I don't need you....

I don't need your store. I can take care of myself, thank you very much. I don't want somebody who doesn't want me, who I can't trust. So I'll do what Aunt Clara says and make lemonade out of any sour lemon.

But thinking of Raymond Boswell as a lemon wasn't easy when she'd been so close to him putting a diamond on her ring finger. Or had that been only her fantasy?

Gloria Seely slowed her pace. It wasn't like she was going somewhere. She paused only a few steps from the mailbox at the end of the sidewalk no more than fifteen feet down from the front porch.

Maybe acceptance was in that mailbox and would put her on the interstate of life. After all, she had education, had experience. She mustn't let them take away her confidence.
YVONNE LEHMAN

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A KNIGHT TO REMEMBER

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Chapter 1

“He humbled you by letting you go hungry.... He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 8:3 NLT

Home.
That’s where the heart is alleged to be.
If so, then yes, Thomas Knight had come home.
“Don’t drive to the entrance,” he instructed the taxi driver when they neared the hotel. “Let me out here at the sidewalk.”
The driver pulled over to the curb and shut off the meter. “Enjoyed talking to you. I don’t get to the suburbs often. Most of my driving is from the airport to the DC hotels and back again.”
“Thank you,” the driver said. Ducking his head, he peered past Thomas in the passenger seat. “Nice-looking place.”
Thomas nodded, got out with his backpack, and shut the door. He lifted his hand in farewell, and the driver pulled away from the curb.
Nice-looking place, yes.

Thomas stood on the sidewalk, staring at the one hundred-year-old, three-story, white Victorian structure. His gaze swept upward to the third floor that consisted of the suite with its king-sized bed, private bath, and small sitting room. A sense of longing surged through him at the windows of the room next to the suite. The hotel looked more like a welcoming bed-and-breakfast than a hotel, reminding him of the fallacy of first impressions.

Just as a book couldn’t be judged by its cover, or a man by his appearance, a hotel couldn’t be judged by its columns, upper balconies, immaculately groomed lawn, or budding cherry trees mingled with a background of red maples, tulip poplars, and white oaks.

A curved concrete driveway provided an entrance and an exit. He strode up the right side of the drive to the entry, bordered by a blue lavender hedge. He could almost smell the fragrance, although the blooms wouldn’t appear until summer. On each side, in front of the white banisters, boxwood shrubs formed a green background for the myriad colored pansies—yellow, purple, pink, and white—growing in profusion in the flower beds.

James had been true to his word in keeping the place looking decent for the small town. The hotel had been a mecca at one time for tourists who preferred not to stay in the heart of Washington, DC, but in Silver City instead. Thomas’s dad had wanted guests to feel at home, even talk to each other in the large living room, where cozy flames leapt and danced in the spacious fireplace whenever winter storms howled outside.

Stepping onto the blue-stained wooden porch, Thomas touched the knob of a royal blue rocking chair. He didn’t bother looking through the glass-paneled doors but focused on the sign he’d posted there after having the utilities turned off and locks secured: Closed Until Further Notice.

The insides were void of human habitation. Abandoned.
Yvonne Lehman

Had been for over three years. The same amount of time Thomas had been...away.

No, one could not judge the insides by the outward appearance.

Mentally shaking away threatening memories of the past, Thomas turned and sat in a blue rocker. James probably stored them in the winter and brought them out in spring. Maybe passersby stopped to sit in the rockers and enjoy the scenery even though they couldn’t enjoy the inside of the hotel.

Familiar cool March winds brushed his face. Fluffy white clouds skittered rapidly across the blue sky as if spring couldn’t wait to make its full appearance in the nation’s capital.

He felt a smile as he thought of cherry blossom time in Washington. The trees in front of him sported pink buds. With the white hotel at his back, he faced the direction of another White House. That brought thoughts of one’s right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Politicians in that capitol were supposed to ensure such rights for its citizens. Many experienced the results of such rights; but there was another side to life, others who had little opportunity to pursue much of anything.

He had pursued.
And where had it gotten him?
That remained to be seen.

He heaved a hefty sigh, pulled his cell phone from the side pocket of his backpack, and punched the first of only a few numbers in his phone.

Holding it up to his ear, he listened to the message. “You have reached the office of James B. Knight, Knight and Son, Attorneys at Law. Mr. Knight is not available at this time.”

No, the elder Mr. Knight was dead.

“Please leave your name, number, and a brief message. Mr. Knight will return your call at his earliest convenience.”
Thomas joked. “Not available for your own long-lost bro—”
“Thomas?”
Hearing his name spoken by James sent the adrenaline flowing faster through Thomas’s veins. Whether James would feel glad or disappointed in seeing him didn’t matter. They were brothers. The only remaining blood kin in the family. No, there was the extended family. James and Arlene’s four-year-old, Valerie. And the baby boy Thomas had never seen.
Thomas laughed. “The one and only.”
“Good to hear from you, Thomas. It’s about time. What can I do for you?”
“Well, you could have a cup of coffee with me.”
“Need to be a pretty darn good cup of coffee to make me chase you all over the nation. Where are you now?”
Thomas was tempted to say he was home, right there in Silver City, where his heart had always been.
“Since you’re the one with transportation, what about the Silver Percolator on Main?”
“You’re kidding. Right?” James’s words came quickly. Thomas scoffed. “Have I ever kidded?”
“Not in about three years or so.”
They both chuckled. “Let’s see,” James said. “It’s my break time anyway. See you there in about twenty minutes.”
“Hurry up, James. I’m needing that coffee.” Thomas closed the phone and heaved a deep breath. What he needed most was renewed contact with his brother. He hoped James felt the same way.
But James enjoyed the good life with a successful law firm, fine home, pretty wife, and two children. He could get along fine without his younger brother.