

## **The Bottle Part II (Into the City)**

The man with a backpack and his wife with a single flower in her hair walked from valley to valley. They had a faith that the contents of the bottle that he carried could heal anyone regardless of the disease that the person had. They witnessed miracle after miracle. Heart disease, blindness, broken legs and deafness were all cured by the contents of the bottle. It also gave the brokenhearted, hope and joy. In addition, the bottle never ran dry and by some miracle, it was always full.

They carried all their earthly possessions with them. Wherever they traveled, they would receive lodging, food and in cases, money by grateful people. Soon they had an abundance of cash. They tried to give the money to the poor along the way, but the poor were so glad that their loved ones were healed that they refused the money. Finally one of the poor said, "Take that money and your bottle of miracles and go to The Big City. There are so many poor and sick people there. They need your help."

The man glanced at his beautiful wife before answering, "We might just do that."

Two weeks later, they reached a town situated on a wide river across from the island, which The Big City occupied. There a pharmacist took them in for the night. The pharmacist asked them, "I hear that you healed a lot of people."

"How do you know that?" the man relied.

"Oh, people tell me things."

"What else do you know about us?"

"You will need help in The Big City. It is not the same as the country. It will be more difficult to heal people."

The man proudly spoke back to the pharmacist, "We never failed in healing anyone and we will not fail tomorrow. I just think that you are just worried that your pharmacy business is about to have major competition."

"No, my children, I am not worried about my pharmacy. Just remember that my door is always open. And one other thing, do not go near the Hotel of Light!"

The couple went up to their room on the second floor. The room was simply adorned but with very good taste. They both walked to the window that overlooked the river and the glittering skyline of The Big City. The woman said to her spouse, "You were a little rude to that old man, and did you notice the scars on his hands?"

"No! Now, just look at the city. Tomorrow hundreds of people will be healed and we will be famous."

Early the next morning, they left the pharmacist's house without ever saying a word to him. As they neared the long suspension bridge that spanned the river that divided the city from the mainland, they noticed what appeared to be dark clouds above the city. Thousands and thousands of tiny dots seemed to be circling about the city. As they began crossing the bridge, the apparitions were large birds

of prey. As they passed the second tower of the bridge, they did not notice the two vulture-like creatures that were perched high above them. The two creatures seemed to nod to each other before taking off and following the couple below them.

Once they entered the city, they quickly noticed a strange world. It was not the city that could be seen in photographs or in the movies. The city was filthy and large areas of rust appeared on all cars, even the newer models. Bird droppings covered everything and the loathsome smell of death permeated the air. Every person, man or woman, wore tattered clothes, even the people dressed in suits. Worst of all, boils covered the people, and their eyes were a milky white. It looked like a scene from a horror movie.

The couple stared at each other without saying a word. Then the man turned and walked towards the man sitting on the pavement. The derelict was wearing a kitted cap and a pair of heavy coats even though the temperature was warm.

“Sir, we have something to help you.”

“What is it?” the derelict replied.

“It is a bottle of medicine, sir.”

“I have my own medicine,” the derelict answered as he held a bottle of cheap wine partially concealed in a brown paper bag.

“But, sir, believe me. This will make you feel better.”

“Not unless it’s booze. Now get.”

Sadly, the couple left the poor man on the sidewalk and proceeded to the next block. Throughout the next block, most people just ignored them or said they were not interested. Slowly the couple strolled along the sidewalk until they met a man standing in front of a restaurant. “Please may I have some money to buy myself something to eat? I haven’t eaten in two days,” the downcast man expressed.

The couple without thinking gave the man twenty dollars, which the man thanked them. Instead of going into the restaurant for food the man quickly jaywalked across the busy street into a gaudy casino. The man glanced at his wife and grumbled, “We should have known better.”

His wife answered, “Forget about him. I’m hungry. Let’s go inside for a bite to eat. Inside the place was a little cleaner than outside, but not much better. They both ordered sausage and eggs with orange juice from a waitress, who had the same boils and milky eyes that the rest of the people in the city had. When the waitress returned, she spouted, “Don’t I just look beautiful? I have a date tonight with a fine looking man.”

