

SO YOU THOUGHT
YOU HAD ME!

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SO YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD ME!

AUDREY GREEN



WestBow
P R E S S

A DIVISION OF THOMAS NELSON



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BEAUTIFUL

ARE

THE

FEET

OF

THOSE

WHO

CARRY

THE

GOSPEL



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all men who have experienced '*possessive*' relationships and didn't know how to escape. Be strong my brother!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Arthur W. Powell, Sr. (MY DADDY), for always being here for me no matter what! Thank you Daddy. I love you so very much!

Dr. Eugenia Gumm, for sharing words of encouragement. Thank you.

Betty Byrd, for always calling to check up on me. I hold your encouraging words dear to my heart. Thank you for your undying love, friendship and honesty. I love you.

To Westbow Press for such an awesome job on my book.

To my Lord Jesus Christ, for always anointing me to write for Your glory. And now anointing me to write a movie script.

To you the Reader for always believing in me, and purchasing my novels. Without your support, my books would not be what they are today. Thank you from my heart to yours.

FOREWORD

The narrative of “So You Thought You Had Me!” will take you on an exciting adventure of true love, fun, laughter, deceit, disappointments and forthright trusting and believing in God. The details of the story are well-defined and graphic, in which, one can imagine being there in the scene tale or watching a movie. Each event of this novel could occur in real life situations. Therefore, you could see the hand of God in each intriguing occurrence. Evangelist Audrey Green was truly inspired by God to write these episodes in which the Living God will be manifested and glorified in every issue from past experiences as well as deep hurt.

This publication is an easy read for everyone to experience the remarkable journey of Bradford and his baby girl and the rest of the characters...you will not be disappointed, on the contrary, heart-moved.

Dr. Eugenia Gumm
Mighty Warriors of God Ministries
Dayton, Ohio

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INTRODUCTION

In today's society, many wander aimlessly in life; not knowing from day to day, where they may end up. There are many who have experienced emotional breakdowns, suicidal attempts, destructive efforts to break up families, and misuse from others.

'So You Thought You Had Me!' will explore the value one must have for oneself and the need to accept that which the Lord has ordained for your life. Walk in your destiny and be blessed by God. It also reveals how people are deceived by the outward appearance of another, yet it reflects ways to be victorious. 'So You Thought You Me!' at times will enrage your emotions, and other times encourage you to step forward and live life to the fullest. So don't be entangled again with the emotional yoke of bondage. Instead, live in the liberty the Lord has promised you.

'Eloquence was the daughter of a famous actress. She wanted more for her son and herself than mere fame. Therefore, she actively pursued her dreams despite all obstacles.

Bradford was married to a beautiful, kind woman. They had a daughter. But, their lives changed in an instant. To what extent would Bradford go in order to fulfill his wife's dream for their lives?

Only time will expose the paths in which Eloquence and Bradford will pursue. Yes, they do cross paths and things happen.'

Take the journey with Eloquence and Bradford. See what happens next! Enjoy your reading.

CHAPTER 1

When We First Met

ELOQUENCE WAS SITTING on a park bench in Seattle, Washington, eating pink cotton candy, sipping on spring water, and reading a novel. Suddenly, she was startled by a noise from behind her. As Eloquence cautiously turned to look in the direction of the noise, her eyes looked upon a tall, handsome man. She was mesmerized by the depth of his gorgeous, dark black eyes. His dimpled smile had her in a daze. Then suddenly, she heard another noise behind him. As her eyes briefly turned from the man, she saw at his side, a beautiful little girl with silky, long black hair and a beautiful smile.

“Hi! Do you mind if I sit here?”

“No, I don’t mind. She’s a beautiful little girl. Is she your daughter?”

“Yes.”

“How old is she?”

“As a matter of fact, today is her birthday. She just turned ten.”

"That's wonderful! Will you be having a birthday party here at the park for her?"

"No. Later this evening, my family and I will get together at the house to celebrate her birthday."

"What's your daughter's name?"

"Her name is Felicitee."

"What a unique name."

"Thank you."

"Are you waiting on someone?"

"No, Ma'am. Why do you ask?"

"I noticed you looking around as if you were waiting on someone. I guess I was just wondering if your wife was going to join you and Felicitee."

"No. Her mother, Tracey, died a couple of years ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Thank you. But why do you have such a concerned expression?"

"What do you mean?"

"People tend to respond with the same expression whenever I mention that my wife is deceased."

"I'm sorry. I didn't..."

"No need to apologize. My wife was a remarkable woman. She was in a car accident and needed a blood transfusion. As I look back and think about that time in my life, I can't believe how the anguish took over my heart."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Yeah, I had my moments. That's for sure."

"Why would you say that?"

"Well, after we got through all the doctor's visits and the days of her feeling really awful, she became extremely ill for no apparent reason. The doctors ran all kinds of tests, then, finally everything surfaced."

"I'm sorry."

"Please, there's no need for you to keep saying you're sorry. There's also no need for you to have that look of bewilderment. I know you don't know me from Adam. You must think I'm crazy sharing all this with you."

"No, I don't think that at all."

"It's just that I never really talked about my wife's death. She had been diagnosed with the HIV virus sometime after the transfusion. We asked how that could happen. As the doctors reviewed her medical records, they realized that they had made an awful mistake. They accidentally had given her the blood that had the HIV virus when they gave her the transfusion. A few years after, when she became extremely ill, they realized that she had full-blown Aids."

"Oh my God, I am so sorry to hear that."

"I didn't mean to keep going on and on about my wife."

"It's alright. Sometimes we just need an unbiased party to listen."

"There are times when I look at my daughter, and see so many attributes of her mother, Tracey."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. My son's father, Matthew Andrew Stanford, II, died about five years ago in a plane crash."

"Now I'm the one who's sorry, Ma'am."

"No, it's alright. My son's paternal grandparents are still living. So in a sense, it's like his dad is still alive."

"But I'm truly sorry to hear about your husband, Ma'am."

"No, I was never married to Matthew, II. We lived together for years though."

"Nonetheless, it's a blessing that your son's paternal grandparents are still around. But, are your parents still living?"

"Yes, it is a blessing. And yes, my parents are still living. Whew, all this silence in the air. I know we've just met, but I really would

appreciate it if you wouldn't call me 'Ma'am'. It sounds so ancient. I'm Eloquence and you are?"

"I'm Bradford Wellington. What a beautiful smile you have."

"Thank you."

"Where is your son?"

"He's spending the summer with his dad's parents in Staten Island, New York."

"That's a nice, long vacation for him. What's your son's name?"

"Matthew Andrew Standford, III."

"How old is he?"

"He's thirteen. Your name again is Bradford?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"Bradford is such a strong, masculine sounding name."

"Um, if I didn't know better, I'd think you were flirting with me, young lady."

"Why would you say that?"

"Well, the smile on your face gives you away. And you also have a nice laugh."

"What smile?"

"You're cute, Eloquence. But it's strange that you made mention of how my name has a strong, masculine ring to it. Just the other day, my daughter and I were researching on the internet the definition of our names."

"Really?"

"Yes. And Bradford comes from the English origin and means 'wide river crossing'."

"I bet that's a wide river to cross too," she whispered.

"I'm sorry, Eloquence. I didn't hear what you said."

"Oh, I just said how high the river has been lately."

"Oh, okay. I thought I heard you say something else."

"No, no. You didn't."

All throughout the conversation, Felicitee was on the swing, enjoying herself. However, periodically, she would glance in their direction which was not far from her.

"If you don't mind me saying, the name Eloquence is unique. Why did your mother choose that particular name for you?"

"My mother was an actress and loved unique names. From what I've been told, she was well sought after. In fact, there were many who were star-struck by her beauty."

"What's her name?"

"Angelica Babbarabus."

"She was your mother?"

"Yes."

"I must say, she was a beautiful woman. I've seen some of her earlier movies and just stand in awe of her talent and beauty."

"Thank you, Bradford."

"You're going to have to stop flirting with me with your eyes and attractive smile. It's intoxicating. See, there you go again."

"Bradford, I never had the opportunity of really knowing my mother."

"Wow, what a way to change the subject."

"What? Seriously, though. My mother was always working. I felt as though my mother didn't truly love me like she'd always proclaim. In fact, I shared those self-same feelings with Frannie, my nanny."

"Why would you feel that way?"

"It never failed. Whenever my mother would take vacations, she never included me. She would always leave me with Frannie. She worked, it seemed like constantly. I can recall being in a school play during eighth grade."

"Why are you staring into space? What about the school play?"

"I had the lead role of a young girl who was abandoned by her

mother. Everyone said what an excellent job I did. But little did they know that I was only acting out my life. I was lonely growing up as a child. I needed the love of my mother, like any young girl would. My father, Peter, left when I was only six years of age. He was my hero for a long time. In fact, he was the one who taught me all about life. It was my father who put me to bed at night and read me stories. But then, something happened. He began molesting me and I had no one to turn to. I tried telling Frannie, but she wouldn't listen. I tried telling my mother, but she said that I was exaggerating because I missed her. So for one year, from the age of five to six, my father molested me at least three times a week. I prayed hard that the Lord would let me die. Instead, the Lord allowed my father to leave us. I don't know why I'm telling you all this."

"Well, sometimes, Eloquence, people just need to let go and allow the Lord to completely heal them from within. I have learned through the death of my wife that we all need a shoulder to lean on every so often, even if the shoulder is attached to a stranger. Maybe the Lord positioned me here just for you. Sometimes, we don't need anyone to speak, just to listen."

"If only I could believe that, Bradford."

"But you do. Didn't you just tell me that about my situation?"

"Anyway, Bradford, it's been nice talking with you. I better get going. Oh, so you're not going to shake my hand, huh? That's okay."

"Oh, you got jokes, huh, Eloquence?"

"Well, you probably need to get things ready for your daughter's birthday party."

"Yes, you're right. And yes, I will shake your hand. But hopefully, I'll see you again, Eloquence," he said softly as he smiled with his evenly white teeth.

“Oh, I don’t know if that’s possible. Have a wonderful time with your family today.”

“Thanks. I will, Eloquence. But as far as I am concerned, all things are possible to them that believe.”

“Oh, no you didn’t just go there with the Scripture,” she laughed.

As Eloquence walked away, Bradford just stood there in a daze, admiring her beauty, thinking to himself about how much she reminded him of his deceased wife. How graceful and articulate she was. Eloquence slowly turned her head to glance back at Bradford, smiled, and waved goodbye.

My, her name certainly does fit her beauty, he whispered under his breath.

“Daddy?”

“Yes sweetheart?”

“Who was that lady?”

“She’s just a kind lady in need of a friend.”

“Okay, can we go to Grandmother’s now?”

“Sure, sweetheart.”

CHAPTER 2

She's On My Mind

BRADFORD AND FELICITEE had returned to his in-laws' home where the birthday party would be held. He went to the bathroom to freshen up and began reminiscing about the day. He remembered the smile on Eloquence's face and the ever-so-mellow scent of perfume she was wearing.

"Baby Girl, I'm going upstairs for a minute."

"Okay, Daddy. I think I'll help Grandmother in the kitchen."

"Alright, sweetheart."

As he entered the bathroom, he began smiling as he washed his hands and began talking aloud to himself.

Wow, Eloquence reminds me of my wife. They say there's a twin for every person on this earth. I guess that simple cliché is accurate. Eloquence. What a wonderful and fitting name for such a lovely woman. What was I thinking! I should have asked for her digits. Oh well, maybe she wouldn't have given them to me anyway. I mean I just met the woman today.

"Lord, if you're listening, please open that door for me to

run into Eloquence again. I don't care where; just do this thing for me. Yes, I miss my wife. But, Lord, I'm still a man in need of companionship from a woman. I remember reading in Your Word that you would give me the desires of my heart. I know I need to be patient. But, Lord, I'm already delighting myself in you. So please bless me with another opportunity to see her again."

Shucks, who am I kidding? I can't go to the Lord with His Own Word, trying to trick Him into giving me my desires. Instead, I need to find out from the Lord if Eloquence is the woman ordained for me.

"Lord, why do your children do the things we do, just to get the things we want? My goodness, she may not be the woman you want to be in my life. Besides, I just can't have anyone in my daughter's life. Not right now."

He finished in the bathroom and went downstairs. Felicitee was in the kitchen with her grandmother.

"Hi, Grandmother."

"Hello, Sweetheart. Did you have fun at the park with your Dad?"

"Yes, ma'am, I did. Guess what, Grandmother?"

"What, honey?"

"Daddy was talking to some lady at the park."

"He was? What did this lady say to your daddy?"

"I don't know everything because I was on the swing for a long time."

"Okay, so did you hear anything this lady had to say to your daddy?"

"Yes, ma'am, I sure did. She asked about my mother."

"What did she want to know about your mother?"

"She asked if my mother was going to join us at the park."

"What did your daddy say?"

"He told her that mother was dead."

"What else did this woman want to know?"

"Not much. I mean, I could tell that she was flirting with my daddy."

"How could you tell that?"

"She kept smiling at him and talking about how his name sounds so strong."

"Really?"

"Grandmother, why do you look so surprised?"

"Honey, how did your daddy respond to this woman? Did he keep his distance? Did he touch her in any way? Did she touch him in any way?"

"I don't really know if they touched, but Daddy did sit down next to her."

"Okay, start from the beginning. What happened when you and your daddy arrived at the park?"

"Awe, Grandmother, do I have to?"

"Honey no need to whine."

Bradford entered the kitchen.

"Whining about what?"

"Nothing, Bradford. We were just having a moment."

"Daddy, may I go watch television?"

"Sure, sweetheart. Everything sure does smell good, Mrs. Cantrell."

"Son, how long has it been since I've been telling you to call me 'Mother'?" You were married to my daughter, for God's sake."

"Why do you sound so disgusted? Did I say something wrong?"

"Bradford, I just think it's high time you call me Mother, okay?"

"Yes ma'am. I guess I better after that tone."

"Here we go with the 'yes, ma'am' bit."

"I was only joking with you. Are you sure that I didn't do anything to upset you? If I did, I am truly sorry."

At that time, Mr. Cantrell walked into the kitchen.

"Hey, son. How are you doing today?"

"I'm fine, Mr. Cantrell, and you?"

"I'm alright for an old man. Where's my granddaughter?"

"Oh, honey, she just went into the living room to watch television. Mark, I was just telling Bradford to stop calling me Mrs. Cantrell."

"Why? That's your name, isn't it?"

"So you got jokes. Of course, that's my name. But he's been in the family far too long to continue calling me that."

"So, what is it that you'd like for him to call you?"

"Mother."

"Come on now, Sweetheart."

"What's wrong with me wanting him to call me that?"

"Nothing, I guess, Sweetheart."

"Listen, son, maybe you could at least try to please your mother-in-law in this small request," he said, looking at Bradford as if to beg him to comply.

"Sure, I'll try."

"That's all I'm asking of you, son, is to try."

"Yes sir."

"Anyway, it's too serious in this kitchen. I think I'll join my granddaughter before the guests arrive."

"Okay, honey."

"Son, would you like to join us and allow my wife to finish up in here?"

"Sure thing, sir."

The joined Felicitee in the living room.

"Honey, did you enjoy your time at the park?"

"Yes granddaddy."

"That's good. What are you watching?"

"I'm watching a movie about a little girl who was kidnapped from the hospital."

"Baby Girl, you don't need to be watching the Lifetime Movie Network. Let's find you something more conducive to your age."

"Oh, Daddy, I'm growing up now. Besides, Mother and I use to watch the Lifetime Movie Network all the time together. I don't see why I can't continue watching it."

"Sweetheart, it's your birthday. How about we just turn the television off and play a couple of games before the guests arrive?"

"I guess so, Daddy."

"What a relief?"

"Bradford, would you come into the kitchen for a moment? I need your help with something."

"Son, why are you walking so slowly?"

"Mr. Cantrell, I just don't know what to expect once I get into the kitchen."

As he entered the doorway of the kitchen, he poked his head inside while his eyes wandered from one end of the kitchen to the next. Finally, as he looked up, his mother-in-law, Denitra Cantrell, was standing right in front of him. Startled, he froze.

"Son, are you alright?"

"Yes, ma'am. But I was just wondering why you're gazing at me with such disdain."

"I thought you were not going to call me 'ma'am' anymore."

"I'm sorry. What can I help you with Mother Cantrell?"

"I can't reach my salad bowl at the top of the cupboard. Would you get it down for me?"

"Sure. Here you go."

"Thank you, son."

"No problem."

"Listen, I was talking with Felicitee earlier while you were in the bathroom."

"Yes?"

"She was telling me that she saw you talking with some woman at the park."

"Yes?"

"I was just wondering who this woman was."

"I don't know. She was already there sitting down on the bench when Felicitee and I arrived. Why do you ask?"

"No reason."

"No, I think there's a reason. But you just don't care to share it with me, huh?"

"Don't be silly, Bradford. I was just curious is all."

"Well, was there anything else you needed while I'm in here?"

"No, no, that was all. Thanks again."

