



CHAPTER 1 MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

“Can you come over?” her best friend’s voice pleaded once again, but with greater despair.

All the way there, Cindy Lou pondered Marg’s favorite saying: *To be or not to be. That is the question.* For the first time, her concern for Marg was replaced by worry.

“I’m so glad ... you’re here ... I’m ... ” Marg embraced her, sobbing and shaking,

“You’ll be alright, Marg. I’m here now.”

“I know ... but why ... why ... why does this keep ... happening?”

Cindy Lou saw Marg was in no condition just then to understand anything she said. So, she just wrapped Marg in her arms, “It’s alright Marg. Just let it out. It’s alright.”

This relaxed Marg, like an upset child who feels encouraged to *cry it out.*

Regaining some composure, Marg mumbled, “But why am I so angry and depressed after all these months?”

Marg’s deep breath let out deep pain. She could barely whimper, “God didn’t stop Mike from dying ... so I keep bouncing back and forth ... angry with God, then depressed at being alone ... more anger ... deeper depression. When will I finally accept what’s happened?”

Soon Cindy Lou hoped.

Marg took a deeper breath and sniffled, “And now ... I have no hope ... Fate has not brought anyone into my life ... to be my companion ... after three long ... lonely years.”

Cindy Lou wondered: *Am I being an enabler again*. She knew what Marg would say. She'd heard it many times before. Sort of like a scratched record that causes the same words to play over and over – until someone lifts the record player's arm out of the rut. She did not know how to do this for Marg.

“You know how many guys I've dated, hoping to find the right one? Hoping Fate and Good Fortune would smile on me again ... at least once? All I want is one good one. Is that asking too much?”

[Marg utters her despair until she looks at the *Gestalt Prayer* hanging on her wall.]

“I've always had a much different belief about what's true. It's called Fate or Good Fortune as described in the *Gestalt Prayer*. I know it by heart:

I do my thing and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you, and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped.”

Marg's smile became hopeful again as she declared, “I know this brought me and Mike together, then enabled us to be great companions on the same life journey.”

“Is this what you're hoping will happen again?”

“That's why I'm dating lots of guys, hoping Fate will bring me the right one.”

“How's that really working out for you?”

“You really want my honest answer?”

Cindy Lou looked deeply into her best friend's eyes, “Your most honest answer.”

Taking another deep breath, Marg responded more honestly than ever before. She divulged what she'd never said before: “California guys are just leaping lechers! Trying to leap all over me, lusting after me. Not wanting to know the real me. I know because I've dated so many I've lost count. They're all the same. I date them usually once, sometimes twice. Until I know there is no hope there. Then, I retreat into loneliness ... until I need to hope again. Honestly, Cindy Lou, it's just a hopeless cycle that doesn't stop.”

“Well, I can see why this keeps happening. You're a physically attractive woman – with a vivacious personality. You're the female version of a *babe magnet*,” Cindy Lou chuckled.

“That's not funny!” Marg chuckled also, because she knew her best friend was right. “But what can I do? I can't change how I look or my personality.”

“Have you considered getting out of Dodge?”

“That's not funny either!”

“I mean, going east – where many men have been more traditionally raised to be Gentlemen and to treat women with respect – as Ladies?”

“Hmmm ... interesting idea.” Marg's creative mind imagined new possibilities. “I do have a sabbatical coming up. Any suggestions?”

“You know I grew up in Virginia. I bet there are some Virginia Gentlemen still being bred there. There's a small college – Liberty Falls College – not far from where my parents live. Why not find out if their English Department will let you teach there on your sabbatical.”

“Okay Cindy Lou, I will. I know if I stay in California, *Mission: Impossible* will keep happening – but without a happy movie ending. Perhaps, *Mission: Possible* awaits me at Liberty Falls College. It's time for this perky California gal to go prospecting elsewhere.”

[Marg decides to take Cindy Lou's advice.]

And so, Cindy Lou drove Marg to the airport, hugged her best friend goodbye, and said, “Phone me when you need to. Otherwise let’s chat once a week or so.”

“That works for me!” Marg’s smile revealed renewed hope. Cindy Lou’s smile ratified this. The California gals were in sync again as best friends who want the best for one another.