As she smiled, the couple noticed that the waitress had several missing teeth and others were decayed. The couple stared at her in disbelief and just nodded. After the waitress left, the husband whispered to his wife, “These people don’t know that they’re sick. We need to go somewhere the people know that they’re ill: like a hospital.”

When the waitress came with the check, the husband asked her, “My wife is feeling ill. Is there a hospital nearby?”

The waitress responded as she glanced at his wife, “I understand. There is The Big City Clinic. Just follow this street,” pointing to the left, “two more blocks and turn right. You can’t miss it.”

As the couple left the restaurant, they observed the man, to whom they gave the money, leaving the casino. As he spotted them, he shouted, “I won ten thousand dollars. I won! I won!” Then the man turned right and walked quickly down the

street. Neither the man nor the couple were aware of a young man with a cell phone wearing a black leather jacket. On the back of the jacket in red were the words, wolf pack, with a face of a snarling wolf. The man with his newfound gain would soon be departed from that wealth and his life in a narrow alleyway.

The couple proceeded to the clinic, which was a large eight-story brick building. They stood by the front door waiting for about two minutes until a young woman covered with boils approached the doorway. "Wait, please! We can help you. If you can just drink from this bottle, your sickness will vanish."

"Hey! I'm not sick. I'm just pregnant and very soon I won't be PG anymore. I can't have a kid cramp my style. I'm a party girl."

Before the couple could react, the woman passed into the building. Another woman came. She explained, "I can't have any rag rats crawling around under my feet."

Later a young couple replied, "We've only been married for four months. We can't afford a child for three more years." All they heard for one hour that the women were not sick, only pregnant. They were standing not in front of a hospital, but an abortion clinic, and torrents of pregnant women were entering the clinic to get an abortion. Finally, the couple with hopes and dreams of healing hundreds of people withdrew from the clinic.

"Why? Why don't they want children? I love children and so far, I haven't gotten pregnant. Why?" the wife wept as tears flowed down her rosy cheeks.

Her husband shook his head and responded, "I just don't know. Maybe we should leave this dreadful city and go back into the country?" They walked down the street until they came to an enormous hotel. This hotel was different than any place that they had seen in the city. The sidewalks were immaculate and the tall hotel was sparkling white. The doorman wore a spotless white uniform, which was not tattered. In addition, the doorman looked handsome with no boils or any other blemishes. The people entering the hotel also looked like the rich and famous.

"Can we stay here for just one night? We have the money," she asked her spouse."

"Ok, we can stay for one night. I hope it doesn't cost too much."

As they entered the hotel, they did not notice the name, the Hotel of Light. Once they passed through a double set of revolving doors, they stood in a very opulent lobby. The room was three stories high with crystal chandeliers suspended from an ornate plaster ceiling. The walls were a brilliant white marble. They strolled across the plush maroon carpeted floor to the mahogany counter where the clerks stood at attention. "May I help you?" addressed the clerk also dressed in white.

"How much is a room for tonight for my wife and me?"

Another clerk whispered into the ear of the first clerk. Then the first clerk responded, "Please wait a moment."

A tall white-haired man with a perfect complexion approached them from behind. The charismatic man was dressed in a white suit, white tie, white socks and shoes. On his suit jacket was embroidered a red letter, 'S'. "Pardon me, please. You wish to have a room for a night?"

The couple was now a little nervous since everybody was dressed to the hilt and they were wearing their hiking clothes. "Yes."