"No problem," Bradford began mumbling beneath his breath, saying, and *She thinks she's slick; trying to find out if I was meeting up with a woman. Boy, it's killing her to even imagine that I'd go on with my life. I don't know what she's going to do when I do start dating again. Oh, well, she'll just have to get use to the idea.*

"Did you say something?"

"No, ma'am. I mean Mother Cantrell. I was just thinking out loud. It wasn't anything important."

"Okay."

CHAPTER 3

Everyone Has Arrived

BACK IN THE living room, the doorbell rang.

“Son, would you get that, please?”

“Sure thing, Mr. Cantrell.”

Bradford opened the door to let friends and family enter for the birthday party.

“Come on in, everyone. Have a seat. Make yourselves at home. The children will be in the backyard playing while the adults are in the house.”

“What, there won’t be any adults in the back with the children?” Sharon inquired. She was Tracey’s cousin and an attorney by trade.

“Of course there will be, Sharon.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear that, Auntie Denitra. Give me a hug.”

“How have you been, honey?”

“Oh, Auntie, I’ve been doing well. How about yourself?”

“Fine.”

“That’s good, but it wasn’t convincing. Are you sure you’re

alright?" Sharon asked as she gently placed her hand on the small of her Auntie's back and walked toward the kitchen.

"Okay, now that we're away from everyone, tell me what's wrong."

"It's nothing."

"Oh, it has to be something. Otherwise, you wouldn't be acting like you're acting. So, just go ahead and tell me what's on your mind."

"Well, Bradford took Felicitee to the park earlier."

"Okay. Did they enjoy themselves?"

"Yes."

"So then what's the problem?"

"My granddaughter saw Bradford sitting next to a woman."

"What were they doing?"

"Just talking."

"Okay. I'll ask again; what's the problem?"

"Well, this Jezebel was asking all about my daughter."

"What was she asking?"

"I don't know exactly."

"Okay, Auntie, calm down. Let's start from the beginning."

"Alright. My granddaughter told me that the lady was asking about her mother, my daughter."

"Auntie, why are crying? There's no reason for you to cry."

"I don't want any woman around my granddaughter. She was flirting with Bradford, talking about how strong his name sounds."

"Whew! You said that with great tenacity. Auntie, first off, you don't really know all that was said. Secondly, Tracey has been dead for a while now. Don't you think Bradford gets a little lonely? Don't you think he deserves to have the companionship of another woman in his life? Don't you think he's smart enough not to get involved with someone who's not right for both him and Felicitee?"

"Oh, I don't know. In my mind, a man is still just a man!"

"Okay, now Auntie, in all fairness, Bradford will make intelligent decisions for both himself and Felicitee. If you're that concerned about this woman in the park, why don't you just ask Bradford about her?"

"I tried, but, all he said, in so many words, was that she was someone who just needed a listening ear."

"Cool. Then until there's something for you to worry about, let's just enjoy Felicitee's birthday party, okay? Everything is going to work out, Auntie."

"I guess so."

"Come on, put a smile on your face. Let's head on out to the backyard and enjoy the day. Come on, now, Auntie."

"You don't have to keep putting your hand on my back, making me go where you want me to go."

"Wow, you truly are upset about all this. Well, I'm sorry for nudging you to go have a little fun with your granddaughter. You forgive me for touching your back?"

"Of course. I wouldn't be a good Christian if I didn't forgive."

"So true, Auntie. So true."

"Hi, Cousin Sharon!"

"Hi, sweetheart. Here's your present. Happy Birthday."

"Thank you. Can I open it now?"

"Sure you can."

"No, sweetheart, just wait until it's time to open all the presents at the same time. Okay?"

"Okay, Grandmother. Go on and play now."

"Okay."

"Sharon, why would you tell her that she could open that present now? You know we have to wait."

"I know, but I really didn't see any harm in her opening up my present. Wow, I sure hope your mood gets better."

"You best watch yourself. You're never too old for me to turn you over my knee."

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Hey there, Mrs. Cantrell and Sharon. How are you both doing?"

"We're fine. What about yourself, Teresa? They said simultaneously."

"I'm doing well,"

"Are the men coming out to join us with the children?"

"Now, Teresa, you already know that answer. Do they ever come outside with us?"

"You got jokes. But I know you speak truth. I just thought that maybe this year would be different."

"Girl, stop your lying. But that was funny. Anyway, how's your business coming along, Teresa?"

"Let me tell you, I just recently made some awesome investments. And girl, business is wonderful if I do say so myself."

"What exactly is it that you do again?"

"Oh, Mrs. Cantrell, I'm a real estate broker. Business is booming like never before,"

"Well, Teresa, you do know what they say, don't you?"

"What's that, Mrs. Cantrell?"

"Just because you are of African-American and Latino descent..."

"Auntie, don't even finish that sentence. That's not nice."

"Well, anyway. Just because you are a beautiful African American Latino with a hairdo to die for like Anita Baker and with a body in tip-top shape does not dismiss you from preparing yourself for a storm while things are going well and dandy."

"Oh, that's an old wives' tale, Mrs. Cantrell."

"How be it old, it still rings true, young lady."

"Girl, my Auntie is really serious. Look at the stern look on her face."

"Look a here, I think I'll just walk over there by the children."

"Boy, oh, boy, you young people of today never take the wisdom of the elderly. Mark my words, you need to put a nest egg up for those rainy days which are coming sooner or later."

"Okay, Auntie, you're on a roll today. Why don't we pull out some of the games so the children can play?"

"Alright, Sharon, but don't patronize me. I know what I'm talking about."

"I know you do, Auntie. But today is all about Felicitee. So let's just enjoy it, okay?"

"You're right. Go tell your friend over there that I apologize for jumping all into her personal affairs."

"She's alright Auntie."

"Girl, go do what I told you to do."

"Yes, Ma'am, I'm going right now."

"Teresa?"

"Yes, Sharon."

"My Auntie didn't mean to upset you with what she was saying. She just believes that young people of today's society don't know how to prepare for the rainy days that are coming."

"I understand. She reminds me a lot of my grandmother. She's feisty, forceful, and refuses to back down when she believes she's correct about an issue."

"Yep, that's exactly how my Auntie is too. Anyway, she just wanted me to apologize for upsetting you."

"No, I'm alright. Do you think it'll be alright if I tell her myself?"

"Sure, go ahead. I'll get the children started on the games."

"Okay, I'll be right back to help you out."

"Okay."

"Mrs. Cantrell?"

"Yes Dear."

"I'm not upset with you. I was just sharing with Sharon how you remind me a lot of someone in my family. She tells me the same thing every time she sees me."

"Well, young lady, where there are two or three witnesses saying the same thing, the Lord said let every word be established. In other words, young lady, you should really take heed and start saving for the rainy day that's bound to come your way."

"Yes Ma'am."

"I hear you saying 'yes Ma'am', but, be mindful of what you bind up here on earth and in heaven."

"Hey Teresa. I need your help over here with the children!"

"You better head on over there before my niece gets upset."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Girl, I'm sorry about my Auntie. I know she had a mouthful to say."

"Yes, she did. But she's just concerned."

"Teresa stop being polite. My Auntie is bossy to say the least. Anyway, I thought you could use my help to get away from her."

"I did. Thanks girl."

"No problem. Let's get this party started."

"Kids, it's time for games. Who wants to play 'hit the piñata'?"

"I do, I do!" all the children responded. The games were extremely fun. The children were screaming with great excitement. However, Bradford heard his daughter's voice over all the other children and decided to see what she was up to. He walked to the doorway and just lovingly watched his daughter enjoy herself.

"Hey Bradford, come on over here with us!"

"No, I'm fine right where I stand, Sharon."

"Okay, be afraid, be very afraid."

"You're silly."

"That's what I've been told."

"I'm going back in the living room where the men are."

"Chicken."

"Yep, that's me."

"You're silly. See you later."

"Okay."

"Ooo la la. He is so handsome. Oops, did I say that out loud?"

"Teresa, if I were you, I wouldn't say that loud enough for Auntie to hear."

"Why? It's true anyhow. He is extremely handsome."

"In case you didn't notice, Auntie Denitra was already upset."

"Why?"

"Bradford was talking with some woman in the park today."

"Why would she be upset because of that?"

"Well, my Auntie believes that Bradford shouldn't be in any relationship until Felicitee turns eighteen."

"No way! She can't believe that! Not as fine as he is."

"Come on now!"

"Yes way."

"Seriously, though Sharon. He's a grown man."

"I know that, he knows that. But my Auntie refuses to accept it. So, you think my cousin-in-law is handsome, huh?"

"I do. I really do. Shucks, I'll say 'I do' to him any given day. He's yummy yum."

"Watch yourself now. There are children around."

"Oh, I'll behave myself for the time being. But if I hang out around here much longer, I won't be responsible for my actions."

"You may not be, but my Auntie will be. So behave yourself."

"Okay, I will, promise."

"I saw that look. I know you."

"Okay all joking aside. I'll behave myself."

"Good. In that case, let me introduce you to him."

"No not right now. Especially after what you said about your Aunt Denitra."

"Oh girl, it'll be alright. Let me go in the house to get him. You stay put."

"Um, I ain't goin' nowhere, chile."

"Wow, you are silly. Okay, I'll be right back."

Sharon entered the house.

"Hey, Bradford. Come here for a second."

"What you want, girl?"

"I want to introduce you to my friend. She thinks you're hot."

"Oh really?"

"Yep."

"Bradford, this is Teresa Mon-Näy. She's a real estate broker. Teresa, this is my cousin-in-law, Bradford Wellington."

"Wow, you have strong hands, Bradford. It's nice to meet you."

"The pleasure is all mine, Teresa."

"Well, I think I'll leave you two alone to get better acquainted."

At that moment, Auntie Denitra Cantrell looked up and saw that Bradford and Teresa were talking with two inches between them. She made her way to them.

"Oh, I see that Sharon has introduced you two."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Son, we're not back to 'Ma'am', are we? If you'd take your eyes off her, you'd see the look on my face."

"I'm sorry, Mother Cantrell."

"Well, young lady, have you thought any more about what I was sharing with you earlier?"

"Yes, Ma'am, I have."

"What are you going to do about it then?"

"I'm going to put more aside for the rainy day you were telling me about."

"That's a good idea."

"I'll talk with you later, Ma'am."

"Humph. Oh no you didn't just dismiss me, like I don't even exist. All this flirting going on around my granddaughter, it's just not right."

"Auntie, where are you going?"

"Back inside."

"Why, what's wrong?"

"Did you see that?" she asked with a brokenness.

"See what, Auntie?"

"Bradford and your little friend over there, answering my questions, but never really looking up to acknowledge me?"

"Well, Auntie, maybe it's not what you think?"

"Oh, yes, it is. That little hussy is trying to make her move on Bradford. I'm not having it! I'm just not having it!"

"Well alrighty then. I guess you're mad. I'm going inside. Oh well, it's time for the birthday girl to make a wish and blow out her candles. Everyone, lets gather around Felicitee so we can sing Happy Birthday and then she can make a wish and blow out the candles and open the gifts."

"Where's Grandmother?"

"She went inside. I'll go get her."

"Okay, Cousin Sharon."

"Auntie, we're waiting on you so we can sing Happy Birthday."

"Alright then, wait no longer. Let's go."

"Here she is, Felicitee. Let's all sing Happy Birthday to my little cousin."

"Now make a wish, grandbaby."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Sharon, did you see that?"

"See what, Auntie?"

"Bradford and your friend Teresa standing side by side?"

"Auntie Denitra, it's okay. You really shouldn't be so furious. You're going to make your blood pressure rise. Just enjoy your granddaughter. This is her day. Okay? Look, she's opening up her gifts."

"Look, Grandmother. I got a laptop."

"That's nice, baby."

"Daddy, look."

"I see your laptop. Now you can go to work when I go to work, huh?"

"Yes, I can sit right next to you in your office across from my bedroom."

"That's right, baby girl. You received some awesome gifts. Tell everyone thank you."

"Thank you, everybody."

"You're welcome."

"So Bradford, your daughter is so cute and polite."

"Yes, she is. In fact, she's a lot like her mother. Well, I think I'll go on inside with the guys."

"Okay. See you later."

"Okay, Teresa."

"Well, well, well."

"What, Sharon?"

"I see you and my cousin-in-law are hitting it off very well."

"Yeah, I think so."

"So do tell."

"There's not much to tell at this point. But I'm working on it."

"Yep, I know you are. Listen, help me clean this mess."

"Sure thing, Sharon." they finished cleaning.

"Well, fellows, I see my wife standing in the doorway, eyeballing me. It's time for me to go now."

"Aw, come on, man, don't be afraid of her look."

"Mr. Cantrell, you're joking, but my wife's face is not."

"Now that's funny, David."

"That's easy for you to say about your niece, but I'm the one that lives with her. I'm out of here."

"Chicken!"

"Okay, that's alright, Mr. Cantrell."

"Well, we're all leaving too."

"Okay, Tony. Thanks for coming."

"You're welcome, Aunt Denitra."

"Teresa, I'll walk you to your car."

"Thanks, Bradford."

"I really am glad you came to my daughter's birthday party."

"So am I."

"Can I call you sometime, if it's alright with you?"

"Sure, here's my number."

"Well, well, well. I see you already prepared for me to ask for your digits."

"A girl can hope, can't she?"

"Alright, then. I'll call you later after my daughter and I get home."

"Around what time will that be?"

"I'm not really sure. I know my daughter and I will stay up for a couple of hours talking after we get home. So, if eleven o'clock is not too late?"

"No, eleven is fine. I'll talk with you later, Bradford."

"Goodbye."

As Teresa drove away from the house, Bradford just stood there, watching her car until he could no longer see her silver-

colored Jaguar. He then walked back into the house to get Felicitee and say his goodnights.

"Son, it looks like my granddaughter wasn't the only one enjoying this day."

"What are you talking about, Mr. Cantrell?"

"Don't play. You know exactly what I'm talking about. That Teresa is a great catch."

"Is she? Well, I better get Felicitee on home. She needs to get her rest."

"Why don't the two of you just stay the night?"

"Oh, no, Ma'am, we couldn't do that."

"And why not?"

"Because Felicitee and I have plans to go to church in the morning."

"That's no excuse. You two can go to church with us."

"No, Ma'am. We'll have to take a reign check if you don't mind."

"No, son, she doesn't mind."

"Thank you for understanding, Mr. Cantrell."

"No problem. You two be safe driving back home."

"Yes, Sir. Goodnight to you both."

"Goodnight, son."

"Sweetheart, go give your grandmother a hug and kiss goodnight."

"Yes Daddy."

"I love you, my darling one."

"I love you too, Grandmother."

"Now, come on over here to your granddad. Give me a tight hug."

"I love you, Granddaddy."

"I love you too, honey."

"Okay, I've loaded up all the gifts. It's time to get on home so you can get into the shower."

"Okay, Daddy. Bye."

"Bye, baby girl. Honey, why are you so upset with Bradford?"

"I'm upset because first, he was carrying on in the park today with some woman he didn't even know. Then, right here at our house, he was flirting with that hussy."

"What hussy? Who are you talking about?"

"Sharon's friend, Teresa. That's who I'm talking about. Don't act like you don't know who I'm talking about."

"Oh, honey, let it go. Bradford deserves to be happy. If he wants to date again, then let him be. He deserves to have a woman in his life. Shucks, our granddaughter deserves to have a mother figure in her life. Just leave him alone."

"First of all, who do you think I am! You don't talk to me in that condescending tone. I'm not your child. I'm your wife."

"Honey, I didn't have any special tone in my voice."

"Yes, you did."

"Then I truly apologize. All I'm saying is that our daughter, Tracey, would not want Bradford or Felicitee to be alone. She would want him to date again so that Felicitee could have a mother figure while growing up."

"How do you know if that was our daughter's wishes?"

"Because we talked right before she took her last breath. She didn't want me telling you because of how she knew you would respond."

"Whatever!"

"Why are you walking away?"

"I just don't have anything else to say to you. So, it's best I walk away right now."

"Okay, Denitra. I love you."

"Yeah, I love you too."

He began praying.

Okay, Lord, now You know my wife like no one else. I know she's

missing our Tracey, especially on our granddaughter's birthday. But, Lord, God, if You don't help me right now by dealing with my wife, it's me that will be standing in the need of prayer and not her.

Now, Lord, God in Heaven, work a miracle before I even step one toe in our bedroom. Even if You knock her out cold. Let her be asleep when I go to bed. Please, Lord! I know You are a God who is attentive to my prayers. Your eyes are upon the righteous.

Lord, please mend my wife's broken heart. She really misses our daughter. I know it's been a few years since You took our daughter on home to be with You. But, Lord, God, my wife is hurting. I also need Your help to teach me how to be sensitive to my wife's pain. Sometimes, Lord, Your sons just don't know how to be sensitive to Your daughters. Because we are the strong ones, we feel that they should be equally strong at times.

Lord, I know I need help in that area. Teach me how to be sensitive to the needs of my wife, the woman whom You entrusted unto me.

Lord, I am the head of my wife. But, it is You who are the head of the church, my Head. Teach me how to truly love my wife as Christ loves the church.