As Marg’s plane rose in the sky, so did Cindy Lou’s departing prayer, “Marg is in your hands now, God. Please watch over her since I can’t.” As the plane disappeared, so did her continuous obligation to her best friend, replaced by a focus on herself. For, she had a heart-felt, but long-ignored longing for an honest and true man – a husband– who would share three love affairs with her: an *agape*-love commitment as a lifelong marriage partner, a *philia*-love companion who enjoys the same activities, and an *erotic* lover for her pent-up passion. Three love affairs in that exact order of importance. Cindy Lou wouldn’t settle for less.

As she prayed for this, and for Marg again, God heard Cindy Lou’s prayer and continued arranging what neither California gal could ever have imagined – because

“My thoughts are higher than your thoughts, and My ways are higher than your ways, sayeth the Lord.”

CHAPTER 2

MISSION: POSSIBLE

[Marg goes to Liberty Falls Gym to play pickleball and prospect for the right man. As Pickleball Ambassador, Rod greets her and introduces her to everyone. Rod and JT play against Marg and Bib, so Rod’s sister can coach Marg while the guys hit balls Marg can return.]

Excerpt:

That night, JT phoned Rod. “You *lucky dog!* Fate just gave you the pick of the litter.”

“What are you talking about?”

“That new eye-candy ... Marg ... that fate brought to our little town from California.” JT quipped, “Five foot two, eyes of blue ... can she laugh ... can she coo.”

“Yeah, she’s a knockout all right. But she is five foot six. That’s all I know right now.”

“Just checking your eyesight,” JT chuckled, “to see how much you noticed.”

“Everything, old buddy.”

“Yeah, you *are* my best buddy, but also a *lucky dog*,” JT repeated with greater emphasis. “Wish I were still Pickleball Ambassador so I could’ve met her first ... you *lucky dog*.”

“Stop that, JT. Marg is brand new here and needs to meet new people. Anyone can meet her ... including you, old buddy.”

“Are you calling me old?” JT chuckled.

“No, just saying ... we’re both getting older ... might be nice to have someone new and exciting like Marg in our lives. We’re both tired of being alone.”

“You sure got that right. We both know she’s the *only* prospect in our little town.”

“Yeah ... we know all the non-prospects. As long-time friends, we each want what’s best for one another. Right?”

“Ditto that, good buddy! Well, I’d best ring off now ... I’m getting older the longer we talk,” JT chuckled, causing Rod to do likewise. Like they’d done over some thirty years.

Unbeknownst to the other, each was thinking: *Marg can choose anyone she captivates. Perhaps, me!*

After bantering with JT, Rod focused again on writing a book he aimed to complete soon. At the end of his busy days, he also made time to reflect back on memories he wanted to recall in the future. Before his wife's death, he would have shared them with her. But now, Rod shared the highlights with loyal Shep because she always listened: Is Marg a *God Nod* for you and me, Shep? But, don't get too excited. She might just be a *California gal* who is only passing through our little town."

That night, Marg wrote impressions into her journal as fast as they entered her vivid imagination: Rod is certainly a HUNK, so is his buddy JT. I like both of them, and Bib too. Each knows how to have fun, and they really care for one another as best friends should. Each can help me learn how to play pickleball and meet eligible prospects. I'm tired of being alone in the land of *Mission: Impossible*. I don't want to return to California without *my* man. Only time will tell if this is Good Fortune for me."

Marg recited the *Gestalt Prayer* she had hung on her bedroom wall. While she was hoping that those words were still true, the phone rang. It was Cindy Lou checking on her.

"Good to hear your voice," Marg beamed.

"Yours too. Just wanted to know if you're alright."

"So far, so good. Great prospects here! Can we talk in a few days. It's late and I have to be up early."

"Okay!"

"Bye for now."

"Good night, Marg."

[In Chapters 3-5, Rod impresses Marg with his coaching methods; so, she entices him to be her pickleball partner and motivate students in the creative writing course she teaches at Liberty Falls College. Their physical appearance, athletic ability and different styles of functioning attract them like magnets.

To entice Marg to remain in Liberty Falls with him, Rod escorts Marg on a *Virginia Bucket List* of unique activities in Virginia and DC: Woodley Park National Zoo, Skyline Drive to take color photos, and Smithsonian Institution.]