**“You are our 500,000th customer and can have a suite for five nights at no cost. Furthermore, your meals, anything that you wish to eat, at our restaurant are free, but I do think you will need new attire for the occasion. I will send for you two of our tailors to be in your room in ten minutes. A manicure and a pedicure are also available for your wife and a hair stylist will style your hair for you both. Anything that we have in this hotel is offered to you and your spouse at no cost during your stay.”**

**“We don’t believe this,” the husband answered.**

**“Here are your room keys and this gentleman will carry your backpacks and will show you to your suite on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor.”**

**The amazed couple followed the bellhop to the elevator and proceeded to the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor. The bellhop opened the door for the couple. As the husband tried to give the young man a tip, he replied that he was not allowed to take a tip from them. Then he gave the couple a tour of their suite, showing them all the hi-tech devices in the large living room. A stocked library of books occupied one entire wall. When the bellhop touched a button on the wall, a large flat hi-definition television descended from a slot in the ceiling. “Your remote is concealed in this red book,” the bellhop explained. “There are speakers in the four corners of the room, surround-sound. You, sir, may want to watch the baseball game tonight. It’s better than being there.”**

**He then pressed an adjacent button. A flat panel appeared from the wall. “This controls the music in each room. Select the type of music that you wish to have. There is pop, rock, rap, oldies, classical, jazz, etc. On this wall is the button to open the drapes.”**

**The burgundy drapes slowly parted to reveal the vast city park situated just to the north of the hotel. Next, he showed them the bedroom with its king-sized bed. “If there is anything that you wish, just call room service.” There was a knock on the door. “Oh, that must be the tailors.”**

**Back in a valley from which the couple came, their niece and nephew began to pray for their aunt and uncle. The small girl said, “I feel that our aunt and uncle are in trouble and they don’t know it. We need to pray.”**

**They both knelt down in a grassy field in which they were playing. The small girl led in prayer, “Father, in Jesus’ name we pray. Please protect our aunt and uncle. We don’t know where they are, but we know that You do. Please send Your angels to watch over them. Amen.”**

**Back in the Big City, while the couple was dining in clothes, which they knew they could never afford, a meeting was taken place in the hotels’ private conference room. The charismatic man in the white suit sat at the head of the table. Along the mysterious cast of characters were a bartender; a beautiful woman dressed in red; the Big City chief of police; several clerks; a baseball manager; a squad of major league umpires; an electronic technician and a man in black leather jacket with two gold epaulets. On the back of the leather jacket in red were the words, wolf pack, with a face of a snarling wolf. The man in the white suit lectured to the rest of the group, “Our first goal is to destroy their marriage and second is to destroy their faith in the bottle. They must not leave the Big City together with the bottle. If they**

try to, they will be terminated and the bottle destroyed. Their kind must never enter our city again. Is that clear?"

They all nodded their heads. "Are the bugs in their rooms functioning properly?"

"Yes, master," answered the electronic technician. "I'll give you a copy of their conversations every twenty minutes. Also we control their television."

"Is the sports lounge actors ready?"

"Yes, master, the lounge will be closed until we get our cue," answered the bartender.

"Also the Big City Bombers must lose until I say so," said the man in the white.

The umpires and the manger replied with a simple yes.

As the meeting continued, the couple ate their meal under the watchful eye of the maitre d'. After eating dessert, the couple left the dining room and proceeded back to their room via the lobby. A clerk stopped them and explained. "We are very sorry, but your television at this time is receiving only one channel. However, there is a fine mini-series just starting about a young couple traveling across America in the late 1870's on that channel. Also, if you wish to see the big game tonight, our sports lounge is an excellent place to view the game. The Big City Bombers, who are on a ten game winning streak, are facing the Mid-Vale Coal Miners. They also are on a winning streak of nine games. This may be a preview of the playoffs."

"Thank you, but I don't think we'll be watching TV tonight," answered the man.

Later in their room the couple looked at the dazzling skyline of the towering skyscrapers that surrounded the Big City Park. As they gazed at the multitude of sparkling lights, they were unaware of the nefarious plans for their demise.

After one of the clerks overheard the electronic technician say that the couple did not turn on the television set but opted for soft music from the suite's sound system. "Oh, the boss is going to be angry," one of the clerks droned.

Another clerk replied, "I don't think so. Did you see that operation manual that the boss has? There must be at least five hundred options in it. They will be here for five nights. They'll watch the television sometime. If not, the boss must have an option if they don't."