Lord, this is one son that needs Your guidance. I love my wife and I hate to see her hurting so deeply. Therefore, Lord, please show me how to be more like You so that I can be more of a help to the woman I love so dearly.

I commit all my requests and supplications to Your heart. I have peace about this, Lord.

In Jesus' name. Amen and So-Be-It.

Mr. Cantrell finally went into the bedroom.

"Honey, you asleep?"

"No, I'm just lying here, thinking about our Baby Girl."

"I know it's been hard for you today, especially knowing that our Baby Girl isn't here to see her daughter turn ten years old."

"Yes, it has been quite difficult for me today."

"Honey, everything is going to work out. I know that sounds cliché. But I just know that Bradford and Felicitee will be alright. I know it's hard to see Bradford and Felicitee with anyone other than our daughter. I know it is. Honey, do you hear me? Wow, no response."

He began praying silently.

Okay, Father, show me how to mend the hurt in my wife's heart. I can't do this thing without Your help.

"Honey, I'm going to lay right here beside you as I hold you in my arms. Do you feel my strong arms holding you?"

"Yes."

"Allow me to wipe away your tears. You see how close I am to you? How close I'm holding you?"

"Yes."

"Honey, God is even closer. He's right here, holding you in His bosom. Just like He's holding our daughter in His bosom. He's right here, wiping away every tear. Honey, the Lord has heard your prayer and seen your tears. In fact, He's placing your tears in a bottle."

"My sweet wife, I love you. I look into your eyes and without you saying a word, I feel your love toward me. Just rest, honey. Close your eyes and just rest."

Bradford and Felicitee finally arrived home.

"Sweetheart, did you really enjoy your birthday today?"

"Oh, Daddy, I did. I had so much fun!"

"Do you like all the gifts you received?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"I can tell you did just by the sparkle in your eyes."

"Daddy, I wish mother were here with us."

"Honey, so do I. But one thing is for sure; she's here with us in spirit. You do know that, right?"

“Yes, I do. Daddy, I’m a little tired. Can I take my shower tomorrow morning?”

“Sure, sweetheart.”

“I have a lot of gifts to take upstairs.”

“Honey, don’t worry about it. I’ll take them upstairs before I go to bed.”

“Thank you, Daddy. I love you. Goodnight.”

“You’re welcome, Baby Girl. Goodnight and I love you more.”

Bradford went upstairs about thirty minutes after Felicitee did. He checked in on her and noticed that she still had on her clothes. He took her shoes off and left her clothes on her. He did, however, gently scoot her up onto the bed correctly and covered her with a comforter, turned out the light, and closed her door. He then proceeded to his bedroom, took a shower, put on his silk pajamas and his smoker jacket. He strolled down the stairs and relaxed in his sitting area, watching a little television, waiting impatiently for eleven o’clock to come around. He dosed off, but the sound of the Grandfather clock awakened him right at eleven o’clock. He hurriedly grabbed the antique-looking phone to call Teresa. Then he realized that he misplaced the paper with her phone number.

CHAPTER 4

The Long Awaited Conversation

NOW WHAT DID I do with her phone number? Let me backtrack.

“Hi, Teresa. I’m sorry for calling so late. I fell asleep and I didn’t want you thinking that I was not going to call.”

“No, it’s alright. I was still awake watching the news which just went off.”

“Okay, good.”

“So did your daughter enjoy her day today?”

“Yes, she was extremely exhausted by the time we arrived home.”

“I can only imagine she would be. What about you, Bradford? Did you enjoy yourself with all the children running around?”

“Well, I enjoyed the fact that my daughter enjoyed herself.”
Silence filled the air.

“That’s good. It’s always difficult finding things to talk about when you first meet someone, huh?”

"That's true, Teresa. Now you said that you are a real estate broker?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"That's got to be a great deal of hard work."

"It is, but it's also rewarding. What about you, Bradford? What line of work are you in to?"

"I'm an architect."

"Architect. Wow, talk about a great of deal work."

"Yes, but I love every aspect of architecture."

"I see. So where is Felicitee at now?"

"She's in the bed. She fell asleep on the side of her bed."

"Wow, she really was exhausted, huh?"

"Yes, she was. Well, I know it's getting late, Teresa. I'll let you get your rest."

"Okay, goodnight."

Bradford began talking to himself aloud after hanging up the phone.

Boy, what's wrong with you? Well, I know it's getting late, but I could have said something else to her. Man, she probably thinks I'm a goofball. Well, maybe I'll call her sometime tomorrow just to see how her day is coming along. I better take my butt to bed. I'm tired myself. Let me set the alarm.

The next morning came sooner than expected.

"Rise and shine, sunshine. It's time to get up to eat breakfast."

"Okay, Daddy." She said in a slumbering tone.

"Let's hurry up. You go shower, get dressed, eat breakfast and I'll meet you in the living room in twenty minutes."

"Okay, but what's for breakfast?"

"I made grits. You can eat them on the way to church."

"Yes Sir."

"Honey, you ready to go yet?"

"Yes Sir."

"Alright, let's go to church."

As Bradford was sitting in the sanctuary, he felt someone staring at him across the way. It was Teresa.

Um, I wonder what she's doing here', he thought to himself. Now I know why; she's with Sharon.

"Hey Cuz. I saw you looking in my direction. So I thought I would come say hello before church got started good."

"Hi Sharon. What brings you to my neck of the woods? What's Teresa doing here?"

"I wanted to visit your church today, Bradford. As far as Teresa goes, I invited her. Is that a problem?"

"No, I was just curious."

"So, what do you think about her?"

Before Bradford could respond, Felicitee interrupted.

"Hi, cousin Sharon."

"Hi sweetie pie. Now, as I was saying, what's your take on her?"

"She seems nice, but she's pretty quiet."

"Yeah, but not once you get to know her. She can actually be quite talkative. Anyway, I better get back to my seat before my hubby embarrasses me by coming over here. I'll talk with you after church, Bradford."

"Okay."

The service was wonderful. Church had been dismissed. As Bradford was fellowshiping with some of the members, David, Sharon, and Teresa walked toward him.

"Hi young lady."

"Hello, Bradford."

"I'm sorry I couldn't talk longer last night. It was late and I was really tired."

"I understand, Bradford."

"Daddy, can I go with Cousin Sharon?"

"Where is she going, sweetheart?"

"She and Cousin David want to take me out to dinner."

"I don't know. I already have plans for us today."

"Oh, don't be a stickler, Bradford. I don't get the opportunity very often to spend time with Felicitree as it is."

"Why don't you take her out next Sunday?"

"Why do I have to wait an entire week to spend time with my little cousin?"

"Because, we have somewhere to be in an hour."

"Okay, don't look so disgusted."

"I'm not. I'm just on a tight schedule today. In fact, we really need to be heading on out now."

"Daddy, where are we going?"

"It's a surprise, sweetheart."

"I like surprises, Daddy."

"I know you do. So did your mother."

"Cousin Sharon, can I go with you next week?"

"Sure, sweetie pie. Give your cousin Sharon a hug."

All this time, Teresa was staring at Bradford, trying to make heads or tails of it all. He wasn't really making eye contact with her.

"Teresa, I don't mean to be rude, but Felicitree and I really have to be going."

"Oh, it's no problem. Enjoy your day."

"We will."

"I wonder what's up with him today."

"I don't know, Sharon, but he seemed a little preoccupied."

"Yeah, he did, didn't he? Anyway, girl, let's go get some dinner."

"Okay, let's go. But what about your husband?"

"I'm not sure. Let's find out. David will you be joining us for dinner?"

"No, Teresa. You ladies go and enjoy yourselves. I'm going home."

"I'll see you later, David. Give me a kiss."

"Alright, baby. Have fun."

"We will. I love you."

"Woman, I love you too."

Felicitee became curious as they were driving.

"Daddy, for real, where are we going?"

"It's a surprise. Just sit back and enjoy the ride."

"Okay."

"We're here."

"Where?"

"Come on. Let's go see about a house."

They enter the office of the Realtor.

"Hello, Mr. Wellington. I'm glad you didn't get lost."

"No, you gave pretty good directions, LaKeita."

"I do my best," she laughed. "Hi, sweetheart. What's your name?"

"Felicitee."

"What a pretty name for a pretty girl."

"Thank you."

"Aw, she's bashful."

"Not really."

"Okay then, after you, Mr. Wellington. Watch your step."

"It's breathtaking, LaKeita."

"Yes."

"How long has it actually been on the market?"

"Oh, it's been about fourteen months."

"And no one made an offer at all?"

"Yes, there have been at least three offers, but they all folded."

"Why? Is there something wrong with the mansion?"

"No, they each had their own reasons, but it had nothing to do with the property."

"Can we look around?"

"Sure, take your time."

As Bradford and Felicitee were walking through the property, he noticed the property next door.

"LaKeita, is the property next door vacant?"

"No, the owner is out of the country on business. She travels frequently."

"Oh, I see. How is she? What's that surprise look about, LaKeita?"

"How is she? Maybe I didn't understand your question."

"I'm sorry. That question didn't come out the way I intended for it to. What I'm asking is what type of neighbor is she? Does she like to have parties? Does she play loud music? Things like that."

"No, as a matter of fact, she keeps to herself. The people who are selling this property lived here for years. They never had a bad word to say about their neighbor."

"Well, that's certainly good to know. I have to say, LaKeita, I am really pleased with what I have seen."

"That's good news, Mr. Wellington."

"I'd like to make an offer on this property."

"Okay, wonderful. Let's go into the kitchen and talk. What would your offer be, Mr. Wellington?"

"Well, let me write it down on a piece of paper. Is this offer to your liking?"

"Wow! I'm sorry, Sir. It's just that this is a very generous offer."

"Well, I want this property. I love it. My daughter loves it. Baby Girl, do we want to live here?"

"Yes, we do!"

"Well, okay then. I'll present your offer to the owner and take it from there."

"Thank you, LaKeita. When will I be hearing from you?"

"I'm going straight to my office when I leave here to contact

the owner. So once I contact them, I'll call you right after to let you know their response."

"Okay, that sounds like a plan."

"Will you be home?"

"Probably not. Just call me on my cell."

"Okay. As soon as I speak with the owner, I'll call to let you know the outcome. Bye."

"Oh, I forgot to ask you something."

"Yes, what is it, Mr. Wellington?"

"LaKeita, how soon will my daughter and I be able to move in once you speak with the owner?"

"As soon as we close the transaction. Say within the month."

"Wonderful. Talk with you soon."

"Okay, Mr. Wellington."

"Daddy, are we going home now?"

"Yes sweetheart. By the way, this is our secret for now. So don't tell anyone about this mansion."

"I won't."

"I want it to be a surprise, okay, sweetheart?"

"Okay, Daddy."

"You sound so innocent. You do like it, don't you, sweetheart?"

"Yes, I really do. I especially like my bedroom. It's awesome."

"Good, Baby Girl."

Within the hour, Bradford received a call.

"Hello."

"Mr. Wellington, this is LaKeita."

"Oh, hi, LaKeita. Have you spoken with the owner?"

"Yes, I have."

"What was the owner's response to my offer?"

"Well, she sounded like she was gasping for air over the phone."

"So it's a 'yes'?"

“Yes, Mr. Wellington. It’s a ‘yes’.”

“You can stop by my office in a couple of days to execute the paperwork.”

“Okay, I’ll see you in a couple of days, LaKeita.”

“Baby Girl, we got the house!”

“Yeah! I can’t wait to sleep in my room. It’s so big.”

“Yes, Baby Girl, I can’t wait either. Your mother would be so happy to know that I purchased her dream house for us.”

“Daddy, I’m so happy.”

“So am I, Baby Girl. So am I.”

CHAPTER 5

The Fear of Confrontation

BRADFORD AND FELICITEE made it back home. He got the mail from Saturday out of the mailbox. And then went inside the house so they could sit and eat dinner.

“Daddy, I’m hungry.”

“So am I, little lady. Let’s go into the kitchen and raid the refrigerator.”

“I’ll race you, Daddy! I win!”

“Yes, you do. Baby Girl, you look so much like your mother when you make that face. I love you more than you will ever know.”

“Daddy, you okay?”

“Yes, I was thinking how much you look and act like your mother. She was so sweet and kind. She would always race me to the kitchen too. I remember one day when your mother said to me, and I quote, “Bradford Wellington, we need to talk”. I just knew that I had done something to upset her.”

“Did you?”

"No, I didn't."

"So what did Mother say?"

"She told me to sit down and then she dropped the news on me."

"What news?"

"Your mother said, 'Bradford Wellington, you're going to be a father'. I jumped up out of the seat I was sitting in, grabbed your mother, picked her up, turned her around, and squeezed her ever so gently. That was one of the happiest days of my life."

"What was the happiest day, Daddy?"

"Well, there were two days, actually. The first was when your mother became my wife. The second day was when I saw your sweet little smile as you entered this world."

"But what about now, Daddy?"

"Well, now, sweetheart, everyday, all days are my best days, as long as I have you on this earth with me. I love you so much, Baby Girl."

"I love you too, Daddy."

"Well, I better get dinner on the stove."

"I can help."

"No, that's alright. You can start packing up your things. We're moving in thirty days!"

"Yippee, Daddy!"

"Baby Girl, you even skip like your mother."

"For real, Daddy?"

"Yes, for real. Now go on and start boxing up your things while I cook us some dinner. I'll let you know when it's ready."

"Yes, sir."

Wow, I can't believe it's finally happening. I just wish you were here, Tracey, to see all this. But it's okay because you're here with us in spirit. I love and miss you so much, Honey. I really do. Let me pull myself together and get this dinner finished.

"Daddy, is dinner finished? I'm so hungry."

"Yes, Baby Girl, it's time to eat."

"Good. I'm coming. Wow, look at all this food. I can't eat all this, Daddy."

"I know, just eat what you can."

"Okay, I will. Daddy, when can I tell Grandmother that we're moving?"

"Honey, let me tell them."

"But why? I want to tell them."

"It would be best coming from me. Do you understand, sweetheart?"

"Yes, sir. But, when are you going to tell them?"

"After I sign the paperwork in a few days. So promise me that you won't share this wonderful news with anyone until I say that you can."

"I promise, Daddy. I'm full now."

"So am I, sweetheart. Would you mind clearing the table and putting the dishes in the dishwasher?"

"Sure, Daddy. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to start packing things up in my office."

"I need some boxes too."

"I'll get some tomorrow while you're in school. Oh, that reminds me, Baby Girl. Don't tell any of your friends about us moving yet, okay?"

"Okay, I won't, Daddy, promise."

"Well, I'm going to get started in my office while you clean the kitchen."

A few moments went by.

"Daddy, I'm finished with the kitchen."

"Okay. I put some boxes on your bed."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Thirty minutes passed.

"How are you holding up, Baby Girl?"

"I'm tired."

"Okay, you go ahead and get some rest. We can work on your room tomorrow after you get home from school. Give me a kiss and hug."

"Okay. Goodnight, Daddy."

"Night, sweetheart. I love you so very much, honey."

"I love you more."

"No way. I love you this much." He stretched his arms wide open.

"I love you around the world and back, Daddy."

They both smiled at one another. Felicitee went ahead and took her shower and then went to bed. Bradford began to talk to himself aloud.

Well, I guess I better prepare my mind to talk with Mrs. Cantrell. I just know she's going to be highly upset with me. I know she's going to think that I'm trying to take Felicitee away from her. I just know she's going to be overbearing. Well, enough about that. I don't have to talk to her until after I sign the paperwork, so no need in stressing.

Shucks, I'm just glad to have the house of Tracey's dreams. The mansion my sweet wife always wanted for our Baby Girl. Well, I guess I better get in the bed too. I'm a little tired.

The next morning.

"Get up, sleepy head. Time to get dressed for school."

"Okay, Daddy."

"What would you like for breakfast, sweetheart?"

"Cinnamon oatmeal, toast with jam, and orange juice."

"Okay, coming right up. As soon as you get dressed, come on downstairs."

"Okay, I will."

Bradford began singing Donnie McClurkin's song, "Just For Me."

"Daddy, I have always loved your voice."

"Thank you, have a seat, Baby Girl. Enjoy breakfast."

"Daddy, is this freshly squeezed orange juice?"

"Yes, nothing but the best for my Baby Girl."

"Very nice. Mommy use to make me freshly squeezed orange juice every morning before I went to school."

"I know, sweetheart. You miss your mother a lot, huh?"

"Yes, I do. I wish I had a mother."

"Oh, well, maybe one day, Baby Girl. Come on, it's time for me to drive you to school."

"Okay, Daddy."

While on the drive to school, Bradford's cell phone rang.

"Hello."

"Hi, Bradford, it's LaKeita."

"Oh, hello."

"Do you have a minute?"

"Well, I'm driving my daughter to school at the moment."

"After you drop her off, can you call me right back?"

"Sure. Is there anything wrong?"

"No, there isn't."

"Okay, I'll call you back in fifteen minutes."

At the school.

"Have a good day at school today. I love you, Baby Girl."

"Bye, Daddy."

Let me go ahead and call LaKeita back before I drive off.

"Hello, LaKeita, its Bradford."

"Oh, good. I just got off the phone with the owner."