CHAPTER 6 FROM HIGH TO LOW

[Marg insists on visiting The Holocaust Museum,
against Rod's strongest advice.]

Excerpt:

Before entering the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Rod said, "I'm here for you, Marg."

To show her resolve, free-spirited Marg grabbed Rod's hand and led him into a barely-lit, cramped room. It was an exact replica of the Secret Annex where Anne Frank lived and wrote her famous diary.

Unexpectedly, Marg began to tear as she read words from the *Diary of Anne Frank* and she felt the walls of this small room crushing in on her. This caused those words, that day, to become real to her, for the first time, and forever after.

Rod wiped away tears she could not stop, and whispered, “Marg, sure you *want* to continue?”

“I ... I ... must find out ... what the Nazis did to my Jewish ancestors,” she muttered.

“Then, we’ll keep going,” he whispered as he gently took her hand and led her away, “Sure you *can* continue?”

Marg squeezed his hand because words failed her. He gave her a reassuring hug – from one human being to another. Again, to show her resolve, she began leading him to experience all the evidence for The Holocaust.

They took the elevator to the top floor to see exhibits of how Hitler rose to powerful Fuhrer, and then moved downward, floor by floor, to see how this megalomaniac gradually caused the decline of morality in Nazi-controlled Germany.

Along this descent into darkest evil, Rod sometimes wrapped one strong arm around her. Other times, she turned her body into his so that both of his arms swallowed her. The human warmth and empathy they felt became even more important as they witnessed the Nazi’s inhumanity in dehumanizing and then exterminating some six million Jews and countless other human beings whom Hitler proclaimed to be sub-human.

They entered barely-lit dark exhibits everywhere they turned: railroad cars that brought boxed-in Jews to the Concentration Camps; bunk houses where they slept, often two or more to a bed, while they still lived; the fake shower rooms where unsuspecting victims were gassed; the ovens where dead bodies rose as ashes that local townspeople somehow didn’t see – or denied.

Everywhere, they experienced the downward spiral to dehumanize human beings and eventually mass murder them as the *Final Solution*. Everything they witnessed was meticulously documented in thousands of *black and white* photographs the Nazis made. In *black and white* propaganda movies they created. In *black-penned* documents that described what had actually occurred. In meticulous *black* tallies of confiscated eyeglasses, gold tooth fillings, human hair, and other items more useful to the Nazis than the sub-humans they mass murdered.

Rod and Marg stopped often to remove the teary blur always before them, so they could see to continue ever downward – to experience more darkness. Many times, this did not work because the tears flowed faster than they could wipe. And so he hugged her to provide reassurance that she is a valued human being who has worth and dignity – unlike her Jewish kinfolk who were mass murdered as sub-humans.

For the first time, this astute literature instructor truly understood Marshall McLuhan’s best-selling book, *The Medium is the Massage*. She understood why the title emphasizes *Massage* instead of *Message* – because *black and white* images kept *massaging* her entire being as her mind kept trying to supply colors she imagined.

All the black and white evidence of Nazi atrocities combined into a *dark medium* that *massaged* and impacted her imagination and every fiber of her being. She knew that what had actually happened in living color to her kinfolk would forever be stored as *black and white* images she could not forget.

Marg felt dehumanized as though she were there. She knew her entire being was being *massaged*, with a final impact that would endure much longer than Hitler’s *Final Solution*.

Marg mumbled, “Now I understand why you tried to stop my coming here.”

[Rod contrasts God’s rule—“Thou shall not murder”—with what Hitler practiced—“survival of the fittest”—as advocated by evolutionist Charles Darwin. They finally exit, haunted by the black-and-white images in their minds.]

That night, Marg was incapable of writing anything in her journal.

At his home, Rod whispered sobering thoughts to Shep: “Thank you God for getting us through that *valley of death* ... my faith in You is stronger than ever.”

Then, he cried himself to sleep, aided by Shep’s loyal presence.

[In Chapter 7, Rod helps Marg refocus by visiting the Library of Congress, where books she’s authored are catalogued and stored.