"Yea! You must be right. The boss never fails when he wants something. Those two country bumpkins don't stand a chance."

The next morning the couple showered, dressed in new casual clothes and headed down to the dining room for breakfast. The maitre d' took them to a table in the far corner of the room and gave them both the breakfast menu. "Your waiter will be here shortly to take your order. Please enjoy your meal."

As the man scanned the menu, he noticed for the first time the name of the hotel. "Honey, we're staying at the Hotel of Light. Boy, was that old pharmacist wrong. I wish he could see us now. What are you going to order? I think I'm going to order ham and eggs with coffee and orange juice."

**“I’m ordering some fresh fruit and mint tea. You’re going to get fat eating the way you are.”**

**“No! After eating, we’ll go and walk the meal off. Just maybe, we’ll find someone who will drink from the bottle and will be healed.”**

**After the waiter took their order, the maitre d’ followed him into the kitchen. Before the waiter brought the meal out of the kitchen, the maitre d’ stirred a teaspoon of white powder into the mint tea and watched it dissolve without leaving a trace.**

**The couple slowly ate their breakfast and then went back to their room for the bottle before leaving the hotel. The sidewalk and street in front of the hotel was very busy. The couple noticed immediately that something was different. The city looked normal; no tattered clothes; no boils covering people; no bird droppings; no large amounts of rust on cars and everything smelled clean and fresh. The city appeared to change over night.**

**“What happened?” asked the wife to her husband.**

**“I don’t know. It seems like yesterday was a bad nightmare.”**

**After strolling into the Big City Park, they approached several elderly people walking with canes. Like the people from the day before, they refused to drink from the bottle. “Well, not everything changed,” the man muttered.**

**All of a sudden, the wife said, “I feel very tired. I can hardly walk. Can we please go back to the hotel?”**

**The couple slowly walked back to the hotel, where the doorman asked, “Does the madam need help?”**

**“Yes, she is not feeling very well,” answered the husband.**

**“I’ll get you a wheelchair and will call for our physician to come to your room for the madam.”**

**“Thank you,” replied the couple.**

**Two minutes after arriving in their room, a doctor knocked on the door and took her vital signs. “Your blood pressure and temperature are normal. Let me check your legs. Oh, they seem to be a little swollen. Stay off your feet and rest for today and watch some television. Last night, I watched part one of an excellent mini-series, Sunset in Wichita. There is a rerun starting at one in the afternoon. In addition, the hotel will have room service deliver your meals to you. I’ll have the menu brought up to your room. I will check on you tomorrow morning.”**

**After the doctor left, the husband told his wife, “Got to listen to the doctor. Do you want to watch a little TV?”**

**“Not right now. I would rather lie down for a nap. Why don’t you go for a walk by yourself or read a book?”**

**He then spotted a newspaper. “Honey, I am going to read the Big City Times. The maid must have brought in when she was making the bed.”**

**After she went into the bedroom, he began reading the sports page. The headlines were Coal Miners buried Bombers 13-2. The Coal Miners were his favorite ball team, but have not won a pennant since he was ten years old. The Big City Bombers however won three pennants in a row. Tonight’s game would have the Bombers best pitcher, who pitched a no hitter in his last start, against the Coal Miners rookie phenomenon, who is leading the league in strikeouts. The paper was calling it the game of the year. Since he had not been following baseball since he was married, he began thinking about watching the game tonight.**

The next page to read was the television section. The paper was raving about the mini-series, *Sunset in Wichita*. Part two would be on the same time as the big ballgame. About twenty minutes after noon, his wife came out of the bedroom and asked to order lunch. She turned on the television to find that the local news was on the one channel that they could watch. The news commentators just finished a piece on a multi-vehicle accident on the East Side Beltway. Then they went to the weather report.

“High of 82 degrees and sunny with no chance of precipitation. It’s perfect weather for the big ball game tonight. Tomorrow there’s a possibility of thundershowers occurring in the afternoon. So if you’re planning to be outside tomorrow, take an umbrella or run fast between the raindrops.”