"Yes?"

"She wanted to know if you wanted the appliances to remain."

"Not necessarily."

"Well, she really didn't want to have to remove them. All the appliances are brand new."

"So then why leave them?"

"Because she ordered the appliances she really wanted for her new house."

"Will this cost me more money?"

"No, she said the appliances are free."

"Well, then, that's fine. I'll keep them. Are there any other concerns?"

"No, that's it."

"Okay, have a good day."

"I will. You too, Mr. Wellington. Oh, wait one second."

"Yes?"

"Will you be selling your house now that you've purchased the mini-mansion?"

"I haven't decided on that yet. I'm not sure if I'm going to sell or rent it out."

"Well, if you decide to sell your home, keep me in mind as your realtor."

"Okay, I will."

"Thanks."

Well, I guess I better head on to the store for more boxes before going home.

Now at the store.

"Is this all for you, Sir?"

"Yes. I think I have enough boxes now to finish packing."

"Moving, huh?"

"Yeah, me and my little one."

"The weather is nice today for a move."

"Well, I'm not moving today. I'm just getting things boxed up and ready."

"Oh, well good luck to you, Sir."

"Thank you, young man. But I don't believe in luck. I do believe in the Lord."

"I hear that. You have a nice day."

"You do the same, young man."

"Thank you, Sir."

As Bradford was walking to his car, his cell phone began to ring.

"Hello."

"Mr. Wellington, it's LaKeita again. I hope I wasn't disturbing you."

"No, it's alright. Is something wrong?"

"Well, I just got off the phone again with the owner."

"Okay."

"She wanted to know if you can sign the paperwork first thing in the morning."

"Okay, that's no problem. But I have to ask, why is she in such a hurry?"

"She's moving to Paris, France. She was able to purchase a cheaper ticket and by doing so, she can leave earlier than planned."

"Okay, I can be there after I take my daughter to school, around nine o'clock."

"Okay, I'll let her know. I'll see you in the morning. I'll have the keys ready for you when you get here."

"Okay, sounds good to me, LaKeita."

He began talking aloud to himself.

Well, I guess I better make it over to see Mrs. Cantrell to tell her the news. Boy, I hate having to go over there. Oh well, I gotta do what I gotta do. I just hate confrontations with that woman. She's always so emotional about everything. Oh well.

Man, I can't believe it's time to pick up Felicitee from school. Wow, time truly does fly when you're having fun. Let me get going before I'm late.

"Hi, Daddy!"

"Hi, Baby Girl. Give me my kiss. How was your day?"

"It was busy."

"Do you have any homework?"

"No, I did it in school."

"That was smart."

"Well, you and mother have always instructed me to make wise decisions."

"I'm glad you were listening. You are definitely wise beyond your years."

"Did you get me some more boxes?"

"Yes, I put them in your room. I was able to get a lot of my things boxed up while you were in school."

"That's good."

"By the way, sweetheart, we will be moving into our house this week."

"For real?"

"Yes, so we're going to visit your grandparents so I can tell them our good news."

"Yippee! Are we going now?"

"Yes, sweetheart."

They arrived at the Cantrell's house unexpectedly.

"Honey, someone is at the door."

"Okay, I'll get it, Denitra. Hey, it's my grandbaby. Give your granddaddy a hug."

"Oh, what a wonderful surprise. It's good to see you two."

"Grandmother!"

"Give me a hug, sweetie pie. What brings you two all this way?"

"Daddy said he wanted to come see you two."

"Really?"

"Bradford, what's going on?"

"Well, I need to speak with you and Mrs. Cantrell."

"What is it? What's wrong, Bradford?"

"Baby Girl, go into the kitchen and get some cookies and milk while I speak with your grandparents."

"Yes, sir."

"Okay, I demand to know what's going on Bradford."

"Okay, Mother Cantrell. Do you two remember that mini-mansion Tracey wanted?"

"Yes, what about it?"

"Well, the owner finally put it up for sale. I bought it!"

"That's wonderful, son."

"Thank you, Dad Cantrell."

"Well, what's so wonderful about it? That means that you'll be taking my granddaughter further away from us."

"Honey, it really isn't that much further away. Maybe an extra sixty minutes. That's only an extra hour from where they live now."

"I knew it! I knew you were up to something. Why are you doing this to me? If Tracey were alive, she wouldn't be moving there!"

"Yes, Ma'am, she would. This was Tracey's dream to have our daughter growing up in that mini-mansion. So, that's what I'm going to do."

"I hate you! I hate you for doing this to me! I hate you!"

"Mother Cantrell, please, come back."

"Son, she's only going into the kitchen cause she's upset. She'll be alright once she sees that you're not trying to keep Felicitée away from us."

"Sir, I'm not. I promise you that I'm not. I'm only trying to give my daughter what Tracey and I wanted for her, the best."

"I know, son. It'll be alright, just give my wife some time. She's really been missing our Tracey more than usual of late. Can you and my granddaughter stay for dinner?"

"Sure, if it's not going to cause Mrs. Cantrell any more heartache."

"It'll be alright. Besides, I'm sure it will do my wife some good to have Felicitee around for a few hours."

"Okay, then, we'll stay."

"Well, make yourself comfortable. I'm going to talk with my wife."

"Okay, Sir."

"Felicitee, why don't you go back into the living room with your dad while I talk to your grandmother?"

"Okay. Hey, Daddy, what's wrong with Grandmother?"

"You know how sometimes you cry when you miss your mother?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, your grandmother is missing your mommy like that and it makes her very sad."

"Is she going to be alright?"

"Sure, sweetheart. She'll be just fine."

"I hope so because she's crying really hard."

"She's going to be just fine. Trust me, okay?"

"Yes, Sir."

"I need a hug."

"I've got one just for you, Daddy. Do you think I can give Grandmother a hug too so she can feel better?"

"Sure, but give your granddad a little time with her first, okay?"

"Okay."

Mr. Cantrell was talking with his wife.

"Honey, I had a talk with Bradford. He's not trying to take Felicitee away from us. He's only trying to fulfill the wish our daughter, Tracey, wanted."

"What, by taking our grandbaby far away from us?"

"No, honey, he's not. Tracey wanted Felicitee to grow up in that mini-mansion. But, at the time, the owner did not want to sell the property."

"So what? Did Bradford, all these years, keep up with that property?"

"Yes, in fact he did. He's only doing what he believes is best for his child. Honey, he's no different than you."

"What do you mean by that remark?"

"All the years our daughter lived on this earth, the only thing you've ever wanted for her was the best. Right?"

"Yeah."

"Honey, there's no cause for you to look at me so sharply from the corner of your eyes. Sweetheart, all I'm saying is that Bradford is looking out for his child. She's our granddaughter, but Felicitee is his child, not ours."

"I know all that. I'm just so afraid that we'll never see her once they move."

"We will. In fact, I'm sure that some long weekends, she will be able to spend with us. Bradford has never made any attempt to keep our grandchild away from us. I do not believe he'll start now. And, if you look deep down inside yourself, I'm sure you know that. Don't you, honey?"

"Please stop rubbing your hand up and down my back. It's annoying."

"I'm sorry, but you didn't answer my question. Do you really think Bradford would keep our granddaughter away from us?"

"No, I don't."

"Honey, I see the sadness in your eyes. I know your heart is aching. But everything is going to be alright. Do you believe that?"

"I guess."

"Okay, can we go back into the living room and enjoy our family while they're here?"

"Sure we can."

"Oh, yeah, Bradford said that they can stay for dinner if it's alright with you."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that it would be alright, that you would be alright with them staying."

"Of course, I'm alright with it. Why wouldn't I be? My goodness, you men are something else. We women can't live with you and we certainly can't live without you." Laughter filled the air.

"That's my girl. I love you so much. Come on, let's get back in the living room. Okay, Denitra?"

"Alright. Besides, I believe I owe Bradford a heartfelt apology."

"Bradford, I'm sorry for the way I acted."

"No need to apologize. I do want you to know that I'm not trying to keep Felicitee away from the two of you. I'm just trying to keep a promise I made to my wife, your daughter, Tracey. I hope you can understand that."

"I know you're not trying to keep our granddaughter away from us. And yes, I do understand you wanting to fulfill your promise to our daughter. You were a good husband to her. And you are certainly a good father to our grandchild. So, I'm sorry."

"Can I get a hug, Mother Cantrell?"

"Sure you can."

"So you two are staying for dinner, right?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Okay, then, come on with me, Felicitee. Help me cook something to eat."

"Yes, Ma'am."

The phone rang suddenly and Mr. Cantrell answered it.

"Hello."

"Hi, Uncle. How are you?"

"I'm fine, Sharon."

"I didn't want anything. Just checking up on you two. How's Auntie doing?"

"She's alright. She and Felicitee are in the kitchen, cooking up some dinner."

"Oh, is Bradford over there too?"

"Yeah, he's right here. You want to speak with him?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Hello."

"What's up Cuz-in-law?"

"Nothing much. What's up with you?"

"Nothing much. I really didn't want anything. I'm just checking up on my uncle and aunt. You and Felicitee going to be there long?"

"Well, we're going to eat dinner and head on home afterward. Why?"

"Nothing, just being nosy."

"Oh, okay."

"Well, tell my uncle and aunt that I'll call to check up on them tomorrow."

"Okay, I will. Bye."

"Bye."

"Mr. Cantrell, Sharon said she'll call tomorrow to check up on y'all."

"Okay, son. Whatever they're cooking sure does smell good."

"I know, right? I'm hungry too."

"So am I. Honey, is dinner almost ready?" he yelled.

"Soon."

"Okay, cause we're hungry out here."

"Dinner is now served."

"Um, Mrs. Cantrell. Oops, I mean Mother Cantrell. Everything smells delightful."

"Thanks, let's eat."

Everyone was satisfied with their meal.

"Well, it's getting late and I need to get Felicitee home."

"Okay, son. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, you two."

"Come give your grandparents a kiss and hug."

"Yes, Sir."

"We love you, sweetie pie."

"I love y'all too. Goodnight."

"Drive safe."

"I will."

"Honey, Sharon said she'll call to check up on us tomorrow."

"I think I'll call her back now."

"Okay."

Sharon's phone rang five times before she picked up.

"Hello."

"Sharon, I was getting ready to hang up."

"Oh, I had another call. So are Bradford and Felicitee still there?"

"No, they just left."

"What brought them all the way out to your house so late in the evening?"

"He wanted to tell us that he bought that mini-mansion Tracey wanted for so long."

"Really?"

"Yep."

"So when are they moving?"

"Sometime this week."

"Wow, that's nice. I mean as far as I can remember, Tracey had her eye on that place for a very long time."

"I know. Well, I just wish she was here to share in the joy."

"Yeah, I know, Auntie. But she's here in spirit."

"Well, it's getting late and I'm a little tired."

"Okay, I'll call tomorrow to check in on y'all."

"Okay. You're so sweet."

"I know."

"Ha, ha. You're so funny."

"I know. That's one of the reasons you love me so much, Auntie."

"Girl, hang up the phone."

"Okay, goodnight, Auntie."

"Goodnight, Sharon."

CHAPTER 6

Working Behind The Schemes

THE NEXT DAY, Sharon telephoned Teresa.

“Hello.”

“Hey girl, it’s Sharon. What’s up with cha?”

“Nothing much. What about yourself?”

“Girl, guess what my Auntie told me last night?”

“What?”

“My cousin-in-law, you know the one that hasn’t called you since his daughter’s tenth birthday party.” Sharon snickered at the thought.

“Don’t remind me.”

“Anyway, girl, my Auntie Denitra told me that Bradford purchased a mini-mansion about an hour or two away from here.”

“Oh really? Well good for him.”

“Girl, don’t sound so disgusted. Don’t you understand what this means?”

"No, not really."

"You're a realtor, right?"

"Yeah, so what?"

"Girl, think. You're really not thinking right about now."

"I guess I just don't understand the point you're trying to make."

"Okay, let me break it down for you."

"Yeah, go ahead, break it down."

"Alright, I figure you'd start searching for homes in the neighborhood that are up for sale, lease, rent, what have you. Contact the necessary parties and WHAMO! You're in."

"I'm in what?"

"Girl, I don't believe you. You'd be close to where Bradford is. You know how to work the market. Do what you do best. I know you still want a relationship with my cousin-in-law. Don't even try to be hard about it."

"Sharon, listen, you really need to get a life. Why don't you focus on your own husband? I mean, there are quite a few women who would love to have your husband."

"Yeah, but when they see the displeasure on my husband's face, they walk the other way. So don't worry about mine. In fact, you need to stop being such a busybody about what's going on with me and mine and see what's staring you in the face. Dang, girl, you're just stupid!"

"Hey. Hey. Hey. Where's all this hostility coming from, Sharon?"

"I'm only trying to help you get the man you've always wanted. Even when my cousin, Tracey, was alive, I watched how you were on the down-low, checking him out. Even though you never said a word. Nor did you ever want to be introduced to him. I never understood that."

"Well, he was married and I am not a home wrecker. Besides, I didn't know him to be like that."

"Maybe not. But you've seen him at family functions since my cousin died."

"Yes."

"Right, so don't try to be miss-goodie-two-shoes now. Don't be stupid. He needs a woman in his life. He needs a mother for his child. You've always wanted children, especially since you found out that you couldn't have any of your own. Besides, I never really cared for my cousin, Tracey. To me, she always seemed as though she was too good to say hello to anyone not in her league."

"You know what, Sharon? I never got that vibe from your cousin. She was a God-fearing woman who cared for everyone that came her way. I think you were just jealous of her success."

"What success? It's her husband, Bradford that made the success, not her. She lived off him."

"That's what I'm talking about. She didn't live off him. She reaped the benefits of taking care of her man. That's why I'm telling you to take care of your husband so you too can reap the benefits. I'm just about tired of you, Sharon."

"Yeah, yeah, but I'm your best friend. That's why I can talk to you how I do. You do me the same way."

"I know, girl. Listen. Sharon, I have clients to see in thirty minutes. I'll talk with you later."

"Alright, but keep in mind what I said about the real estate market where Bradford is moving to."

"Alright. Bye girl. Hey Sharon, exactly where is he moving to? I know you said something like one or two hours away."

"Do you remember that mini-mansion I showed you when Tracey was alive?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the place."

"Alright. Bye, Sharon."

Teresa began talking out loud to herself.

I know the girl has a point. Shucks, sometimes us single women have to put ourselves in harm's way of a man so he can take notice. Since I have to go in that direction anyway, I might as well stop by my friend, Frank's office to see what properties are on the market. I know that I need to take this opportunity to purchase property myself to be close to Bradford. He is fine in every sense of the word. Just thinking about him gives me shivers. Well, let me get out of here before I'm late.

Her meeting went well with the perspective buyers. She then drove to Frank's office.

"Well, look who the cat done drug in. Give me a hug, girlfriend."

Frank was an openly homosexual and quite the comedian.

"How have you been doing, girl?"

"I've been doing wonderful."

"What brings you into my neck of the woods?"

"I've been wondering about the properties in this neighborhood."

"Any particular one?"

"Well, there's a mini-mansion I understand that's up for sale."

"If you're talking about that gorgeous piece of property up the road, you're too late. It's been sold. As a matter of fact, the new owner will be moving in sometime this week."

"What?"

"Yeah, girl, you waited a few days too late. Wait a minute. What are you up to? This area never really caught your attention. What's the scoop?"

"No scoop, just think it's time for a change in my life."

"Drastic change, huh?"

"No need for suspicion, Frank."

"Listen, sweet thang, there is a home a couple of blocks over that's up for sale. Why don't we go take a look at it?"

"Yes, my dear friend. That would be wonderful."

"Okay, let me get the keys and we'll head on out. Are you going to ride with me, or are we going to take your car, Teresa?"

"I'll ride with you."

"Okay, let's go!"

"This is awesome, Frank. I'll take it."

"Slow your role, girlfriend. You know the drill. The house is selling for fifty-thousand dollars. What's your bid?"

"My bid is sixty-five thousand dollars. I want that property."

"I'll call you as soon as I hear something back from the owner."

"Would you like to see the inside first?"

"Not really."

"Okay, that's fine."

"I know you're up to something. I will find out what it is. Don't look at me with that attitude. I know you, girlfriend. Now, why don't we just take a look at the property you were first interested in?"

"No, that's alright."

"No, it's not alright. I think you're up to something. And I want to know what that something is."

"Okay, let's go look at that property so you can stop thinking that I'm up to something."

"Uh huh."

"Whatever, Frank."

"Okay, here we go. The house on the hill, so-to-speak."

"Wow, Frank, this is gorgeous. I could have lived here if this mansion wasn't bought already."

"Okay, that's it. Spill it, spill it all. What are you up to, girlfriend?"

"What?"

"So stop all your playing. If you don't tell me now what you know about the new owner, I'll find out on my own. If I investigate—and you know I will—then you're in trouble."

"Okay, okay already, Frank. The new owner's name is Bradford Wellington. He is my best friend's cousin-in-law."

"So he's married?"

"No, his wife is deceased. Anyway, he has a ten year-old daughter. She's cute and all, but her Daddy...Wow, he's all that and a bag of chips."