In Chapters 8-9, Marg flies Cindy Lou to Liberty Falls for Thanksgiving and insists Rod coach her to play pickleball. Marg wants her best friend’s impressions of Rod.]

CHAPTER 10 SEEKING INDEPENDENCE

[Rod and Marg enjoy companionship while doing fun activities. Afterwards, they go to the Pickleballers Annual Christmas Party. Each dances like they once did with their departed spouses.]

Excerpt:

After Marg arrived, they flowed seamlessly from one activity to another. Until they danced. Rod was used to leading Mary, whether slow dancing or touch dancing to faster Rock and Roll songs. He was used to Mary responding to the pressure of his right hand on her back as he twilled her around in a slow dance, and to her following his lead to spin out and back, or go around him or under his arm during the faster songs.

Rod was not used to what Marg did: lead him during the slow dances and physically move away from him to *do-her-own-dancing-thing* during the fast songs – her arms flailing in all directions as her body gyrated here-there-and-everywhere. Marg and Mike had always enjoyed dancing like this – moving apart, coming together, moving around, coming face to face, over and over for two-to-three minutes or more, until the song ended.

Neither Rod nor Marg knew the dancing style the other liked. Not until now.

Marg’s mind told her body *I’m no longer willing to just go along* with what Rod wants me to do. So, she stopped dancing. Her mind forgot how she totally enjoyed doing all the traditional activities on Rod’s Virginia Bucket List. She desired spontaneity like she enjoyed with Mike.

Suddenly, independent-minded Marg *stormed* off the dance floor, in front of all his friends, to show Rod how displeased she was with *his* dancing style. For the first time, they were not functioning as partners.

To not embarrass Marg, Rod hid his disappointment about their clashing dancing styles, by not making a scene in front of all his friends. He simply left the dance floor and touched Bib and JT as he passed them on the way to the exit, to let them know he was leaving – alone. Their grim faces reflected his disappointment.

For the first time, this was something they didn't discuss. Rod was extremely discouraged because, early in life, he had gained an important insight while leading touch dancing with Mary: *If I can hold her hand to lead her as a dancing partner, she'll hold my hand and we'll dance through life together as partners.* For over thirty years, Rod did this with Mary and thus knew that touch dancing requires agreed on interdependence with your partner. But Marg wanted to dance independently, doing her own thing.

This wisdom was not about controlling or dominating a female. It was about cooperating together as dancing partners – and life partners – bringing out the best in one another. For, when *touch dancing* as true partners, the best male leaders are best at showcasing their female partner, who actually performs the more exacting and exciting moves. He discovered this bit of wisdom with Mary and married her to perpetuate it.

Rod didn't know what to do, except to go home and phone Cindy Lou for advice, before she went to sleep on the west coast.

"Hello, Cindy Lou ... It's Rod ... from Liberty Falls ... you said we could talk ... sometime." Rod stammered so awkwardly that she knew why he was phoning.

"You sound very upset. Marg just phoned me ... she is too. Let's hang up and use FaceTime so we can see one another." Cindy Lou sensed Rod needed this.

Looking at Cindy Lou on FaceTime decreased Rod's mumbling, "I need your advice. Marg and I clashed because we enjoy very different dancing styles. How can I get on Marg's good side again?"

"I can't really say, Rod. What do you think Marg's good side might be?" Cindy Lou jested to cheer him up – and she did, judging from his smile.

"I don't know what it is ... or where it is ... or how to find it," Rod responded without yet realizing what Cindy Lou was doing. "That's why I need your advice." He looked *hopeless* when he realized her advice was three thousand miles away, then looked *hopeful* as he realized Cindy Lou was actually facing him on his computer screen.

"Well, take a guess ... you just might be right." She giggled because she knew it would be the first time that any man could be right about this. But, Rod was too upset to surmise what Cindy Lou was about to do.

"How will I know ... if you don't know as her best friend? I just met Marg ... you've known her for some thirty years."

"Do you want to know her longer?" Cindy Lou wanted to get Rod's mind on the big picture and off being so upset right now.

"Don't know ... it's complicated. She might be just passing through here before returning there."

"But, what if she's staying there and not returning here?" Cindy Lou wanted to find out what Rod really desired.