Then came a string of commercials; go to The Big City Casino – you can’t lose; treat your woman right – buy her jewelry from the Downtown Jewelry Store across the street from the Hotel of Light; and watch the big ballgame tonight at seven on our sister station, WWOW as the Bombers play the Coal Miners.

The news ended with several human-interest stories before *Sunset in Wichita* began. The mini-series opened with the introduction of the main characters, Jeff and Cindy, being married in a small county church in the East. Since he was trained by his father to be a blacksmith, Jeff and his wife headed west like many people after the Civil War. After twenty minutes of the show, the commercials began with the same commercials that appeared on the news. The series resumed with the couple meeting historical characters such as General George A. Custer and Joseph Glidden, an Illinois farmer, who invented barbed wire, which changed the West by ending the open free range for cattlemen. Near the end of part one, the couple settled in Wichita, Kansas, one of the first cowtowns. After setting up a blacksmith shop, Jeff is wounded by a stray bullet when a drunken cattleman shoots up the town. This is where part one ended and previews of part two began.

When another commercial on the baseball game appeared, the husband told his wife that he would like to see the game that night in the hotel’s sports lounge. She never realized that her husband liked baseball so much since they spent much of their time walking and rarely had a chance to watch television.

They ordered dinner at 5:30, but as with breakfast, a powder was added to the mint tea. They ate and then kissed before he left for the sports lounge. A call was placed from the electronic technician to the man in the white suit as the husband waited for the elevator. Immediately a bouncer removed the reserved sign at the sports lounge entrance. After the husband walked through the lobby and into the sports lounge, the bouncer replaced the reserved sign.

Inside the lounge, the husband saw that there were only two chairs available, both together at the bar. He sat at one of the stools and ordered a Coke. As the *Star Spangled Banner* was played, a woman walked into the lounge. She was the same woman that was dressed in red at the conference room the night before. This time she was wearing a baseball jersey, white with dark blue pin stripes with the number 13, and blue jeans. She sat along side of the husband.

The bartender walked up to her. “Jess, what will you have tonight?”

“Hank, give me the usual,” she answered.

She then turned and began a conversation with the husband. “The Bombers are really going to hammer that rookie pitcher for the Coal Miners. I can’t wait. You’re rooting for the Bombers, aren’t you?”

**“No, I’m actually a Coal Miners fan.”**

**As she started to quote players stats to the unsuspecting husband, the bartender pressed a button under the counter; three television-cameras began to record the husband with the mysterious woman. She remarkably knew baseball facts better than he did. She kept chatting as the game progressed.**

**Upstairs, the wife was still watching the mini-series, but she was not feeling fatigued. In fact, she now felt like she was about to have an anxiety attack. In the movie, the blacksmith meets an old friend from back east and decides to go to a saloon to reminisce about the times when they were younger. After an hour and many drinks, both men are walking upstairs, each with a saloon girl in his arms. As the show cuts to a commercial, they’re leaving no doubt that the blacksmith was about to commit adultery.**

**The wife was very thankful that she knew that her husband would never do anything like that. Then the commercial was an advertisement for the Big City Sports Lounge and there was her husband taking to a strange woman. Abruptly the wife leaped from the couch and headed out the suite, slamming the door behind her. Again a call was placed from the electronic technician to the man in the white suit as the wife waited for the elevator. The bartender also received a call. As the wife rushed across the lobby to open the door of the lounge, the bartender calls to the mysterious woman, “Jess, now!”**

**Jess leaned toward the husband, wrapped her arms around him, and kissed him just as his wife entered the lounge. Before the charging wife reached her, Jess stood and said loudly to the dumfounded man, “My room number is 623,” and turned and quickly disappeared into the crowd of people.**