"Girl, snap out of it. You're in la la land. Quit playing. I'm snapping my fingers and you're still in la la land. Come on back to reality. Earth to Teresa, come back, girl."

"Oh, I'm sorry. But Bradford is a hunk."

"Anyway, okay, so what I'm getting from this conversation is you like this man. In fact, you are willing to purchase a mini-mansion just to be near this man! Girl, you're a stalker on the down-low."

"No, I'm not! I'm offended by your remark."

"Girlfriend, don't give me that attitude. You know what this reminds me of, don't you, Teresa?"

"No. What?"

"It reminds me of when you stalked another guy, five years ago. Is there still a restraining order out on you?" Frank burst into laughter.

"That was an honest mistake. Anyway, I've moved on."

"Honest mistake my foot. But regarding this Mr. Wellington, he's an innocent fellow. Well, all I can say is be careful. You don't want to be sent back to the Looney bin, do you? Who is that hunk of a man getting out of that car?"

"It's him! It's Bradford! Let's get out of here, now!"

"I don't think so, girlfriend. In fact, I think I'll drive up to the mansion to welcome him to the neighborhood."

"Oh, no, you won't! I can't let him see me! Get me out of here!"

"Nope. Like I said, I think I'll go introduce myself to my new neighbor."

"Don't you dare! Close your door, Frank! I mean it or else!"

"Or else what?"

"Or else nothing. Please, just don't do this to me, Frank!"

"Oh, alright, don't get your pants into a frizzle. I'll introduce myself to him after he completely moves in. Girl, I smell trouble, and he has a little girl too. I know you're going to do what you want. But let me advise you not to go through with whatever scheme you're cooking up. There's a child involved and the authorities out here don't take kindly to people abusing children in any way, shape, form or fashion."

"Oh, please. I wouldn't hurt little Felicitee."

"Whew and you say that with such contempt. Well, don't say that I didn't warn you."

"Let's just go, alright?"

"Okay, we're going. I'll head on back to the office so you can get your car."

"Thank you."

"And once again 'contempt' in your voice. It's not my fault you got issues."

"Whatever, Frank."

Back in Frank's office.

"Okay, Teresa, I'll get started on the paperwork and contact the owner of the property. I'll call you in a few days."

"Thanks, Frank."

"Um..."

"What you say that for, Frank? Why did you respond to me that way?"

"Because I know you."

"Well, I'm going to get out of here so I don't run into Bradford before I'm ready to see him."

"Alright, girl. Chat with you later."

"Okay, bye."

As soon as Teresa sat in her car, she called Sharon.

"Hello."

"Hey, girl! Guess what I just did!"

"I don't know. What?"

"I just put an offer on a mini-mansion two blocks over from where Bradford is moving to."

"You did what?"

"Yeah, but then my friend Frank and I drove over to Bradford's place so I could see it. Girl, that mini-mansion is awesome. It's off the hezzle-fazezzle." She laughed.

"Girl, you're silly."

"That's what I've been told. I just wanted to let you know."

"Now that you might be moving into that neighborhood, how do you plan on hooking up with Bradford?"

"I've haven't gotten that far with my plan. But, when it happens, you'll be the first to know. What's so funny, Sharon?"

"Naw, I won't be the first to know, Bradford will. Girl, you're crazy."

"Crazy in love with the man of my dreams. Okay, I gotta go!"

"Bye, Ms. Crazy. That's what I'm going to start calling you—Ms. Crazy."

"Don't you dare! I gotta go before I run into Bradford."

"Why would you run into him? He won't be moving until this weekend."

"No, he's actually moving in right now. He pulled up with the

movers as my friend and I were sitting in the car looking at the property from across the way.”

“Oh, boy, you better get up out of there now.”

“I know. I’m gone. I’ll talk with you later.”

“Okay, Ms. Crazy. Bye.”

Meanwhile, Bradford was able to move everything into his new place of residence.

A few years passed. Bradford and Felicitee were at the local market when he ran into someone from his past.

“Well, hello stranger. Long time no see.”

When Bradford looked up, he stared right into the eyes of the woman that reminded him so much of his deceased wife.

“Well, hello. What a nice surprise. How have you been, Eloquence?”

“I’ve been fine.”

“And, how is your son, Matthew?”

“He’s doing well.”

“Is he here with you?”

“Yes, he’s right over there.”

“Oh my. He’s a tall young man.”

“Yes, he’s quite the man now. He brings me such joy.”

“I can tell just by the smile on your face. How old is he?”

“He’s seventeen. Hi, Felicitee. How are you?”

“I’m good.”

“Bradford, how are you these days?”

“I’m fine.”

“Honey, do you remember this lady?”

“No, Sir. Do I know her?”

“Not really, but remember the day at the park, a few years back? I was talking to a lady who was sitting on the bench eating cotton candy?”

“Yes, I remember that.”

"Well, this is the lady who I was sitting and talking with."

"Oh, I remember you now. How are you, ma'am?"

"I'm fine. You've gotten taller, Felicitee and you still have that pretty smile."

"So, Eloquence what have you been doing with yourself since I last saw you?"

"Well, I finally sat myself down long enough to write a novel."

"Really! What's the title of your book?"

"I Played Too Long."

"What a powerful title."

"It became a New York Bestseller. In fact, it was made into a movie last year. It ranked number one in the box office ticket sales. It pulled in over just two million dollars."

"Wow, that's awesome! I'm happy for you."

"Yeah, it finally happened for me and my son."

"That's wonderful."

"So what have you been up to these days, Bradford?"

"We just moved into the neighborhood. I purchased the mini-mansion up on the hill."

"Oh, yes, I've seen that property. It's beautiful."

"Yes, it is."

"In fact, Bradford, I wanted that property, but at that time, the owner adamantly refused to sell. So, I purchased the next best mansion down the hill and over two blocks. You picked a wonderful neighborhood to live in. I've been here for the past few years."

"Really? It's actually been quite some time since we last saw one another? It just seems like yesterday that we were in the park talking."

"Yes, I know. The school system is wonderful. I really love it here, Bradford."

Teresa was her prospective new neighbor, provided the owner sells.

"Son, come here for a moment."

"Yes, Mother."

"This is the man I told you about that I met in the park. Matthew, this is Mr. Bradford Wellington."

"It's nice to meet you, sir."

"What a strong handshake, son."

"It's finally nice to put a face with the name. My mother said a lot of great things about you."

"She did?"

"Son, you've got Mr. Wellington blushing."

"Let me introduce you to my daughter. Felicitee, this is Matthew Andrew Stanford, III. Matthew this is my baby, Felicitee Wellington."

"It's nice to meet you."

"Nice meeting you too, Matthew Andrew Stanford III."

"No one has ever called me by my full name before except for my mother. It's nice."

"Well, Bradford, I didn't mean to take up so much of your time. I just wanted to say hello."

"I'm glad you stopped me, Eloquence. It really is nice seeing you again. And finally meeting your son."

"Likewise, Bradford, but we really need to be going."

"Okay, but can I give you my phone number? You can call anytime, day or night. I'd like to continue our conversation."

"Sure Bradford. You still have that big, gorgeous smile."

"Thank you. Here's my number."

"Alright, it's now saved in my cell phone."

"Good." he said as he smiled once again at her while grabbing her hand firmly, yet gently.

"Bye, Bradford. Can I have my hand back?"

"I'm sorry. But I have to say you have such a beautiful smile."

"Thank you. Bye now."

"See you later."

"Daddy, she's pretty."

"Yes, she is, sweetheart. Yes, she is. Anyway, Baby Girl, what do you want for dinner tonight?"

"How about I make us some tacos?"

"You want to cook tonight?"

"Yes, Daddy, I do."

"Okay, then tacos it is."

Eloquence and Matthew III had placed their groceries in their trunk and were now sitting in the car, talking.

"Mother, he seems nice."

"Yes, he does."

"You like him. I can tell."

"What do you mean, you can tell?"

"Your eyes always give you away."

"Is that right, son?"

"Yes, Ma'am. That's right. His daughter is cute, that's for sure."

"Hey, now, she's younger than you. You're too old for her."

"I know, but in a couple of years, I won't be."

"You are your father's child." They laughed for a few seconds before driving away."

Weeks have passed. Bradford and Felicitee have settled in. Bradford was hoping to get together with Eloquence for dinner. Teresa moved into her new mini-mansion. However, she was still plotting ways to run into Bradford to make her move on him.

CHAPTER 7

The Plot Thickens

SHARON WAS VISITING with Teresa.

“Hey, girl! How was your drive?”

“It was long.”

“It’s only a two hour drive, please. Besides, you needed to get off your butt and get moving anyway.”

“Yeah, I know. But you also know that I hate driving beyond an hour.”

“I know. Let me help you with your luggage.”

“Whew. Thanks, girl.”

“Sharon, you sound a little out of breath. What’s up with that?”

“I don’t know, girl. I’ve been breathing like this for a few months now.”

“So why haven’t you gone to the doctor to find out what’s wrong with you?”

“You already know why.”

“Alright now, stop rolling your eyes. One of these days, your

eyes are going to get stuck. So, if you don't start nothin', there won't be nothin' started."

"Alright, Teresa. Anyhow, have you made your move on my cousin-in-law yet?"

"No."

"When do you plan on doing something? I didn't come all this way just to look at your face."

"I thought you came to visit me."

"Girl, stop playin'. I really came up here to push you into getting the ball rolling. You know there are plenty of women who would love to snatch up Bradford. Shucks, if I weren't married, I'd be trying to snatch him up myself. He's finger-licking good, girlfriend."

"Sharon, stop licking your fingers. You are so silly, for real."

"Maybe, but at least I know how to trip up a man. How do you think I got my husband?"

"What did you do?"

"I went down that old fashioned road of 'I'm pregnant—now deal with it'."

"You got pregnant on purpose?"

"Dog on right. I got tired of waiting on the Lord to bless me with a man. Shucks, I went out and got my own. You know how those sanctified, holy-roller women talk about just sitting back and let the Lord bless you? How they say the Word of God says, 'He who finds a wife finds a good thing'?"

"Yeah, what about it?"

"Well, I felt that my husband just needed a little incentive to realize that I was that good thang, girl!"

"Sharon, you're a sick individual. Look at you laughing at your own self. Pitiful."

"Well, maybe so, but I got the man I wanted. Let me tell you something, Teresa. If you stick with me, I'll show you how to snag

that tall, dark, and delicious man you call Bradford. Now, show me where I'll be sleeping so I can freshen up."

Teresa's phone began to ring.

"Hello."

"Teresa?"

"Yes, who is this?"

"This is Bradford."

"Well, hi. It's good to hear from you. It's been a long time."

"Yes, it has, Teresa. You were on my mind. So I thought I'd just call to see how you've been doing."

"Hey, Teresa, what are we going to do today?"

"Sssh, Bradford's on the phone," she whispered.

"Oops, sorry." Sharon whispered.

"So, Bradford, what have you been into these days?"

"Well, my daughter and I have moved."

"Really? Where to?"

"My daughter and I are now in the suburbs of Federal Way, Washington."

"Really? So am I."

"Wow, what a coincidence."

"I'll say it is, Bradford. Where about do you live?"

"On Infirmary Road."

"What? Are you serious?"

"Yes. Why do you ask, Teresa?"

"Because I live not too far from there."

"What? This is a coincidence. That is so strange."

"I'll say it is, Bradford."

"Listen, since you live so close, how would you like to join my daughter and me for dinner tonight?"

"Oh, I can't tonight. But I'm free tomorrow night."

"Okay, then it's settled. Let me give you the address."

After writing down the address, Teresa said, "Okay, I'll see you and Felicitee tomorrow night. What time should I arrive?"

"Is seven o'clock fine with you?"

"Oh, yes, Bradford, seven o'clock is fine with me."

"Okay, see you tomorrow, Teresa. Goodbye."

"Bye, Bradford."

Bradford thought out loud to himself.

She thought I didn't catch that seductive tone in her voice when she said seven o'clock is fine. Women—they're so transparent. That really is strange that she lives right down the road. Wow, Lord, are you trying to tell me something? Is she going to be the future Mrs. Bradford Wellington? You know, I've been waiting an awful long time. I'm getting a little bit impatient. Oh well, let me focus and get finished with mowing the lawn.

"Hey, Daddy."

"Yes, Baby Girl."

"Can we go see a movie tonight after dinner?"

"Sure. What's playing?"

"Tyler Perry's movie, 'The Family That Preys.'"

"Sure. I saw the previews and the movie looks interesting. What time does it start?"

"Seven o'clock."

"Okay, I better hurry up with this lawn then. Have you cooked dinner yet?"

"Yes Daddy. I put your plate in the microwave."

"Okay, Baby Girl."

While they were in the kitchen eating.

"Baby Girl, aren't you going to eat?"

"I already ate while you were mowing the lawn."

"Okay. By the way, guess who lives close by?"

"Who?"

"Do you remember your cousin Sharon's friend, Teresa?"

"Yes, sir."

"She lives down the hill."

"Well, isn't that something? There's Ms. Eloquence and now Ms. Teresa. You do realize that they are both attracted to you, right?"

"No way, Not Eloquence."

"Yes, they both are."

"Daddy, I'm going to give you a word of advice, just like you would give me."

"What's that?"

"I know you're lonely and desire to date. But whatever you do, don't get caught up."

"What do you know about 'getting caught up'?"

"I watch Lifetime and I've seen how women go after men."

"Honey, you don't have to worry about that with your old man."

"Okay, just be careful."

"Do you know something that I don't about these women?"

"No, but I just feel that there's a hidden agenda behind Ms. Teresa. I didn't care for her at my tenth birthday party. I just don't fully trust her. So, please be cautious when it comes to her."

"Okay, I will. What type of vibes are you getting concerning Ms. Eloquence?"

"I don't really know yet. I mean, she really does seem genuinely nice and all. But still, just be careful. Promise me."

"I promise, Baby Girl. Okay, we better get to the movies before we miss the beginning."

The drive to the theatre was somber.

"Daddy, the line sure is long."

"I know. This movie must really be good."

"I guess, Daddy."

"Bradford, is that you?"

"Oh, hi Sharon! I'm surprised to see you here. What are you doing here?"

"I'm here visiting a friend."

"Where's your friend at?"

"She's parking the car."

"Hi, Cousin Sharon."

"Hi, sweetheart. You sure have gotten big."

"Of course I have. I'm older now."

"Wow, I guess you are, missy. What movie are you two seeing?"

"The Family That Preys".

"So are me and my friend. Maybe we could sit together, if that's alright with you and Felicitee."

"Baby Girl, is that alright with you?"

"Sure, Daddy."

"Okay, I'll go get our seats. We'll look for you and your friend inside."

"We'll be right in."

"Okay."

"Teresa, it's about time you parked that car. Girl, you'll never guess who was just in line getting tickets for 'The Family That Preys'."

"I don't know. Who?"

"Bradford, girl."

"What? He's here!"

"Yes, he and Felicitee. Now thank me. He agreed that we should sit together."

"Does he know I'm with you?"

"Not exactly. He knows that I'm here visiting with a friend. Boy is he going to be ecstatic when he sees you. But girl, you have to play it cool."

"Alright, Sharon, I will."

"Let's head on inside to find them."

"Over here, Sharon."

"Okay."

"So this is the friend you're visiting?" Bradford said with a smile.

"Yelp, that's right. Listen, you sit next to my cousin-in-law."

"Well, if it's alright with you, Bradford."

"Sure, Teresa."

Felicitee was sitting on Bradford's left side. Teresa was sitting on the right side of Bradford. Sharon was sitting next to Felicitee. As they watched the movie, Teresa slowly moved her hand to touch Bradford's leg. He looked over at her and smiled. She knew if he did not remove her hand then she was making headway in the right direction.

After the movie, Bradford said, "Let's get out of here before it gets too crowded."

"Yeah, I know what you mean, Bradford."

"You do, Teresa?"

"Yes, I do."

"Alright, let's get to the lobby."

"Let's go, Bradford. What's that look for?"

"Well, you placing your arm in mine just took me off guard."

"I can move my arm."

"No, don't you dare, Teresa. I like it there."

"Cool."

"Cousin-in-law, what do you and Felicitee have planned next for the evening?"

"We were going home to play a couple of games that we like."

"Oh, well, alright. Let me holler at you over there for a minute, Cuz."

"Sure, what is it?"

"I was thinking, why don't you invite Teresa over to play games with you two?"

"Because tonight is just for me and my daughter. I won't allow anything or anyone to come between my time with Felicitee. I know what you're trying to do, Sharon. Just back off."

"Ooo, okay, Cuz. I'm backing off."

"Well, let's get back over there, Sharon. I'll see you two later."

"Alright, Cousin-in-Law."

"I've always wanted to know why you call me 'cousin-in-law' instead of Bradford."

"I don't know. It's just the first thing that came out of my mouth when we met many years ago. I guess it's my pet name for you. Why, do you not like that I call you that?"

"In all honesty, I really don't. I'd prefer you call me by my name, Bradford."

"Okay, I'll do my best."