"Are you trying to confuse me?" Rod somewhat giggled and looked harder at his screen to see if she was.

"Just trying to be helpful."

"Can we return to how I can get back on Marg's good side?"

"Well, since we don't know Marg's good side, would it be helpful to discuss how to get back on any woman's good side?"

"Possibly ... I need an example ... tell me about ... your good side," Rod stammered again.

"I have lots of good sides all over." Rod's face moved closer to his computer screen.

"What are they and how would I find them?" Rod was no longer stammering. He was becoming intrigued with Cindy Lou's wit, and wanted to continue their light-hearted repartee.

So, he asked, “Isn’t having *lots* of good sides a lot harder to figure out than finding out just *one* good side?”

“As a college math instructor, I’d say it’s a lot more probable you could find at least one of my *many* good sides. You’re mathematically less likely to find someone’s *one and only* good side.”

“Seems like we are right back where we started.” Rod was looking confused.

“Want some advice, Rod?”

“Please! That’s why I contacted you.” Rod now sounded desperate.

But Cindy Lou continued to provide some levity to cheer him up before giving advice, “My father used to tell me: *If you ain’t who you is, then who you is, is who you ain’t.*”

“That’s funny. But, what does that have to do with Marg and me?”

Seeing Rod’s mounting desperation, Cindy Lou finally gave this advice: “Just be yourself Rod, and let Marg recover. Say and do what you always say and do. If that doesn’t work, I have no further advice for you.”

“That might work.”

Sensing Rod needed encouragement, Cindy Lou added, “Each woman is complicated in her own way. The key to success is realizing you’ll never completely understand this, so just be the kind, gentle man you are and see what happens ... this would work with me.”

Wanting to keep their banter going because it really was lifting his spirits, Rod asked the witty college math instructor, “So, mathematically I’m much more likely to find out *some* of your many good sides than the *one* good side Marg has?”

“Is that a question or a statement?” she teased.

“Both,” Rod responded, “But, now I’m going to take your advice and just be myself and find out what happens with Marg.”

Rod thanked Cindy Lou again and they logged off FaceTime.

That night, another *God Nod* caused Rod to recall how the prophet Samuel chose a little shepherd boy named David to become Israel’s greatest king: *People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*

Elsewhere, Marg again looked at the poster hanging on her bedroom wall, displaying the words of Fritz Perl’s *Gestalt Prayer*. She verbalized over and over, *I am not in this world to live up to your expectations, and you are not in this world to live up to mine.* Convinced these words are true and she is right to believe them, she entered only two words in her journal: *Baugh, humbug!* Then she fell asleep – still festering.

[In Chapters 11-15, Marg flies Cindy Lou to Liberty Falls for Christmas, to get her best friend’s impressions of Rod. He involves them and sister Bib in cutting down Christmas trees, decorating a Christmas Float, wrapping Christmas gifts for homeless kids, participating in the Sing-Along-Messiah at The Kennedy Center, attending the Christmas Eve service where he reads the Biblical account.

Several times, Rod flies to San Francisco to work with a client. To entice him to move to California, Marg prepares a *California Bucket List* of unique activities for Rod to do with Cindy Lou. For the first time, she doesn’t share her infatuated impressions about Rod.]

CHAPTER 20 BAH, HUMBUG IN FEBRUARY

Throughout the next week, Rod had to prepare for his second trip west, besides co-hosting Bible Study and exercising little Shep. Marg had to focus on her growing responsibilities at Liberty Falls College. When possible, they got together to play pickleball, for Marg was as hooked on it as he was. When Rod couldn't play, Marg played with JT because he could coach her almost as well as Rod. She was determined to stay fit and improve here so she could play with slightly younger and fitter, and more naturally athletic Cindy Lou after returning to California.

Everything was going well for both Marg and Rod, until the Pickleballers Valentine Party

While dancing to several slow dances, Rod appreciated Marg letting him lead as she had promised. When the band cranked up the tempo for fast dancing, Marg let him lead her in touch dancing for a while and then suddenly let go of his hand and started 'wildly flailing her arms about and doing-her-own-thing' again.

Marg 'lost it' in Rod's eyes. More than that, she broke her promise to him. This was his perception.