**The husband became even more startled when his wife slapped him across the face as everyone was watching. “You....you....” his wife spouted before bursting into tears and running out of the lounge. As she ran through the lobby towards the elevators, she missed seeing the man in the white suit standing in a corner with a smirk on his face. That night the husband slept on the couch, while his wife slept alone behind a locked bedroom door.**

**The next morning, the man awoke but the door to the bedroom was still locked. Though in his mind, he knew he could not explain what happened the night before, but he had to try. “Honey, please let me in,” he pleaded. “I can explain.”**

**“Leave me alone. I never want to see your face again,” was the answer from the bedroom.**

**The man showered in the extra bathroom but had to wear the same clothes that he wore the night before, since his clean clothes were in the bedroom with his wife. He waited an hour before leaving to go downstairs for breakfast. After eating, he went upstairs to their suite, but his wife still would not come out of the locked bedroom nor talk to him. After waiting thirty minutes, he headed downstairs again and this time he left the hotel to walk the streets of the city.**

**After the wife heard her husband leave for the second time, she showered, dressed and waited forty minutes before finally opening the bedroom door. She ordered lunch from room service and ate the meal behind the locked door again. Later she went downstairs as her husband did to walk the streets of the city. She just missed seeing her husband as he strolled into the Downtown Jewelry Store across from the main entrance to the hotel.**

The couple always split the money that they carried between them. Since the husband knew that his wife rarely would buy anything without asking him, he decided to buy her a string of pearls to endeavor to win her love back. After purchasing the pearls, he went back to their suite only to find it vacant.

The wife wandered the streets until she saw The Big City Casino that they passed when they first entered into the city. Enticed by glitter and sounds, she entered the casino and decided to play a slot machine one time. On the first pull she won two hundred dollars. Then a waitress dressed like a French maid gave her a complimentary drink. Not realizing that it was an alcoholic drink, she quickly drank it. Several hours later she lost most of the money that was in her purse and she was quite intoxicated.

Back in a valley from which the couple came, again their niece and nephew began to pray for their aunt and uncle. They both knelt down in their home. The small girl led in prayer while weeping, "Father, in Jesus' name we pray. Please protect our aunt and uncle. Please send Your angels to watch over them. Amen."

Finally the wife realized that she needed to get back to Hotel of Light and find her husband. Although the hotel was only four blocks away, it took her ninety minutes to find it, since she became lost.

The pacing husband was waiting most of the afternoon into the early evening hours. When the door slowly opened, he saw his inebriated wife staggered into the room. "I'm sorry. I brought you something that I hope you like," he spouted to her. Then he opened a leather case to show her the pearls.

The surprised wife stammered, "Oh, aren't they ...aren't they. They...pretty. I don't have anything for ...for you. I lost...lost our money gambling." As her legs then crumpled beneath her, the husband caught her before she collapsed. He laid her gently to floor and stood shocked that his wife was drunk. After a few moments, he went in the bedroom, found his backpack and pulled out the bottle. If the bottle healed her before, it could heal her again. He walked back into the main room, tenderly lifted her head and poured a dose from it into her mouth.

After a few seconds, her eyes opened wide and she raved, "We need to leave this city immediately. I can't explain but this place is evil. I am sorry that I slapped you. I now realized that you're not at fault for what happened last night. We need to go now!"

The husband noted the urgency in her voice and knew that she must somehow know the truth about this hotel. The contents of the bottle healed many people. Now could the bottle allow people to know the truth?

"Let's pack our backpacks and change into our hiking clothes. Don't take anything that you don't need. It will only slow us down," she urged again. "We must go to the pharmacist."

The telephone rang in the office of the man in the white suit. "They're going to make a run for it. They're packing now, master."

The man in the white suit made a call to the cell phone to the man in black leather jacket with two gold epaulets. "They will be headed for the bridge. Get the bottle and destroy it. You can have whatever they have in their backpacks and

whatever they have on them. Then kill them. Remember; make it look like a murder/suicide.”

“Yes, Master. I have the steak knife and the gun with its receipt.”

“I want their deaths on the front page of tomorrow’s newspaper. Their kind must never enter The Big City again. Is that clear?”

