



Look to  
the Light

**QUICKREADS**

JANET LORIMER



Jill picked up the single white envelope that had just been pushed through her mail slot. When she saw the return address, her eyes narrowed in anger. *A lawyer!* “Well, why not?” she thought bitterly. “Everything else in my life is going wrong.”

A few months before, Jill had been laid off from her job. So far, she hadn’t found a new one. Now her unemployment benefits were running out, and the bills were piling up. “Either I’m being kicked out of my apartment,” Jill thought, “or someone is suing me.”

She ripped open the envelope and pulled out a single sheet of expensive stationery. At the top of the page was neatly typed: *Regarding the Estate of Agatha Elizabeth Morris, deceased.*

Jill took a deep, ragged breath. Cousin

Aggie? *Dead?* Tears stung the corners of her eyes. Cousin Aggie had been much older than Jill. She wasn't even a first cousin—more like a second or third cousin. But Aggie Morris had been an important part of Jill's childhood.

Jill remembered visiting Aggie when she was little. Aggie was sponsoring a Vietnamese woman and her little girl, Trinh. They'd come to the United States after the war in Vietnam.

"Trinh was just about my age," Jill remembered. "We had a lot of fun together. I remember we picked wild strawberries in the garden. We slid down the banisters and played at the beach. Those were great times."

Jill sat down to read the letter. She was stunned to learn that Aggie had named her the sole heir. The letter asked Jill to get in touch with the lawyer as soon as possible. Jill grabbed the phone and punched in the number. "Does this mean my luck is changing?" she wondered.



Aggie's house was up the coast, just outside the small town of Kettle Cove. Jill met with the lawyer—Matt Baxter—just before noon the next day.

When she was seated, he handed her a copy of the will. After scanning it quickly, Jill asked, “Can you tell me what’s included in the estate?”

“The house and property,” Baxter said. “And the contents of the house—although there’s not much left. Over the last 30 years, your cousin sold most everything she owned.”

Jill frowned. “Poor Aggie! I remember that she never seemed to have a lot of money. But I didn’t realize she was forced to sell off her belongings.”

Baxter nodded. “I tried to get her to sell the house, too, but she refused. She said she’d promised her husband—” He paused. “But then I guess you already know that story.”

Jill thought for a moment and then shrugged. “I really *don't* know what you mean. I know that her husband—Cousin Reginald—died before I was born. After he was gone, Aggie stopped socializing. We assumed she was still grieving.”

Baxter studied Jill's face for a long moment. Then he said, “I think the word you want is *ashamed*. After all, Reginald died in prison.”

Jill's eyes widened in surprise. “What are you talking about?” she asked.

Baxter leaned back. “Oh, dear—I thought you knew. I'm afraid it's a long story,” he said.

As the chief accountant for a large company, Reg Morris had been very well paid. He and Aggie bought a nice piece of oceanfront property north of town. Reg had the house especially designed and built for his beloved wife.

“As a matter of fact, my father was the architect who designed their house,” Baxter said with a smile. “That's how I first

got to know Reg and Aggie.”

He went on to say that Reg and Aggie had filled their new home with the best furniture, the most expensive china, and the finest silver. Their lifestyle was the talk of the town. But then one day their wonderful world suddenly collapsed!



One Saturday morning, the sheriff and Reg’s boss arrived at the house without warning. The sheriff was there to arrest Reg! His employer had discovered that Reg had stolen a large sum of money from the company.

“There was a terrible argument,” Baxter told Jill. “Reg’s boss demanded to know where the cash was hidden.”

Jill shook her head in frustration. “Wait! Back up!” she exclaimed. “Reg made a fine salary. Why would he have stolen that money in the first place?”

“It turned out that Reg’s boss was planning to sell the company,” Baxter explained.

“That would have made *him* an extremely rich man. But at the same time, the sale of the company would have put most of his employees—including Reg—out of work.”

“So Reg stole the money to get even?” Jill asked in amazement.

Baxter shrugged. “Who knows? Reg didn’t deny that he stole the money—but he didn’t admit it either. So that made him the most likely suspect.”

The sheriff arrested Reg that day and took him to jail. Then, at the pretrial hearing, bail was denied.

Shortly after he was jailed, Reg became quite ill. Aggie tried to have him released so he could get better medical treatment. The judge refused.

Then one night Aggie was called to the prison hospital. It was quite clear that Reg was dying. His last words to his wife were, “Look to the light.”

Jill was confused. “Look to the *light*? What on earth does that mean?”

Baxter smiled. “He was a very sick man

by then. I don't imagine it meant anything."

Jill sat back in her chair. "Wow! That's quite a story," she said. "Poor Aggie! What about the house? After all these years, is *it* worth anything?"

Baxter shook his head. "It's in bad shape," he said. Then he brightened up. "The land is another story, however. Your cousins chose one of the nicest pieces of property in the whole county. It's just north of town, located right on the beach. Today, that land is worth a small fortune. I guess you'll want to sell it."

"Probably," Jill said. "But I'd like to take a look at the old place first."

Baxter reached into a desk drawer and then handed her a set of keys to the house. "There are some other legal matters to take care of, too. But don't worry about it now. I can help you get through all that."



**A**s she drove into the town, Jill realized how much Kettle Cove had grown



over the years. A number of new subdivisions had sprung up outside of town. “I can see why Aggie’s property is valuable,” she thought. “I bet a developer would love to build a hotel or maybe a fancy restaurant on that land.”

When Jill reached the house, she studied it for a moment before she got out of the car. The old place was three stories high. But somehow it didn’t look as big as it had when she was a child. And it certainly was *shabby!* The paint was peeling, and a few bricks had fallen off the chimney. The roof looked like it needed repairs, too.

Jill pulled her suitcase from the trunk. She had just reached the front door when it suddenly opened. A smiling young woman stood in the doorway. “Jill? Is it really you?”

Jill gasped. “*Trinh?*”

The two women hugged, laughing and crying. “I was just thinking about you,” Jill said, wiping away tears. “I’m so glad you’re here. How’s your mother?”

Trinh ushered Jill into the house. “She

died a few years ago,” Trinh said. “But Aggie took good care of me. She helped me get a scholarship to go to nursing school. When I graduated, I came right back to be with her.”

“I’m so sorry to hear about your mother,” Jill said. “And I’m sorry I wasn’t here to help out. I’ve had a rough time recently. I’m so glad *you* were here.”

Jill paused in the doorway to the kitchen. “It hasn’t changed a bit!” she exclaimed. She took a deep breath. “Whatever you’re cooking, it smells delicious. Is it a Vietnamese dish?”

Trinh laughed. “How about old-fashioned macaroni and cheese? I may be Vietnamese, but don’t forget that I was raised in America!”

Over lunch, Jill asked, “What are you planning to do now, Trinh?”

Trinh smiled. “I’ve already had a job offer from the local hospital. What about you? I’d love to hear about your life.”

“I don’t know what I’m going to do,” Jill said with a sigh. She glanced wistfully