Suddenly, Marg publicly *stormed* off the dance floor to show Rod how displeased *she* was with his dancing style – just as she had done at the Christmas Party. And, again Rod hid his disappointment from all those watching this spectacle. The rest of the evening was spent avoiding one another, as Marg flitted about and chitchatted with everybody, as was her style, and Rod fulfilled his Pickleball Ambassador functions. Most observers thought they were acting normally – they could not see the disappointment each felt.

But, Bib and JT did.

In silence, Rod drove Marg home and dropped her off. He did not seek out anyone's advice about fixing this recurring conflict.

That night, Marg again pondered Fritz Perl's *Gestalt Prayer* hanging on her bedroom wall, hoping to understand the truthfulness of these words: *I do my thing and you do your thing ... and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped.*

At his home, a very dejected Rod felt rejection to his core, more this time than before, because of Marg's broken promise. So he cuddled little Shep, who sensed something was dreadfully wrong with him ... Shep's tail did not wag that night. Finally, Rod uttered just two words, *Bah, Humbug!* He kept cuddling loyal Shep while longing for a *God Nod* he understood.

[In Chapters 21-22, Cindy Lou uses Rod's coaching methods to coach him to ski at Square Valley. Meanwhile, Marg continues learning more about Rod from his sister Viv and best friend JT.]

CHAPTER 23 YOU'RE THE ONE I'M YEARNING FOR

[After Rod returns from California, Marg and Rod avoid one another. Until they meet to break up. While thanking each other for fond memories, their story takes an unexpected turn.]

Excerpt:

Rod was almost on the verge of saying “Let’s try to make this work” when his analytic, logical, left brain kicked in: “It seems to me that you need someone more adventuresome than me, less systematic, more free-spirited and spontaneous. Do you agree?”

[They agree that each other’s best friend is the right match. So, Marg pursues JT while Rod flies to California to begin a relationship with Cindy Lou. She becomes Personal Tour Guide for a California Bucket List of fun activities to do, so they can get to know one another better.

At the Artichoke Dance in Castroville, they dance in sync like the *Dancing Queen* with her *Dancing King*. They agree to return for more.]

**CHAPTER 24
SIDE-BY-SIDE**

[Leaving Castroville the next morning, Rod drove south onto the scenic Pacific Coast Highway. Previously, he told her how Buddy’s big hit, *Peggy Sue*, was originally titled *Cindy Lou*. Because they are Buddy Holly fans, he sings to her.]

Excerpt:

Rod suggested they play a CD of popular songs and sing along. Cindy Lou looked at the playlist of the *Greatest Rock-and-Roll Hits from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s*. To her delight, she found *Peggy Sue* and inserted that CD so Rod could sing along with Buddy Holly, but substituting *Cindy Lou* in place of *Peggy Sue*. She wanted Rod to sing to his Cindy Lou. And he did:

If you knew Cindy Lou,
Then you'd know why I feel blue
Without Cindy, my Cindy Lou
Oh well, I love you gal
Yes, I love you Cindy Lou

Cindy Lou, Cindy Lou
Oh how my heart yearns for you
Oh Cindy, my Cindy Lou
Oh well, I love you gal
Yes, I love you Cindy Lou

Rod repeated several verses he'd already sung to finish the song, but couldn't imitate Buddy's nasal twang, especially when Buddy hiccupped certain words. Cindy Lou laughed and applauded because Rod sang off-key as much as on.

"Thanks for serenading me, *Buddy*." She just had to quip, "I think."

"Ah shucks, *Cindy Lou*. It weren't nothing at all," Rod parried back with a west Texas twang, like Buddy had developed while growing up in Lubbock.

"Buddy must've really loved that gal, *Cindy Lou*, to keep repeating her name ... over and over and over," Cindy Lou chuckled.

"Perhaps not enough ... because he changed that name to *Peggy Sue* ... and then sang *thirty* times to *Peggy Sue*," Rod replied to impress Cindy Lou's precise mathematical mind with his knowledge.

"Yeah, but his heart must've really *yearned* for the original *Cindy Lou*," she retorted.

"Yep ... 'cause he *loved* that first gal Cindy Lou."

"And *needed* that gal Cindy Lou?" she added.