“Yes, boss!”

“How do you address me?”

“Forgive me, Master.”

“That’s better.”

The couple left the room with their backpacks. The husband did precisely what his wife asked. He left all his new clothes in the room and packed the camping gear and the bottle in his backpack; but she did not follow her own advice by packing the string of pearls into her backpack. They stopped at the front desk to checkout.

“You’re leaving so soon. Is there a problem with our accommodations?” questioned the clerk.

“No, there isn’t. We just want to leave.”

“You may leave. Thank you. Please come again.”

As the couple reached the sidewalk in front the Hotel of Light, very dark ominous clouds blotted the late afternoon sun from sight. The normally full sidewalks quickly emptied as howling winds began to accompany the ever-increasing darkness. The couple did not notice the foursome in black leather jackets following them. Soon they hurried past the restaurant where they ate when they first arrived in The Big City. As they approached an intersection of an alleyway, three men and one woman stepped on to the sidewalk, blocking their path. One of the men pointed a revolver at the couple and bellowed, “This way and you and your misses wouldn’t get hurt,” as he motioned them into the alley.

From the group that was following them, a coarse female voice screeched, “You heard the man. Now move!” The two women and two men behind them, all pointed switchblades at the now very frightened couple. Without talking, the couple was led into the dimly lit alley.

The man in black leather jacket with two gold epaulets barked, “Keep your traps shut; turn around slowly and hand us your backpacks.” The husband relinquished his backpack to the leader while his wife surrendered her pack to a leader’s girlfriend. “While you’re at it, we’ll take your wedding rings also.”

“Listen to him, honey,” the husband insisted. With tears in her eyes, she handed the rings to the leader’s girlfriend.

“Now get on your knees. You there and you over there,” demanded the gang leader as pointed with the revolver. “Let’s see what they got in their backpacks,” he told his girlfriend.

The girlfriend quickly discovered the case of pearls and opened it. “They’re pearls. Can I have them?” she questioned the leader.

“Of course you can. Here’s what I’m looking for,” he answered as he found the bottle. Slowly he opened the cap and took a swig. Laughingly he spouted, “It ain’t nothing but water. Now the real fun begins.” He threw the bottle against the brick wall of one of the buildings. The bottle shattered. The contents ran down the face of the brick wall. Then he placed the gun receipt into the woman’s backpack,

and then pointed the revolver at the husband. With his left hand, he pulled out a steak knife and laughed, "A woman can get very angry when her man cheats on him." He lowered his aim to the man's right leg and his finger tightened on the trigger.

Unexpectedly two blinding lights appeared near the frightened husband and wife before the trigger could be pulled. Chaos erupted in the narrow alleyway. Switchblades and a revolver dropped to the asphalt. The gang members ran towards the street as if their lives depended on it. As the girlfriend of the leader ran with the string of pearls dangling from her hand, the pearls caught on an edge of a dumpster breaking the string. Her momentum carried her face first into a brick wall, knocking her unconscious and breaking her noise. As the pearls scattered and rolled across the alley, two gang members tripped and fell. Unharmed, the leader made it to the street only to be struck a glancing blow by a car. As he fell onto the next lane, a truck slammed on its brakes, but it was too late to avoid the terrified man. The remainder of the gang scattered into the eerily darkness of the oncoming evening.

The startled couple stood and began running toward the street, jumping over the inquired gang members who were lying prone in the alley. As the couple headed for the bridge, flashes of lightning crisscrossed the stormy sky. Arriving at the entrance of the bridge, they stopped and glanced back and saw the lights from police and medical vehicles converging at the alleyway. "Let's keep going until we're across the bridge," gasped the wife, "then we'll go to the pharmacist's house. He said that his door is always open."

As they approached the pharmacist's house, the humbled husband explained, "I know he going to say, 'I told you so.'"

"For some reason, I don't think so," answered the wife.

When they arrived at the house, they knocked and the door mysteriously opened. The pharmacist was standing in the middle front room. "I had been waiting for you. I knew you would be back," the pharmacist addressed them.

