

Storms

One spring, a series of tornadoes swept the plains, cutting a swath of disaster from the Colorado flatlands through Kansas and into the panhandle of Oklahoma. Several towns were wiped out in one day. Kemper Rescue was called in to help with the rescue, so the mobile office was set up in Ashton, Kansas and the team went to work. Trevor was amazed at the amount of damage these storms created. There was not one tree for miles over twenty feet tall; the tops were cut out of them and from the air, it looked like a well cut yard. Many trees were plucked right out of the ground, leaving massive holes where they had been uprooted. The town looked like a bombed-out debris field. Homes were lifted from their foundations and scattered for miles; others were so damaged that they were dangerous and unsalvageable. Trailers lay twisted and mangled in the stubs of trees, and cars and fallen electric poles were scattered everywhere. Live electric lines shot sparks like kids' sparklers on Fourth of July. It was nearly impossible to get emergency vehicles up and down the streets, and that is where Kemper Rescue came in. Their main job was to fly injured people to the Trauma Tent

where they were stabilized and put into ambulances. Clay was in the Bell47D, and his job was to find stranded people and call in their location.

Trevor set down on the makeshift chopper pad just outside a huge pavilion tent and helped two attendants in white smocks with the three people from the same family he had just brought in. Inside the tent, there were several rows of cots with people on most of them. Uniformed nurses and doctors dashed around caring for the people on the cots. The place was lit by several sodium lights, and in the very center of the floor were three tables where doctors worked frantically to stabilize people. There was one strained faced doctor in his fifties who seemed to be keeping things running smoothly, issuing orders and pointing out patients to a stern-faced nurse, who floated around efficiently seeing to it that the doctor's orders were carried out. Though there were other doctors in there working on patients and other nurses dashing from cot to cot, no one seemed to challenge their authority. By the tent entrance was a table where a teenage girl sat filling out pickup forms. Trevor went over to her and said, "Three patients, male, female, and one child extracted from a house at eleventh and Prescott. Their name is Williams."

The girl nodded as she wrote on the paper and then scribbled KRS on it and tossed it into a basket. They had a table just inside the entrance opposite the desk where the girl sat, and it held three huge café type coffee pots and several stacks of styrofoam cups. This was Trevor's next stop. As he was drawing up a cup, the doctor that seemed to be in charge came over to get one too. "How is it going, Doc?" Trevor ventured, downing one cup and drawing up a second.

"It's a nightmare," he returned, "Not enough help and we can't get people to the hospitals fast enough. We're just sending the more serious ones." He sighed and looked around. "We're just being swamped."

“Well, my wife might be of some help. Give her a call. Kemper Rescue Service.”

“I just might do that,” the doctor nodded.

Kitra watched Clay’s camera in shocked amazement. She had never seen a disaster from the air before. There was so much destruction and devastation, she wondered how anyone was able to survive. Later, she would learn that there were hundreds killed and thousands injured.

She was monitoring the radio while Sandy was making tuna sandwiches for the guys when she heard the call for Kemper Rescue Mobile Unit through the rescue radio chatter.

“Kemper Rescue! Over,” she answered.

“Mrs. Kemper, your husband said you might give us a hand at the Trauma Tent. We sure could use some help here. Over.”

Kitra looked around at Sandy and she nodded. “I’ll help...if you’ll send someone to get me. Over.”

“Yes, ma’am, a police car will be dispatched right away.” It had been a long time since Kitra had worked the Red Cross medical tent and she was a little nervous. She had, however, kept her Advanced First Aid certification up to date because the boys were getting hurt periodically, but it was never anything too serious. Working trauma was a whole new ballgame.

Every muscle in Kitra’s body ached, and she thought if she did not sit down she would drop, and if she did sit down, she would never get up again. She was that exhausted. Not to mention how depressed all the suffering made her, especially the children, and she was hungry. She was wrapping up the leg of a little boy about five and trying to tell him they would find his mom soon. The doctor had just removed a six-inch piece of wood from his tiny leg. That made a major wound for a little guy this small. He was scared, shaking, and crying softly. Kitra picked the

boy up and thought she would drop him. Then she carried him to a cot and laid him down.

“Billy, you lay here and let your leg heal, and I’ll go find out if they have found you parents yet.” Kitra’s heart went out to this little fellow. At one time, she had thought about going into nursing, but soon learned that she could not handle seeing people hurt. It struck her as funny that she was able to watch the guys put their lives on the line for people and even get an adrenalin rush at times of crises, but to see someone hurting was too much for her. She found a nearby supply table, took up a shock blanket and went back to cover the boy up. She rubbed his curly hair back from his forehead and kissed it. The boy gave her a half smile and it warmed her heart. She hoped they would find his parents alive.

She turned to find the head nurse and saw Trevor coming through the tent toward her. He looked tired and strained too, but his face lit up when their eye met. Oh, how she loved that beast of a man! She waited with anticipation for the comforting embrace she knew he would give her. She needed it; her emotions were frayed and she was shaking from hunger.