"And *wanted* that gal Cindy Lou,"

"Well, I sure wish I'd been that gal Cindy Lou ... and Buddy was singing *to* me ... He would not have sung to that other gal ... Peggy Sue," she spoke her words very wishfully, so Rod would keep singing to her, especially *Oh how my heart yearns for you ... my Cindy Lou*.

And, he did, sitting side-by-side, as they took turns driving to Anaheim.

[Where they visited Disneyland.]

[In Chapter 25, Rod and Cindy visit the San Diego Zoo, and nearly breakup.
Until a *God Nod* saves the day.]

CHAPTER 26 A RE-DO AT THE ZOO

[Day 2 at the Zoo advances their relationship. While Cindy Lou drives them back to their motel, Rod pretends to be "all-knowing Carnac" like Johnny Carson pretended on his popular TV show.]

Excerpt:

Because of their hilarious repartee, Cindy Lou became relaxed enough to disclose a serious personal situation that had plagued her for several years, and was getting worse. Parked at the motel, sitting dejected in the driver's seat, she muttered, "Rod ... I need your help with something ... I ... I haven't told you about ... I'm ... I'm feeling ... desperate about this."

Recognizing her distress, Rod's hands reached for hers and sandwiched them. "Of course I'll help you, Cindy Lou."

"Will you help me defend myself against vicious, personal attacks from instructors at my college?"

[Cindy Lou describes attacks that make her want to stop teaching. Rod begins helping her verbalize “your head knowledge” to stand up to personal attacks. Then explains all the *God Nods* that brought them to this point in time.]

“I agree, Rod. *God Nods* occurred in the past and present, but they have not ceased. I know a *God Nod* that will occur in the future that you don’t know yet.”

“What?” Rod could not contain his excitement. “Another *God Nod* for us?”

“Because Marg is a true friend, she advised me to apply for a vacancy at Liberty Falls College. I applied, was accepted, and will begin instructing the same physics and math courses there, next fall, that I’m currently instructing at San Ramon College.

“All of this would be mathematically improbable – and unbelievable – except that God orchestrated it all,” she concluded.

Rod looked at Cindy Lou, “Do you still want my help to defend your faith and worldview? At Liberty Falls College?”

“Absolutely! College instructors everywhere are attacking those who disagree with them, even at conferences where we’re all supposed to present our ideas and research findings. The sad truth is this: there is no more academic freedom to pursue truth wherever it might lead.”

“You can count on me to get you ready to go into the fray.”

“I know, Coach!” She beamed,

[They discuss dancing again in Castroville, and continue practicing as they drive northward.]

“What if I don’t master this skill, Coach?”

“We’ll just keep driving up to Canada,” he quipped.

“What if it still doesn’t happen?”

“Have you ever driven to Alaska?” he jested to lift her spirits.

“I know you’ll get me ready, Coach, so you can send me in.”

“Don’t worry, Lassie. You’ll become *aware* of what to say and *able* to verbalize this.”

Rod’s wit worked, he could tell, by the way she laughed and hugged him and kissed him good night, before prying apart to enter their two motel rooms.

[In Chapters 27-29, Rod and Cindy Lou grow closer as helpmates as Rod helps her practice verbalizing what she’ll say to mockers who attack her Christian morality and Biblical Worldview.

In Castroville, they grow closer as dance partners, who want to dance through life together.]

CHAPTER 30 TRUE LOVE THAT ENDURES

[Rod and Cindy Lou discuss dancing the previous night,

while driving northward to Cindy Lou’s home.]

Excerpt:

Rod crouched on one knee and asked the question Cindy Lou desired to hear, “Will you marry me, Cindy Lou Dunbar, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, forsaking all others, until death parts us?”

In that very moment, after three lonely years of yearning, her heart recognized a *God Nod* that her logical mind had always known: *A is Not-A*. She knew he was vowing *YES* to her and *NO* to all others. She knew Rod’s vow would always be *A* because all other women are *Not-A*.

Her heart leaped higher than ever before. “Yes! Yes a gazillion times, Yes! I thought you’d never ask me.”

Rod had prayed for this answer. And, God nodded and answered his hopes and prayers. And, Cindy Lou’s too.

