then amputate it," Samuel replied.

"I can't Samuel."

"Sure you can Doctor. You can do anything."

"No Samuel, it would be too painful for you."

"Then give me something to take away the pain," Samuel's impatience began to show.

"There's nothing left to give you. The chloroform is gone. I don't have anything else. I'm so sorry Samuel."

"Amputate it," Samuel's voice became strained.

"But..."

"Doctor Jameson!" Samuel yelled, "I will NOT die here. Amputate it!"

Reluctantly Doctor Jameson removed the amputation knife from his medicine bag. He tore part of Samuel's shirt off and placed it into the young man's mouth. He said a quick prayer and then pierced Samuel's skin with the knife. Samuel screamed in pain and bit into the shirt in his mouth. The doctor continued to operate through the screams and the curses thrown his way. When he finished he bandaged the remaining skin. The boy, long since unconscious from the pain, lay in silence.

Slowly Doctor Jameson rose and continued across the field to resume treatment of the wounded. Samuel's screams echoed in his mind. He performed various operations on fully conscious men that day, but none of those screams compared to young Samuel O'Toole's. They were eerily similar to the cries his mother Mary let out the day he was born.

Doctor Jameson remained so lost in thought that he didn't hear a single word the man

sitting across from him was saying.

"Doctor Jameson, you've got that look again," the man told him.

"What look?"

"The same one you had out in the field the day you mutilated half the countryside."

"I did NOT mutilate anyone!" Doctor Jameson noticed the other man's teasing eyes twinkling and softened his tone, "I only did what I had to do. You of all people should understand that."

The man glanced down at his missing right leg then back at the doctor.

"I never said mutilating us was a bad thing, just mutilating us without anesthesia."

"Samuel O'Toole," Doctor Jameson sighed, "that was ten years ago. Are you ever going to let it go?"

"Never," Samuel chuckled to himself, "Never Doctor."

Doctor Jameson looked at Samuel's smiling face and started to laugh.

"Well Samuel, at my age never doesn't sound that bad."