"That's all I'm asking of your Sharon. Hey Teresa, your hands are so soft."

"Thank you, Bradford."

"Anyway, Teresa, can I call you later?"

"Sure."

"What time would be best for you? I know my cousin-in-law is visiting and I don't want to disturb that."

"No, it's alright. You can call me tonight around ten o'clock."

"Okay, ten it is. I hope what I'm about to do doesn't upset you."

"Well, it depends on what you're going to do."

"I'm only going to gently kiss you on the cheek, but I don't want my daughter to see me. So I have to wait til she's distracted by Sharon."

"Okay, that would be just fine."

"Alright, here's my opportunity."

"Bradford, what soft lips you have."

"The better to kiss you with, my dear."

"Sharon, I'm getting ready to take my daughter out of here."

"Alright, Cuz."

Everyone left. Teresa and Sharon were driving back to Teresa's house.

"So, what was Bradford talking about?"

"He wanted to know if he could call me tonight."

"Of course you told him yes."

"Of course I did. He'll be calling me around ten tonight."

"Cool."

During Bradford and Felicitee's drive home.

"Sweetheart, what are you thinking about? You look like you're in deep thought."

"I was just wondering, Daddy, why that Ms. Teresa put her hand on your leg when we were in the theatre."

"Oh, sweetheart, she didn't mean anything by that. It was just a small gesture. There's no need for you to look so worried. Daddy's okay."

"But what was her purpose for making such a small gesture?"

"Baby Girl, I just think she was...oh wait a minute. Let me answer my cell. Hello."

"Bradford, its Eloquence."

"Hello there. I'm glad you called."

"Are you really?"

"Yes, I am."

"I was wondering if you and Felicitee would like to join my son and me for dinner tonight, if you're not too busy. I know it's a little late, but we've been off schedule today"

"I'm sorry, but we've already eaten. But we'd still like to come over. So what time would you like us there?"

"How about now?"

"Oh, we can't at this moment. We just left the theatre."

"What did you all go see?"

"The Family That Preys."

"That's an excellent movie. My son and I saw it last week."

"Yes, it was very well written."

"So, are you two on your way back home?"

"Yes. We'd like to freshen up a little first."

"Okay, I'll tell you what, Bradford. Why don't you two join us when you can?"

"Okay, that sounds like a plan. Felicitee and I will see you two in about an hour."

"Okay, see you then."

"Daddy, who was that and where are we going now?"

"That was Ms. Eloquence."

"I do like her, Daddy."

"Yeah, she's nice."

"So, Daddy, which one do you like most?"

"Who are you talking about?"

"Which one do you like the best? You know, Ms. Teresa or Ms. Eloquence?"

"Oh, Baby Girl, there's no competition going on."

"They are both lovely ladies."

"Yeah right. I told you how I feel about Ms. Teresa. I don't trust her at all."

"Baby Girl, sometimes you act beyond your years."

"That's what mother use to tell me all the time. Sometimes I picture me and mother walking and talking. That makes me smile. Daddy?"

"Yes, Baby Girl."

"Just be happy, okay?"

"You always amaze me with the things you say at such a tender

age. But I promise you that I will. As long as you're happy, then I'm happy. Home again."

"Tender age! Daddy, I'm fifteen now. But, I'll still race you to the front porch. I win!"

"You look just like your mother jumping up and down like that. Yes, you win again. Your old man can't keep up with you like I use to."

"Daddy, you're funny."

"Well, we better freshen up. I'll meet you in the living room when you're finished."

"Okay, Daddy."

After Bradford showered, he sat on the side of the bed, moisturizing his body. He was thinking to himself with a smile on his face.

Wow, Eloquence sure is a beautiful woman. She's so mellow and intuitive. She really does remind me of Tracey in so many ways. Maybe that's why I'm so attracted to her. I wish I knew how she felt about me though. It would make a world of difference. Well, I guess in time I'll find out. But being invited to dinner was certainly a lovely surprise. Okay, boy, get your game on. It's time to woo her.

"Daddy?"

"Yes, Baby Girl."

"I'm dressed and ready to go."

"Alright, wait for me downstairs. I'll be with you momentarily."

"Okay."

They had now arrived at Eloquence Babbarabus' house. Bradford knocked on the door. The maid let them in.

"Come in, sir, Madame. Ms. Babbarabus will be with you soon. She wanted me to seat you in the Parlor Room."

"Okay, thank you."

"Hello, Mr. Wellington."

"Hello, Matthew, III. How are you this evening?"

"I'm fine and yourself?"

"I'm wonderful."

"And, you, Ms. Felicitee?" he inquired with a gentle touch of the hand and smile.

"I'm alright," she responded as if to try not to indulge him with meaningless flirtations.

"Go ahead, have a seat. May I offer either of you something to drink?"

"No thank you, son."

"I'd like a glass of cranberry juice with a little ice, please?"

"Coming right up, my lady."

"Did you just wink at me?"

"Yes, I did, my lady. If I offended you, I truly apologize."

"Matthew, I'm quite fascinated by the original paintings on the wall." Bradford never noticed Matthew flirting with Felicitee.

"Bradford, I've been watching you for a few seconds, admiring my paintings."

Eloquence walked toward Bradford, and eventually gently placed her hand on his right shoulder.

"I've noticed your concentrated stare at this particular painting."

"Yes, it's breathtaking. Is it an original?"

"Yes, it is. Come. Let's sit. Matthew and I have eaten already."

"Okay. I like you taking me by my elbow to lead us to the couch."

"I didn't mean anything by it."

"Oh, it's alright, Eloquence."

"Good."

"Hello, Ms. Eloquence."

"Hi sweetheart. I hope my son has been behaving himself with you?"

"I guess he's doing the best he can."

“Um, I see how you’re cutting your eyes toward my son. Matthew, is everything alright?”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“My son likes your daughter. I’ve never seen him act so bashful around any girl.”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Ms. Eloquence, this is a lovely table.”

“Thank you, Felicitee.”

“Mr. Wellington, I see that your daughter has exquisite taste.”

“Yes, Matthew, III, she does. She’s a lot like her mother use to be.”

“Use to be, sir?

“Yes, her mother passed away years ago. But Tracey—that’s her mother’s name—taught our Baby Girl a lot about finer things; how to collect and appreciate the finer things in life. As well as to keep them in their original state.”

“I’m sorry to hear that your wife is no longer around. It sounds like she was a wise woman.”

“She was, young man. She was.”

“I didn’t mean to make you sad by talking about her, Mr. Wellington.”

“No, it’s alright.”

“Well, let’s sit, shall we?”

“Okay, Eloquence.”

“Felicitee, you sit here.”

“Thank you, Matthew, III.”

“Please, you don’t have to say ‘the III’ every time you call me Matthew.”

“Okay.”

“And with a lovely smile you respond. Awe, I made you blush. So, Felicitee, what things do you indulge yourself into?”

"Horseback riding (when possible), walking, and soccer are my top three favorites."

"How often do you get the opportunity to ride?"

"Not very often. My horse is at the stables most of the time because I just don't have the time to take care of him."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Mother, we have a stable here. Why can't she keep her horse on our property?"

"Well, I don't know, son. Let me think about that."

"Yes, Mother."

Felicitee looked over at her Dad with a look of 'what in the world is going on here?'

"I know you two have eaten already, but did you have dessert?"

"No. That would be nice, Mrs. Babbarabus."

"You're such a respectable young lady. Eat up."

"This is awesome."

"Thank you, Bradford."

"What do you think, Baby Girl?"

"I agree. It's awesome. I've never tasted chocolate mousse like this, ever."

Everyone laughed.

"Mother, would it be alright if I take Felicitee to see Thunder?"

"Sure, if it's alright with Mr. Wellington."

"Mr. Wellington, would it be alright if I took Felicitee to see Thunder?"

"Who's Thunder?"

"He's my horse."

"Sure, young man."

"Son?"

"Yes Mother."

"Be careful. I don't want you two riding. It's too late in the evening."

"Yes, Mother. Oh, and son, don't stay out there too long."

"Yes, Mother."

"Felicitee, would you like to see my Stallion?"

"Sure."

"Okay, let's go."

"Young man, can I speak with you for a second?"

"Sure Sir."

"Don't think I haven't noticed you flirting with my baby girl. Just watch yourself."

"Yes Sir."

Now at the stables.

"Oh my goodness, she's gorgeous."

"No, it's a male Stallion."

"Oops. Sorry."

"No need to be embarrassed or sorry."

"How long have you been riding, Matthew?"

"For the past three years. I love riding him, especially when I have a lot on my mind."

"Why don't you tell me what you like doing outside of riding horses? Why did you get so quiet on me, Matthew? Come on, now. Don't be shy."

"Well, you might think I'm crazy when I say this, but, I enjoy writing and reciting poetry."

"Really, now that surprises me."

"Why?"

"You strike me as the type of person who would enjoy a nice fun game of horseshoe."

"Now that's funny!" he said jokingly. No, seriously, though. Mother and I drive down to the Victoria Theatre on Parakeet Way, once a month."

"For what?"

"I recite poetry I've written. Sometimes, I enter into contests. In fact, my poetry has won three trophies."

"Really, I'd like to see them if you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind at all. In fact, we better start heading on back to the house before your dad comes looking for us."

"Yeah, you're right."

"Your dad is very protective of you."

"Why do you say that?"

"Did you see the way he looked at me when I asked about taking you see my Stallion? Didn't you notice how he took me to the side to talk to me?"

"No, I missed that stare. But, I did see you two talking."

"So, I'm right about your dad, uh?"

"Yes, you are. My Daddy is real protective of me, especially after my mother died."

"If you don't mind me asking, how did you mother die?"

Felicitee told him the entire story of how her mother died.

"Wow, that's deep. I'm sorry to hear that about your mother."

"Yeah, I miss her at lot."

"Hey listen, I didn't mean to make you sad. Let's head on back to the house so I can show you my trophies."

They finally reached the backdoor.

"We're back, Mother."

"Did you enjoy yourself, Felicitee?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Daddy, his Stallion is beautiful. The coat is so shiny. I miss my horse."

"I know sweetheart. Maybe we'll drive down there next week so you can take her out for a ride. Would you like that, sweetheart?"

"Yes Sir."

"Felicitee, you wait here. I'm going to get the trophies I was telling you about."

"Okay, Matthew."

"My son is so proud of those trophies."

"What did he win trophies for?"

"Well, Bradford, my son enjoys writing and reciting poetry."

"Really?"

"Don't look so surprised."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything by it. I just took your son as one who would enjoy a nice fun game of horseshoe." Felicitee bursts into laughter. "What's so funny, sweetheart?"

"I just said the exact same thing to Matthew." The three of them bursts into laughter.

"What's so funny?"

"Son, Felicitee was just telling us that she assumed you would enjoy a game of horseshoe."

"What's so funny about that?"

"Well, Bradford just said the same thing about you."

"I'm glad that my interests amuses you all."

"Son, don't be so perturbed. We weren't making fun of you."

"Okay. Felicitee, here are the trophies I was telling you about."

"Wow, these are awesome! Your trophies look as though they're made out of pure gold."

"They are, My Lady. I'm not your 'Lady'. I'm Felicitee and don't you ever forget that."

"I'm glad you were smiling when you said that. Otherwise, I would be afraid to say another word to you. Are we cool, seriously though?"

"Yes, we're cool."

"Anyway, Felicitee, I'd like for you and your dad to join my mother and me next month at the next competition."

"I think that's a wonderful idea, Bradford. Would you join us?"

"Sure Eloquence. Just give me the time, date and location."

"Here, I'll write it down for you."

"Matthew, I'm impressed."

"Thank you, Mr. Wellington."

"Matthew, I can tell you enjoy what you do just by looking at your face. Your eyes light up just like my daughter when she talks about what she enjoys doing."

"Bradford, can I interest you and Felicitee into a game of Scrabble?"

"Sure, we enjoy playing that game."

"Son, why don't you put your trophies away while I get the game out?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Baby Girl, now that I have you alone, are you enjoying yourself?"

"I really am, Daddy. At first I thought that Matthew was extremely snobbish. But, now I see that he's not. It's like he's trying to mask who he really is. And, that I don't understand. Because the real Matthew, to me, is rather interesting, kind, talented and sweet."

"I see."

"You see what, daddy?"

"It looks as though you're beginning to have feelings for the young man."

"No way, I've only just met him. It's just that we have a lot of things in common."

"Like what, outside of horseback riding?"

"Well, we both enjoy playing scrabble."

"What else, young lady?"

"Why do you sound like you're upset with me, daddy?"

"I'm not upset. But what other things do you and Matthew have in common?"

"We both enjoy writing. He likes writing poetry and I enjoy writing short stories."

"Okay, what else?"

"Daddy, I don't know yet. I have to get to know him better first before I find out what other interests we share. Why are you acting like this?"

"I'm just not ready for you to be interested in boys. That's all."

"Daddy, give me a break, please. I think you need a hug."

"You're right. Thank you Baby Girl."

"Here we go, Scrabble! I hope you're ready to be beat, Bradford."

"Oh, are you challenging me! The king of Scrabble!"

"I most certainly am."

"Alright Eloquence, show me what you got!" Laughter exudes from everyone.

"Where's Matthew?"

"Here I am, Felicitee."

"I thought maybe you chickened out on the game."

"Mother, these two really think they can beat us at this game. Let's show them who the Champions really are!"

"Yeah, let's do it, son."

"Wow. That was the closest game we've ever played with anyone. Being tied two for two."

"So, Eloquence, we at least gave you two a run for the money, uh?"

"That you two did, Bradford."

"My goodness, look at the time Felicitee. We better get going."

"Ah, I know you two are not quitting on us now. We have one more game to play in order to break the tie."

"Maybe we can finish this last game some other time. I didn't intend to stay so late. We don't want to overstay our welcome."

"Bradford, you're not overstaying. But in all fairness, let's finish out this game to break the tie. That way there will be no question as to whose king and queen of Scrabble."

"Okay, you're on."

"We win. My son and I are still the champions of Scrabble! Whew Whew!

"Wow, I'm seeing a side of you I didn't even know existed."

"And what side would that be, Bradford?"

"You're not modest when it comes to winning games."

"Ha, ha. Funny. But true."

"Okay, so tonight you two are crowned king and queen. I really enjoyed myself, Eloquence."

"So did I. We'll walk you two to the car."

"Daddy, is that your cell phone ringing?"

"Yeah."

"Aren't you going to answer that?"

"No, Baby Girl. Not right now I'm saying goodnight to a wonderful lady."

"Goodnight Bradford." Hmm, he must really think I'm stupid.

"Goodnight, Felicitee."

"Goodnight Matthew."

As Bradford and Felicitee were driving home, Bradford's cell phone rings again.

"Hello."

"Bradford Wellington, where are you!"

"Hold up, first of all who is this!"

"This is Teresa! You said that you were going to call me at ten

o'clock tonight. What happened! Is everything alright? Is Felicitee alright?"

"Yes, we're both fine."

"So, then, why didn't you call me?"

"Listen, Teresa, first let me apologize. My daughter and I were doing some things and the time slipped away from me."

"Well, next time, I'd hope you have enough decency to call and let me know something, one way or another," he pulls the phone away from his ear and just stars at it, wondering to himself, is this woman crazy or what.

"Listen, Teresa, it's late."

"Well, that I know, Bradford!"

"You need to calm down."

"I am calm!"

"If this is calm, I'd hate to see you upset."

"Boy, you don't know who you're messing with."

"Okay, Teresa, I'll call you after we get home."

"What, you're not even at home!"

"No, we're not. I have my daughter with me right now. I can't talk to you. I'll call you once she's down for the night."

"Yeah, you better," she slammed the phone down. Once again, he just looks at his cell phone in disbelief of her actions."

"Daddy, that was Ms. Teresa, wasn't it?"

"Yes Sweetheart."

"She's mad, uh?"

"Yes, Baby Girl."

"I told you to be careful with her. Something just isn't right upstairs, if you get my drift."

"I get your drift, Baby Girl. Anyway, we're home now. Get your shower out of the way and get ready for bed. You have school in the morning."

“Okay. But Daddy, I know what I need to do. I think you forget sometimes how old I am.”

“You’re right, Baby Girl. I apologize.”

Twenty minutes have passed.

“Daddy, I’m ready for us to pray.”

“Okay, come on in, Baby Girl.”

Dear Lord. Thank you for this day you made for me and my Baby Girl. It has truly been a blessed day.

Thank you for blessing Baby Girl with laughter all day long.

Thank you for blessing me to see her enjoy this special day. You made this day specifically for her enjoyment.

Lord, God, you are good and your mercy endures throughout all generations.

Lord, we ask that you forgive us of all our sin and unrighteousness; rather in word, thought or in deed. Thank you, Lord, for your forgiveness of our doubt, fear and slothfulness.

We just want you to know how much we appreciate you, Lord. You are our Abba Father. We love you so much. In Jesus’ name.

Now Lord, it’s my turn. Your daughter, Felicitee. Lord, please bless my daddy to be safe from Ms. Teresa. I can’t put my finger on it, but Lord, she’s trouble. Please keep him safe from all the evil she may want to impose upon my daddy.