The husband whispered into his wife's ear, "I told you so."

The pharmacist smiled and cited, "Tell me about the events of the last several days."

Both the husband and the wife took turns explaining their happenings in The Big City. Then the husband began to weep. "All we have now is the clothes on our backs. Our money is gone. They stole our wedding rings. And most of all they destroyed our precious bottle. We need help."

"Yes, I know my son. I have some things for both of you. Sir, hold out your right hand." The pharmacist placed the wedding ring of the wife in the palm of his hand. "You may place the ring on your beloved's finger."

"But how? It looks just like...."

"Yes, it is your wife's ring. Please do not ask how I received the ring. I just like you to know that you have friends in high places."

The wife's face irradiated and her eyes sparkled as the husband slipped the ring unto her finger. Then the pharmacist gave the wife the husband's ring and she placed it the ring finger of her spouse. "May love abound in your lives and neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, separate you from this love," the

pharmacist addressed the couple. “Tonight you may stay in the same room which you slept the last time you were here. Also you will find your backpacks with your clothes and supplies in that room. What you will not find is your money nor the string of pearls. They are gone forever. I have one more thing for you.” The pharmacist walked over to a hutch, opened a door and pulled out two bottles. “Now there is a bottle for each of you. I would like for you to follow my instructions. You must return to the valley from which you came and you shall then wait. One day you will hear my voice, and you will know what to do. Also you may give anybody a drink from your bottles at anytime, but you must drink from your bottles at least once a day, starting now.”

The pharmacist handed the couple the bottles and they slowly partook from them. As the couple fell to the floor before him, he said, “Peace be unto you.” Then slowly the pharmacist rose in the air and disappeared.

Approximately a year later, the couple returned to the pharmacist’s house but they were not alone. With them were the wife’s sister and her husband with their two children (the niece and nephew who earlier prayed for them) and three other married couples. The door opened as they approached the house but the pharmacist was not there. Inside the hutch were ten bottles, which the couple gave to each of the members of their group. Then they formed a circle and drank from their own bottles, joined hands and prayed.

The next morning singing praises, the team crossed the long suspension bridge into The Big City. The man with a backpack and his wife with a single flower in her hair lead the procession. A man in a wheelchair came into view. Both his legs were amputated above the knees. He was wearing a black leather jacket with two gold epaulets. On the back of the leather jacket in red were the words, wolf pack, with a face of a snarling wolf. He cried out unto them. “Will you please help me?”

The couple heard his cry and went to him and he drank.

*Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls; because I give water in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

Isaiah 43:19-21

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In his story as in “The Bottle, Part 1,” the bottle signifies the Bible, the Word of God, a wellspring of living waters that never goes dry. As in this story, today many ministries with good intentions seem to have problems. Some vanish; some never seem to increase; and while others flourish. The ministries that are not grounded in the Word, may blossom for a season before withering away. The couple had their problems mainly because they did not partake from the bottle. The husband’s sin was pride, while the wife’s sin was love of the world. She allowed herself to be deceived by the luxury of the Hotel of Light, just as Eve was deceived by the pleasantness of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Because Satan is very subtle, he sometimes allows the things that appear to be good to steal our time from our real purpose in life, to reach the lost. Also the niece and nephew of the couple illustrate the power of prayer. Without their prayer, God would have never sent his angels into the dark alleyway to protect the couple.**

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passed away, the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.*

**1 John 2:15-17**

**This is dedicated to Debbie Schachner of O'Fallon, Illinois. May her actions and the words of her mouth be a wellspring to the lives of the people whom she meets as she approaches the last miles of her walk across America.**

**To learn more about the One Nation Under God –Walk Across America, go to our web site, [www.walkacrossamerica.info](http://www.walkacrossamerica.info).**

**God bless,  
Jim Shaner  
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**Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail - 772 miles  
Number of prayer walkers - 59 prayer walkers  
Number of people praying for America - 53,011 prayer warriors**