Trevor had brought in load after load of patients. His hand was giving him fits from gripping the stick. It was quivering and he was rung out. After he reported the patient count, he looked around and saw Kitra way across the tent. Her movement worked pleasantly inside of him. She had been at this for ten hours now, and he knew she would not rest until he stopped her. She was that much like him. She would push herself to destruction if it meant helping someone. He was too tired to make another pickup and his hand and arm was killing him. He found a doctor, and after explaining was given some pain pills, and he then went to Kitra. When she saw him coming, he saw the spark he loved so much come into her eyes even though they showed her tiredness. He came over to her and she looked up at him so pitifully tired and he gathered her into his arms

and hugged her against him. "Let's go get something to eat and some rest," he said near her ear. He felt her nod but she made no effort to let go of him, so he slid her around under his left arm and they headed for the door.

She leaned against him and walked, so thankful for the strength of his arm around her. He helped her into the chopper and soon they were landing near the mobile unit out in a field on the outskirts of what was once a town.

Sandy had roast and several kinds of vegetables hot in the oven. "Hi," she smiled up at them and then said, "go sit down and I'll fix your plates."

Johnny had talked them into letting him come along, promising to go to the nearest gym and do his therapy in the swimming pool. He was monitoring the radio when they came in. He came over and gave Kitra a hug. "Pretty rough, huh?" he smiled at them.

"I hope I don't fall into my dinner before I get it eaten," Kitra complained with a soft moan. Then she felt Trevor take hold of her hair and stroke it. She looked at him and smiled weakly. She saw the sympathy and love in his eyes and her heart leapt a little like it did so often when he was near. She loved him with her eyes.

"What are Deuce and Clay doing?" Trevor asked Johnny as he began to eat.

"Same as you," Johnny replied.

"They come in to eat yet?"

"Yes," Sandy entered. "They both came in about two o'clock and lay down until about thirty minutes ago. Then they ate and took to the sky again."

"We're going to get some rest too after we eat." Trevor informed.

"You better," Sandy observed. "You're both worn out."

"What about Flynn?" Trevor asked.

"He's still out there," Sandy sighed.

"Tell him I said to get his butt in here for some food and rest." Trevor growled.

“I will!” Johnny exclaimed. “It’s the only time I get to give orders.”

Though the bunks were not large, Kitra snuggled in Trevor’s arms. “Damn,” Trevor muttered.

“What are you cursing about now?” Kitra yawned.

“You!” he grumbled. “I have to lay here and try to sleep with you in my arms and smelling the freshness of you after that shower, and I am too tired to take advantage of the situation.”

Kitra felt the little imp rise up in her and she stroked his chest tenderly. “I would like that too.” Trevor groaned and took the hand on his chest in his. Kitra snickered and replied. “Do you want me to get in another bunk?”

“Just try it! I’m not that tired,” he grumped.

For three more days, Kitra worked the trauma tent, but by the end of the third day, the arrivals were waning, and the doctor thanked her and said they could handle the load. She was thankful for that. Three days later, the very tired girls turned the RV for home. A stop to rest was necessary in Rocky Ford. The first place they stopped was a fast food place, and a snack of fresh watermelon made them ready for a good night’s rest—no pressure, no monitoring, and no interruptions.

That winter, the snow came in massive quantities, and on the mountains, there was a constant threat of avalanches. Kemper Rescue was asked to help find potential danger spots where avalanches were possible. Then an Army helicopter would fly in and blast the ridge, sending the snow down the mountainside harmlessly. There were many supply drops to people stranded in mountain cabins, and several rescues where snow slides had crushed cabins and trapped people inside.

One such rescue proved very hazardous. Rescue personnel were dropped in the area, and they frantically worked to free the cabin occupants and fly them to safety, or to the hospital, whichever was required.

Clay was working on the site of a slide, because it was believed there was someone trapped in the cabin under the snow. Kitra was watching from the camera on one of the choppers when the section where Clay was standing gave way and he slid through a hole in the cabin and a fresh flood of snow followed, burying him.

Kitra keyed the mike and shouted, "Clay fell through a hole and the snow has covered him. Over."

"Yeah," Trevor returned, "I saw that. I'm going to try to set down. Over."

Deuce came on and said, "Trev, it's too unstable down there. Over."

While they were talking, three Mountain Ranger Rescue team members ran to the spot and began to dig.

"Trevor," Kitra keyed, "there are people on the scene; don't try it...please."

There was no reply and Kitra held her breath. Once Trevor made up his mind about something, he would not listen to anyone. Kitra watched as he tried several places to set down where there were no trees, but always the snow gave way under the skids. Finally, he conceded the attempt and all he said was, "Damn! Over."

Kitra, Sandy, and Johnny watched the rescuers working frantically. In a situation where someone is covered in snow, the window for life was only about an hour. The clock hands moved slowly around and there was dead silence as everyone watched. Suddenly, they saw a hand come up out of the hole and then the green and white jumpsuit told the story that it was Clay. He was loaded in an airlift basket, and Trevor flew him to the Denver hospital. Two hours later, Clay came home none the worse for his ordeal. He told them that he had a few feet of room where part of the house held the snow at bay. They were all a very happy crew at dinner that evening.