And, Lord, continue blessing Matthew with his poetry and contests. He has a special gift. Help and teach him how to perfect that gift of writing.

Lord, also bless his mother, Ms. Eloquence. She’s real nice Lord. All this I ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

“Okay, Baby Girl, get some rest.”

“I love you Daddy.”

“I love you too honey.”

Bradford calls Teresa.

“Hello.” She answers in disdain.

"It's me, Bradford. You don't have to sound so upset.

"Listen, before you say anything, I need to apologize for my behavior. I was just so worried that something happened to either you or Felicitee. Sharon said that it's not like you at all not to call. So, I just got little frantic."

"No, we're alright. We just got so involved with what we were doing, that the time slipped away from us."

"Well, as long as you two are alright. That's all that matters."

"We are. Listen, Teresa, it's late. I have an early day tomorrow. Can I call you tomorrow?"

"Sure, that'll be fine."

"Okay, goodnight."

"Night, Bradford." Teresa walks down to the guest bedroom where Sharon was staying.

"Sharon, Bradford has really ticked me off. I am so angry right now."

"So, what did he say?"

"He apologized that he allowed the time to slip away from him."

"I can understand that myself, Teresa. I mean he does have to spend time with his daughter. He is the only parent she has you know?"

"Yeah, I guess girl."

"So, what is he going to do to make up for this little mishap?"

"He'll call me sometime tomorrow."

"Girl, don't let him play you like a fiddle."

"I won't. He's tired. Besides, he has an early day tomorrow morning."

"Alright, then I'm going to sleep."

"Sharon, when are you going back home? You do have your own family."

"Are you trying to get rid of me?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm trying to do. So, when are you leaving?"

"I guess after that statement, I'll leave tomorrow afternoon."

"Cool, but, I hope that I didn't offend you."

"Girl, no. Don't worry about it. I know how you can get when you're focusing on your love life, or lack thereof."

"Now, see, you didn't even have to go there."

"I know, but you walked right into that door."

"Whatever, Sharon."

"Goodnight girl."

The next morning.

"Rise and shine, Baby Girl."

"I'm tired."

"I know, but you have to get ready for school."

"No, can I stay home today? I'm tired."

"Come on Baby Girl, get on up. Take the covers from over your head. Breakfast is on the table. Come on now. I'll be downstairs waiting on you."

"Okay daddy."

"Well, well, well. I thought I would have to go back upstairs."

"Nope, I've showered, dressed and now, I'm eating my breakfast. It's good too."

"Thanks, Baby Girl."

"I'm finished."

"Let's get you to school."

"Yes Sir. Daddy, what are you going to do today while I'm in School?"

"I'm going to make more investments and watch them turn a profit for our benefit. I also need to contact some people about building a twenty-five floor building on the east side of town."

"But, that's not going to take all day, is it?"

"No."

"Okay, so what else are you going to do?"

"Today, I think I'm just going to enjoy the silence."

"Are you trying to say that I talk too much?"

"Oh you got jokes. But, no, sweetheart. That's not what I'm trying to say."

"Just stay out of trouble today, Daddy. That's all I want you to do."

"No worries, man."

"Now who got jokes, sounding like you're Jamaican, You're funny, daddy."

"Here you go sweetheart, front door service. Have a good day at School, Baby Girl."

"I will. By the way Daddy, don't you think it's time for me to get my driver's license? I mean, I am old enough now."

"I know you're are. It's just that you're growing up so fast. I want to keep you with me forever. See you later."

"Okay, Daddy—love you."

"Love you more."

Well, let me get back home so I can make some phone calls. I need to at least make some profitable investments. Well, home again. It's time to get working. Who do I contact first? Let me see. Roberts & Roberts.

"Hello. Roberts & Roberts Company. How may I help you?"

"Yes, this is Bradford Wellington. Is Mr. Daniel Roberts available?"

"Yes, one moment please."

"Hello, Bradford. How are you?"

"I'm fine. Have you made a decision yet regarding that building on Fifth Street?"

"As a matter fact, my partner and I were just talking about that."

"And what is your decision?"

"We decided to invest at the price you mentioned."

"Awesome."

"Why don't you come by the office tomorrow morning to sign the paperwork?"

"I'll be there. Thanks for the investment."

"No problem. All we ask is that you make it worth our while."

"Will do."

"Okay. See you in the morning."

"Okay." Bradford was suddenly startled by a loud hard knock at his front door.

Bang, Bang, Bang.

Who in the world is banging on my door so early in the morning? he looked out the peep hole.

"Teresa! What are you doing here?" he says with disgust as he opens the door.

"I just wanted to bring you a little snack and to tell you again how sorry I am about my attitude."

"Well, you really didn't have to do this. Why are you stretching your neck to look into my home? I really wish you hadn't come, Teresa."

"I know you're a little upset with me for coming. But, it really isn't a problem. I mean, I only live down the hill."

"Listen, I really don't have time right now to chit-chat."

"Oh, I understand."

"What's your problem? Why are you trying so hard to look inside my home?"

"No reason, just want to make sure all is well."

"Goodbye, Teresa."

"You don't have to be so mean Bradford. Hey, don't close the door on my face. Oh, you will regret this!"

He begins talking to himself aloud.

This woman has a serious problem. I guess Baby Girl's instinct

about her were accurate. But, now, I don't know what I'm going to do. She's a stalker, that's quite evident.

Okay, Lord, it's me calling on you again. I need your help out of something I've gotten myself into. You said that you are an ever-present help in my troubling and difficult times.

Lord, I'm calling out to you for help. I am so sorry for acting upon my impulse instead of your Spirit which leads and guides your children into all truth.

Well, Lord, just help me out of this one. Thank you, Lord.

CHAPTER 8

You Don't Know What You're Missing

TERESA LEFT. AS she was driving, she fell into a deep thought, as if in a trance.

Oh, Bradford, if you only knew how happy I could make you and Felicitee. I have to play it cool. I don't want this relationship to end up like my last one. But, Franklin had to die! He just didn't know how important he was to me.

All Franklin had to do was love me. That's all I ever wanted from someone, anybody was just to love me. I know that I can make someone a wonderful wife.

Why do men think that they can take advantage of me and then leave me? Well, Mr. Bradford Wellington, not this time. You're mine and if I can't have you, no one else will.

Enraged within, she began speeding unintentionally and hits a tree head-on. A nearby neighbor heard the crash, ran outside to the car and saw Teresa unconscious. He immediately called 911.

"911, what's your emergency?"

"A woman hit a tree."

"Is she breathing?"

"I can't tell. I'm going to knock on the window to see if she responds."

"Sir, what's going on? Where is your location?"

"We're at the bottom of the hill, near Infirmary Road."

"An ambulance is on the way. Stay on the line with me until the paramedics arrive."

"I will. Oh, no, the car!"

"Sir, what's wrong with the car?"

"The engine is burning. I have to get this woman out or she'll die."

"Sir, the paramedics and Fire Department will be there momentarily."

"She'll be dead before they reach her."

He put his cell phone in his pants pocket.

I got to get her out of here. Why can't I find a rock!

More neighbors came out to help free Teresa. A huge explosion.

"Sir, Sir."

"Yes, I'm here. We got her out just in the nick of time."

"Sir, is she alright?"

"I don't know. I mean she's barely breathing."

"The Paramedics should be right there."

"Yes, they're pulling up now."

"Okay sir. Let them take over. I'm hanging up now."

"Okay. Thank you."

The Fire Department was able to distinguish the fire. The paramedics took Teresa to the nearest hospital. The Paramedics were not able to identify her, because her purse was burned up in the fire. So she was considered a Jane Doe.

Now at the hospital.

"What do we have here?" the emergency doctor asked the paramedics.

"African American female mixed with what looks like Latino. She's unconscious and from what I gathered from the witness who found her, she evidently hit her head on the steering wheel after her car crashed into a tree. Her car caught fire. The neighbors were able to free her before the car exploded."

"Okay, people, let's move. Let's get her to the operating room. It looks like she may be bleeding internally."

In the interim, the witness, Pedro Gonzalez arrived at the hospital.

"Nurse, excuse me."

"Just a minute. Let me finish with this phone call."

"Okay."

"Sir, can I help you?"

"Yes, I am the man who called 911 about a woman crashing into a tree."

"Are you family?"

"No, I just wanted to make sure she was alright."

"Sir, I'm not at liberty to say since you're not immediate family. Do you know the woman?"

"No, I just heard a loud noise which sounded like a boom. I ran outside only to find a woman slumped over the steering wheel with no movement. Can you at least tell me if she's going to be alright?"

"I'm sorry, Sir. I can't."

"Is there anyone I can speak to?"

"If you like, you can wait on the attending physician. I'll let him know you're waiting when I see him."

"Okay, thank you Nurse." he stated with great concern.

The Physician finally surfaces.

"Doctor, there's a Mr. Pedro Gonzalez waiting to see you."

"Who is he?"

"He's the man who pulled the woman out of the burning car."

"Okay, thanks. Mr. Gonzalez?"

"Yes."

"I'm Doctor Freeman. Nurse Galligher informed me that you wanted to see me."

"Yes, I'm the person who called 911 regarding a lady that hit a tree. Is she alright? When I pulled her out the burning car, she was barely breathing. Is she alright?"

"Sir, let's take a walk. Are you family?"

"No, but I just want to know if she's going to be alright. She was so lifeless. Doctor, please tell me."

"I'm curious. If you're not family, why the concern over someone you don't even know?"

"It's just the way I found her. No one should ever have to go through what she did."

"Are you talking about more than just an accident?"

"No, I saw a woman who was barely breathing. I've never experienced that in my life. I just want to know if she's alright."

"Mr. Gonzalez, calm down. I'm not at liberty to share any details about a patient that's not kin."

"Okay, so what I am supposed to do then?"

"Sir, I really need you to calm down, or I'll have to ask you to leave the premises."

"No problem, I'm gone!"

"Wow, Dr. Freeman, what was his problem?"

"Nurse Galligher, he really was just genuinely concerned about the young lady he rescued from the burning car. But, I need to find out who this woman is."

"Dr. Freeman, the Fire Department stated that they could not make out her driver's license. It was completely charred in the fire."

Maybe we can do what we did with that one patient a few years back before you came on board."

"What was that, Nurse Galligher?"

"We had Nationale Crisis Services ("NCS") take her fingerprints and pull them up in their data base. We were able to locate her family."

"Nurse Galligher would you get NCS on the phone?"

"Sure Dr. Freeman."

Nurse Galligher calls NCS.

"Hello. Nationale Crisis Service. How may I help you?"

"Yes, this is Nurse Galligher from Greater Memorial Hospital. We have a patient who was just brought in unconscious from hitting a tree. Her vehicle caught fire and burnt up her identification. We need someone from NCS to come out and take her fingerprints so that we can identify who she is."

"Okay, someone will be there within the hour. Who should we ask for?"

"Dr. Freeman."

"Okay, tell Dr. Freeman we'll be there soon."

"I will. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"Dr. Freeman, I contacted NCS. They will be here within the hour."

"Thanks, Nurse Galligher."

"You're welcome, Doctor."

While they were waiting on NCS to arrive, Teresa was in a deep coma, and yet, thinking about Bradford. In her thinking, she and Bradford were married. They had a daughter and she loved them both dearly.

"Nurse Galligher, look at how rapidly her eyes are moving from left to right. Maybe it's her family that she sees dreaming about."

NCS has now arrived.

"Oh you're here. I'm Nurse Galligher."

"I'm Frederico Ahmand from NCS."

"Wonderful. I'll page Dr. Freeman for you. Dr. Freeman, please come to the nurse's station. Dr. Freeman, nurse's station please."

"Yes, Nurse Galligher."

"Doctor, this is Frederico Ahmand from NCS."

"Good, sir, come with me. We have a patient who was in a one-car crash. She suffered internal injuries and is in a coma. We have no identification on her. We need NCS' assistance in gathering that information."

"Well, we can do that, as long as her fingerprints weren't charred in the fire."

"No, there was a young man that pulled her out of the burning car before it exploded. But he wasn't able to reach her purse. Once the fire was contained, the Fire Department noticed her purse. Everything inside it was charred beyond recognition."

"But, at the very least, we have a phone."

"Here's her room. Frederico took her fingerprints with a specialized scanner."

"Doctor, we got a hit."

"What do you mean, Frederico?"

"Her personal information popped up."

"Thank you, Frederico."

"It's NCS' pleasure to assist in matters like these. I hope things work out for her."

"Yes, so do I. Who is she?"

"Her name is Teresa Mon-Näy."

"What's her address?"

"It's..."

"Does it provide a next of kin?"

"No. But it does provide contact name in case of emergency."

But for some reason only the contact name pops up without a phone number.”

“Who’s the contact?”

“Sharon Pureé.”

“That’s a common name which makes it difficult for us.”

“Yes Sir. Is there anything else we can help you with Doctor?”

“No. Thank you.”

“Then you have a good day.”

“Thank you, young man.”

Mr. Ahmand left the hospital. Dr. Freeman returned to his office to call Teresa’s home. No answer. Dr. Freeman was so concerned about making contact with Sharon that he drove to Teresa’s house after he was off the clock. At that time, Sharon had also arrived two seconds before the doctor arrived. He saw Sharon on the front porch, got out of his car and proceeded to approach her. He still had on his doctor’s jacket.

“Excuse me, ma’am. I’m Dr. Freeman of Greater Memorial Hospital. What’s your name?” She looks at his identification.

“I’m Sharon Pureé.”

“Do you know a Teresa Mon-Näy?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I hate to have to tell you this, but she was in a car accident earlier today.”

“What!”

“Ma’am are you alright? Is it your heart?”

“No, I’m just. What happened to Teresa!”

“Ma’am, let’s get you taken care of first. We have to get you calmed down. Let me take your pulse and listen to your heart. Just stay on the stoop. We don’t want to have to rush you to the hospital too. Okay?”

“Okay.”

"Ma'am, what's your name?"

"Sharon Pureé."

"Do you live here with Ms. Mon-Näy?"

"No, I live at...I'm here visiting with her."

"Okay, Ms. Pureé."

"It's actually Mrs. Pureé."

"I apologize."

"No need to apologize."

"Well, your pulse has returned to normal. I'm glad about that."

"Yes, so am I, Dr. Freeman. Now, tell me about Teresa?"

"Earlier today, she was in a one-car crash."

"What do you mean a 'one-car crash'?"

"She lost control of her vehicle and ran into a tree. The car caught fire. She was knocked unconscious. In fact, when I left the hospital this evening, she was still in a coma. She had internal bleeding but we were able to stop it."

"Thank God. How long do you think she'll be in a coma?"

"Each case is different."

"I have to get to the hospital."

"You're in no condition to drive, Mr. Pureé. Is there anyone who can drive you to the hospital?"

"No, I can drive. I'm calm enough to drive."

"Okay, are you sure?"

"Yes, Dr. Freeman, I'm sure. Thank you for driving over to tell me about Teresa."

"You're welcome. I'm just glad you were here when I arrived."

"So am I."

"I will call the hospital to let them know that I've spoken with you. I'll tell them to let you see Teresa. If you're sure you're alright. I'll take off."

"I'm sure. Thank you so much."

I have to call my husband.

"Hello."

"Baby, where are you? It's late. I'm sorry we fought earlier. Just come home."

"I'm sorry. I can't."

"Why not?"

"Teresa was in a one-car auto accident."

"What!"

"Somehow, she lost control of the car and ran into a tree. The car caught fire."

"Is she alright?"

"No, she's in a coma. I'm driving to the hospital to be with her. I'm going to stay the night. I just wanted to let you know where I was at so you wouldn't worry."

"Okay, sweetheart. I can come out there to keep you company if you'd like."

"No, that's alright. You stay home and get your rest."

"Okay, but I don't mind driving out there. By the way, what hospital is Teresa at?"

"She's in Greater Memorial Hospital."

"I'll be out there first thing in the morning."

"Okay, I'd like that."

"Okay, sweetheart, I'll see you in a few hours."

"Alright honey."

In the interim, Bradford has picked up Felicitee from school.

"Hi Daddy!"

"Hi Sweetheart. How was School today?"

"It was really good."

"With that big smile on your face, it had to have been a good day. So, what happened to make it a good day?"

"We had an assembly this afternoon. We're going to start

having fundraisers soon. I've been chosen to head up a Committee which focuses on under-privileged children."

"Oh, sweetheart, I'm so very proud of you. So Baby Girl, do you have homework?"

"Yes, I need to get started on my assignment as soon as we get home. However, I will need your help."

"What do you need from me?"

"I need to know how to ask people for donations. I don't know who I can even ask."

"Honey, why don't you first make a list of all your friends? Then on another sheet of paper, we can make a list of all my friends and business associates. After the lists are finished, then you and I will do a mock interview."

"What's that?"

"It's like practicing for a school play or for a job interview. That way you will know the purpose for what you're doing and be able to share with others without hesitation when asking for donations."

"Oh, I see. We don't call it that these days. But anyway, thanks a lot Daddy."

"It's my pleasure, Baby Girl."