As he slipped an engagement ring on her finger, she proclaimed, “Rod, if you had not asked me, I was going to ask you to be my Virginia Gentleman and helpmate forever.”

After the longest hug, she then launched her own questions, “How will we break our good news to everyone in Liberty Falls? Will everyone remain Best Friends Forever? Where will we be married? When? By whom? Who should we invite?”

Rod kissed her lips so he could interject, “I told Bib what I was going to do on this last trip to California. I described all the *God Nods* that indicated how God had orchestrated everything—from the past to the present and into the future—so that we would marry. Bib agreed with everything I said—with no objections. Both are firsts for her.”

“How will everyone remain Best Friends Forever?” Cindy Lou needed reassurance.

“Bib will assemble everyone and get their agreement that Marg and JT are best matches, and you and I are best matches.”

[They confirm all the God Nods that have occurred,
and discuss next steps.]

CHAPTER 31 CELEBRATING EASTER TWICE

Excerpt:

On Easter Sunday, Cindy Lou drove Rod to her church to announce their engagement and to celebrate their first Easter together.

“Cindy Lou, do you mind if I tell you something?” Rod tried to muffle a giggle.

Suspecting he was up to something, she wanted to find out. “Certainly.”

“You agree, we should start our marriage with total honesty?”

“I do,” she replied, feeling relieved and pleased he would say this.

“Then, please promise me you won’t laugh.”

“All right. I promise.” She half-hid a growing smile, again suspecting Rod was up to something.

“Well then, here goes ...” Rod paused ... and waited ... and waited ... until Cindy Lou said.

“It’s alright, Rod. You can tell me.”

“I’ve been told that I sing off-key.”

“So?” Caught off-guard, Cindy Lou’s voice was as puzzled as her look.

“Mary and Bib said they constantly prayed for me to *sing better*, that’s what they told me.”

“So?”

“I just want you to know ... that I prayed for each of them ... to *hear better*,” Rod giggled.

This triggered Cindy Lou’s wit, “I’ll do my best to *hear better than you sing*.”

“Can you hear *off-key*?”

“You sing it, Rod, and I’m pretty sure I’ll hear it.”

“My singing won’t just go in one ear and out the other, will it?”

“I’m pretty sure something between my ears will stop it.”

“So, if it stops, you’ll hear it?” He just couldn’t stop, nor could his growing giggle.

“Absolutely ... unless you’re singing *false soprano* ... my brain has a filter for that coming from a man.”

With a lowered voice he said, “Then, I’ll sing in my best Johnny Cash bass.”

“Then, I’ll pretend I’m June Carter and love your singing.”

“You will, June.”

“Yes, Johnny.”

“Why, June?”

“Because I love you.”

“But, do you love me more than June loved Johnny?”

“At least 3.1416 times more.” The math instructor cited the exact ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.

“That’s exactly what I wanted to hear from you. Johnny never heard this from June.”

Their light-hearted bantering continued right up to their arrival at San Ramon Bible Fellowship, right up to when they entered Their joyful hearts became even more joyous as people greeted them with “*He is Risen!*” and they responded “*He is Risen Indeed!*”

[After singing lots of Easter hymns, the Pastor announces their wedding. Cindy Lou introduces Rod to her friends, before he has to fly back to Virginia.]

CHAPTER 32 GAME, MATCH, LOVE

[Everyone gathers at Bib’s home to review everything that has occurred and agree that Marg-and-JT, and Rod-and-Cindy Lou, are the right matches. All agree to remain Best Friends Forever.

They plan a June wedding for Rod and Cindy Lou, with everyone participating.]

Last excerpt:

Marg finally felt contentment from realizing: *Fate brought JT into my life and Good Fortune makes us sync.* JT looked forward to *philia*-love companionship and new adventures – and no more loneliness – with vivacious Marg.

Rod was joyful from realizing *God Nods* brought Cindy Lou and him together for True Love because he had heeded Cindy Lou’s advice, “If you ain’t who you is, then who you is, is who you ain’t – so be yourself.”

Cindy Lou realized “You can take the girl out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the girl” and looked forward to once again being treated as a Lady by her Virginia Gentleman husband.

The Beginning
for Books 2&3 in this *God Nods Trilogy*