Chapter Fifteen

Missing in Action

AFTER THE TELEGRAM, THERE was nothing Jeanne could do but wait, and no one could tell her how long the waiting would last.

The Navy had reported John missing. It was not the same as dead. He might have come down in the water and been picked up, or made a forced landing somewhere no one had yet found him. Until the Navy knew more, there was still something to hope for.

She remained at her parents' house on Monrovia Avenue. The mail came, and she read what it brought her.

December 1944

The first word Jeanne received after the telegram was not an account of what had happened to John. It was a letter about money.

Dated December 1 and signed by Lieutenant Price Stradley, the commanding officer of John's

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squadron, it concerned John's money, his personal effects, and the shipment of his clothing.

Enclosed with this letter are a money order for $62.00, representing John's personal cash on hand, a check for $34.20, representing his wardroom mess rebate, and a money order for $9.27, representing a rebate on his cigar mess share. There is also on the way a large box containing John's clothing and etc.

Sixty-two dollars. Thirty-four dollars and twenty cents. Nine dollars and twenty-seven cents. Jeanne sat with the money orders in her hand, the cash John had, and a rebate from his cigar mess account. A box containing his clothing was also making its way east across the Pacific.

At the bottom of the letter, after Stradley's name, was a postscript:

P.S. Also enclosed is a temporary Citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross. A permanent Citation should come from Washington at a later date.

It was the first she had heard of any medal. No one had told her what John had done to earn it, and the citation had arrived beneath an accounting of his cash. She put it in the drawer with his letters. The Navy had settled his accounts, and still no one had told her what had happened to him.

Later in December, another letter arrived from the Navy. It came from the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, over the signature of an officer in the

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