They are now at home. Felicitée and Bradford are eating an early dinner. She began working on her list of friends and family. Bradford made his list of friends and business associates.

"Daddy, I'm finished with my list."

"Good, so am I. Let me see your list. Good, good. Oh yes, this is good. The parents of your friends are excellent for donating to charities. I think they'll be a tremendous help to your fundraiser."

"You think, Daddy? For real?"

"Yes Sweetheart. Okay, let's get started on the mock conversation. I'll be a potential donator to your cause. But, first

you have to convince me that your cause is worth investing into. But wait a minute. What is the name of your Fundraiser?"

"I don't have one. I was just going to tell people that I talk with that it's for under-privileged children."

"Oh, Baby Girl, come on now. You must have a catchy name for your fundraiser. So, let's put our heads together and come up with something."

"Okay daddy, how about 'Make A Wish Foundation'?"

"No, that name is already taken."

"Well Daddy, what about 'A Child's Desire Granted'?"

"Now that's a catchy title for a Foundation. Let's work on the mock conversation."

"Okay, I'm ready."

"I'll play the role of a father of one your friends and you've called to speak with me. The phone rings and I answer it. Take it from here, Baby Girl."

Mock Conversation.

"Hello, Mr. Terry. This is Felicitee."

"Oh hi. Samantha just left with her mother."

"I didn't call to speak with Samantha. I wanted to speak with you."

"Okay, how can I help you?"

"The school I attend is having a Fundraiser. I have been assigned as Captain."

"That's good, but how can I help?"

"I'm calling friends, family and business owners to invest either their time or monetary means into the Foundation."

"What is the name of your Foundation?"

"A Child's Desire Granted Foundation."

"What does your particular Foundation do that's different from other children foundations?"

“We provide underprivileged children with clothing, shelter, fun activities, adopted parents (at the facility).”

“What do you mean by ‘adopted parents at the facility’?”

“It’s similar to the Big Brother/Big Sister program.”

“Okay, that’s good. So, how much of a donation are you asking?”

“Mr. Terry, we accept donation in any amount. Each dollar will go toward fulfilling a child’s desire.”

“Baby Girl, I’m truly impressed. You did an excellent job. I especially like how you answered the question dealing with the donation amount. Well done.”

“Thank you, Daddy.”

“Also remember that when you ask for donations in person, smile. I mean who in the world can resist your gorgeous smile?”

“Oh Daddy.”

CHAPTER 9

What In The World Happened?

AFTER BRADFORD FINISHED helping Felicitee with her Mock Conversation his phone rings.

“Hello.”

“Hey, man. Did Sharon call you?”

“No. Why?”

“Teresa’s been in a bad accident.”

“Is she alright?”

“Not really. Sharon told me that her car hit a tree and caught fire.”

“Oh my goodness. And you don’t know how she’s doing?”

“Well, Sharon did say that she was pulled out just in time. Teresa is in a coma. The doctors don’t know at this point if she’s going to pull through or not.”

“What hospital is she in?”

“Greater Memorial Hospital?”

“I wonder why Sharon didn’t call me.”

“She just found out herself, Bradford.”

"Well, I can't go to the hospital now. I'm helping Felicitee with a school assignment."

"Why don't you just call Sharon on her cell phone?"

"I think I will. Listen, thanks David for calling me."

"No problem. I assume Sharon will stay overnight at the hospital with Teresa. Would you please make sure Sharon is okay? I'll be there in the morning."

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow."

"You are going to call Sharon, right?"

"Sure, man. I'll see you tomorrow."

Wow, I can't believe this. It's all so surreal. Let me call Sharon.

"Hello".

"Hey Sharon. I just got off the phone with your husband. What happened?"

Sharon reiterated exactly what the doctor informed her of.

"Wow, this is so surreal. I just saw her not too long ago. I'm in shock. Is she going to be okay?"

"I hope so. I mean she is in a coma. I just don't know."

"Listen, I won't be able to come down there tonight because I'm helping Felicitee with her school project. But I can be there in the morning if you want."

"That would be good."

"Okay, I'll be there. Oh, yeah, David wanted me to make sure that you're alright. So are you?"

"Yes, I'm alright."

"Have you eaten anything?"

"No. To be honest, I'm not really hungry."

"I can understand that. But you should at least hit the cafeteria if it's not closed yet."

"I might. I just don't want to leave Teresa's side right now."

"Well, if the cafeteria is closed, they do have vending machines. So at least get something in your stomach, okay."

"Alright cousin-in-law. I'll see you in the morning."

"Okay, Sharon. But you sure you're alright?"

"Yeah, I'm okay. I'm just worried about my best friend."

"Okay. Goodnight."

"Goodnight Bradford."

Wow. I just can't believe this. I wish I wasn't so harsh with Teresa earlier. This is something else. Lord, let her be alright. Thank you, Lord.

"Daddy, what's wrong?"

"Ms. Teresa was in a bad accident."

"Is she going to be alright?"

"I'm not sure, Baby Girl."

"I'll pray for her before I go to bed. You try to get some rest."

"I will Baby Girl. Goodnight."

The next morning, Felicitee awakes to the smell of pancakes and turkey bacon.

"Um, Daddy. Breakfast sure smells good."

"Thanks sweetheart."

"Are you doing anything special today, daddy?"

"I'm going to the hospital to check up on Ms. Teresa."

"Okay. I prayed for her last night."

"That's good." Well, let's get you off to school. Ready to go?"

"Yes Sir."

There was silence during the entire ride to school "Here you go, young lady. Front door service."

"Thank you daddy." she reaches over to kiss Bradford on the cheek and to give him a hug.

"Thank you, sweetheart. Have a good day at school."

"Okay, I will. I love you."

"Love you too, Baby Girl."

I just can't believe Teresa is in the hospital. I just spoke with her. Lord, let her pull through this thing.

Bradford has arrived at the hospital and is now in Teresa's room.

"Hi Sharon. How is she?"

"Hey there. She's about the same. She's still in a coma."

"I just don't understand any of this. I had just spoken with her earlier. In fact, she came to my home."

"Yeah, I don't know how in the world her car could hit a tree. I can only assume that she was distracted by something while driving. Otherwise, I just can't assume she'd purposely hit a tree."

"You think she did this on purpose, Sharon?"

"I refuse to believe that about my best friend."

"So has the doctor been in to see her this morning yet?"

"No. But the nurse did say that he will be in sometime today to check in on her."

"That's good."

"Bradford, you seem a little distracted yourself. What's up with you?"

"Nothing. I just have a million and one things to do today before picking up Felicitee from school this afternoon."

"Okay, if you say so."

"Well, I'm not going to linger. I better get my day started. Keep in touch, okay?"

"No problem. But let me ask you something, Bradford."

"Sure, what is it?"

"I noticed that from the time you walked in Teresa's room, you held her hand ever so gently. Are you and she a couple?"

"No, we're not a couple. I was just silently praying for her. That's all. But why would you ask me such a thing?"

"No reason. I just thought..."

"Well, call me with updates."

"Will do, Bradford."

Bradford went about his day.

I just need to talk to someone. But, who can I call?' Before he knew it, he was dialing those famous seven digits.

"Hello."

"Hi, Eloquence. How are you?"

"I'm fine Bradford. You?"

"You're smiling aren't you?"

"Yes, Bradford. You can tell, uh"?

"Yeah, I can. Were you busy?"

"No. What's wrong?"

"I just left the hospital."

"What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing. I'm okay. One of my friends is in a coma. I just spoke with her earlier in the day on yesterday. And now, she's in the hospital, in a coma."

"What happened, if you don't mind me asking?"

"From what my ex-cousin-in-law said, Teresa's car ran head-on into a tree. We can only assume that she was distracted by something. But what that something was, none of us knows."

"Oh Bradford. I'm so sorry."

"Thank you."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"The only thing that can help her now are your prayers."

"You got it. I will certainly pray for your friend."

"Thank you. So are you free sometime this afternoon?"

"I do have some things I need to take care, Bradford."

"Oh, okay."

"Hey, don't sound so down and out, Bradford. I'm sure that I can rearrange some things. No big deal."

"I hate to ask you, but if you would, I'd greatly appreciate it."

"Okay, consider it done. What time would you like to come over?"

"How about within the hour?"

"Okay. That'll give me enough time to make some phone calls and rearrange some things. So, I'll see you within the hour."

"Thank you. You're such an awesome person."

"I don't know about all that. But thanks for the compliment."

"Okay, if I don't hang up this phone, I will still be talking with you as I drive up into your driveway."

"You're silly. So I'll see you in a few."

"Okay, Eloquence."

She is such an awesome person and she doesn't even recognize her awesomeness. Well, I better go ahead and get some gas. Don't make no sense how expensive gas prices are. I should invest in the oil business. In fact, I need to just outright own my own oil company. That way, I won't lack. The Bible does say that we will lack No Thing. It also says that wealth comes as I work. Well, I better stop talking before the people pumping their gas think I'm crazy.

Bradford is now at Eloquence's front door. He's knocking.

"Hello Mr. Wellington."

"Hi, Amos. How are you today?" he's Eloquence's butler.

"I'm fine, Mr. Wellington. How are you?"

"I've been better. Is Eloquence available to see me?"

"Yes Sir. She's expecting you. Go ahead into the living room."

"Okay, thank you."

"Hello, Bradford." she says as she walks over to greet him with a peck on his cheek.

"Hi, Eloquence."

"Come, have a seat. You look like you could use a friend."

"You ain't said nothing but a word."

"What, going Ebonics on me? Cute."

"No, I apologize."

"No need for apology. I'm just pulling your leg. So, tell me, what's on your mind?"

"I just miss talking with you. It seems so long ago since we last spoke."

"Wow, it's good to know I have that kind of effect on you. But we just spoke a few days ago. So tell me, what's really going on with you?"

"I don't know."

"Okay, keep it to yourself. But when you're ready to spill the beans, I'm here."

"You really do know me, uh?"

"More than you realize, Bradford Wellington."

"The entire name. Wow, what did I do to deserve that?"

"Oh, I just needed to make sure you were paying attention to what I was saying."

"Believe me. I heard every single word."

"Okay, enough about that. Can I offer you something to eat or drink?"

"No thank you. Do you mind if we just sit without talking for a bit?"

"No problem."

They sat in silence for hours. In fact, Eloquence noticed that Bradford dozed off. She glazed down at her watch.

"Bradford, wake up. What time do you have to pick up Felicitee from school?"

"What time is it?"

"It's 2:30."

"Oh my goodness. School dismisses at 3:00. I better get going."

"Okay, that's fine. But drive safely."

"I will. And, I'm so sorry for falling asleep like that."

"Hey, listen to me. It's no problem. Evidently you needed to

rest your mind. Otherwise, you would have been talking. So, don't worry about it. Okay?"

"You are so beautiful. And your eyes are so full of understanding and love. I better get on out of here, Eloquence."

"Okay. Enjoy the rest of your day."

"Can I call you later?"

"Sure, that'll be fine."

Man, I can't believe I fell asleep like that. I better get to the school.

"Hi Daddy."

"Hi Baby Girl. How was school?"

"It was good. Are you tired, daddy?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Your eyes were closed when I got in the car."

"Oh, I'm alright. So what do you want to do this afternoon?"

"Can we go buy some new clothes?"

"Girl, you've got quite a bit of clothing in your closet now. Why would you want to buy more clothes?"

"The clothes are not for me. There's this girl in my class that wears the same few outfits to school. I think that maybe her daddy lost his job."

"But you don't even know what size clothes she wears."

"I think we wear the same size."

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, she was a little chilly today. I think she has a cold or something. So I gave her my sweater that I keep at school. And when she tried it on, it fit perfectly."

"Oh, Sweetheart. You are so much like your mother."

"Why do you say that?"

"Whenever your mother saw anyone in need, she would stop whatever she was doing and help that person. It never failed. Your mother's heart was so big toward people in need. And you're just

like her in so many ways. It's amazing how much you're like your mother."

"Well, so can we go shopping?"

"Yes."

Now at the department store.

"Okay, young lady. Do you have in mind how much money you want to spend?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much then?"

"One Thousand Dollars?"

"One Thousand Dollars! Are you sure about that? I mean this is coming out of your savings. I'll write a check from my account though."

"Thank you so much. I know it's a lot of money, but daddy, I just believe I need to do this for her."

"Okay, then go at it. But, Baby Girl, how are you going to give her these clothes? I mean you can't just take them to school and give them to her there. That would embarrass her."

"Oh yeah. I didn't think about that. So what am I going to do daddy?"

"Well, we could call the principal when we get home and ask if it would be alright if she'd give the clothes to your classmate."

"That's a good idea."

"Do you want the principal to tell the little girl who gave her the clothes?"

"No sir. She doesn't need to know. Why are you smiling so big daddy?"

"You are truly your mother's daughter. That is for sure. Okay, do you see anything yet that you think she'd like?"

"Not yet, but I'm sure I will as long as I keep looking."

"Alrighty then."

"Daddy, this is so pretty. And look—this outfit is nice too."

"Honey, are you going to try these on just to be sure you can fit them. Cause if you can fit them, then possibly she can too."

"Good idea."

"By the way, Felicitee what happens if she can't fit some of the clothing?"

"Then she can bless someone else. See daddy, it's all about paying it forward."

"What do you know about paying it forward?"

"Our teacher was teaching on paying it forward today. So, I did what she suggested."

"What was that?"

"She suggested we think about someone less fortunate than ourselves. Then the teacher asked a question."

"What was the question?"

"Who around you needs your help but don't know how to ask for it?" Once you answer that question, what can you do to change that person's life without making them feel bad about you helping them?"

"Those are two very good questions. I think the way you're helping your classmate is awesome. You see, it shouldn't matter to the giver if the recipient knows whose blessing them. All that matters is that you help. I am so very proud of you, Felicitee."

"Thank you Daddy."

"Baby Girl, you are more than welcome. Now let's get these clothes paid for so we can go home and call your principal."

"Yes sir."

"Someone's been a good little girl."

"Oh these aren't for me, Ma'am. I just want to bless someone less fortunate than me."

"Sir, did I hear her correctly?"

"Yes, you did."

"You must be very proud. Is she your daughter?"

"Yes, she is my daughter. And I am most certainly proud of her. She's going to go far in life."

"If only all our children were like your daughter. This world would be in a much better place."

"Yes, I agree."

"Well, young lady. You be blessed and the girl you're going to bless with all these clothes is going to be very well pleased with the selections you made."

"Thank you, Ma'am. Goodbye."

"Bye, young lady."

As they were leaving the store, they overheard the cashier talking to her co-worker.

"Now that's someone to model after. Did you hear what she said?"

"No. What?"

"She purchased One Thousand Dollars worth of outfits and they weren't even for her."

"What do you mean they weren't for her?"

"She told me that she just want to bless someone less fortunate than she is."

"Wow, you don't see that at all. Kids these days are all about getting for themselves and not helping anyone. In fact, kids now days are so very selfish. It's just a crying shame the way kids think they have a right to steal from their parents or even someone walking down the street, wanting to rob them of their clothes and shoes. My heart aches for these young people today."

"Girl, I know just what you mean. Anyway, we better get back to work."

"Baby Girl, did you hear them?"

"Yes, I did."

"Honey, I'm so proud of you. I really am. Come on, let's get out of here."

"Okay, Daddy."

Bradford and Felicitee are now at home.

"Baby Girl, how about we order pizza for dinner?"

"Okay. I'm glad the sales clerk put all these clothes in boxes for me."

"So am I. It will make it easier to transport them to school. As a matter of fact, let me call your principal's cell. I'm glad she gave the parents her cell at the beginning of the school year."

"Are you going to call her now?"

"Yes Sweetheart."

"Okay."

As Bradford was reaching for his cell, it began to ring.

"Hello."

"Hey Bradford, its Sharon. Were you busy?"

"Well Felicitee and I just got in. How's Teresa doing?"

"No change. But I'm keeping the faith."

"You sound tired, Sharon. Have you gotten any rest since you've been here?"

"Not much."

"Maybe you should just go to Teresa's and get some rest tonight. Has David made it in yet?"

"No, he hasn't. But, I think I will go to Teresa's. Sleeping on this chair that's in her room just isn't comfortable. But I just wanted to let you know that there's no change."

"Listen, if you like, you can have dinner with me and Felicitee. We're ordering in pizza."

"Let me call to see where David is at first."

"Okay." Let me know."

"I will. David, are you still coming?"

"Honey, I'm sorry. I can't. I have to work overtime."

"Okay. I'm going to eat dinner with Bradford and Felicitee."

"That's a good idea. At least you won't be alone."

"I'll call you later. I don't want to talk and drive."

"Okay Sweetheart."

"Bradford, I'm on my way."

"Okay, come on. We're home."

"Thanks Cuz."

"You're welcome."

Well, I better call the principal.

"Hello."

"Hi. Mrs. Heiler. This is Felicitee Wellington's dad, Bradford."

"Oh hi. Mr. Wellington. Is everything alright with Felicitee?"

"Yes, everything is good. Listen, I'm calling because Felicitee's teacher had them do an assignment today about helping those less fortunate than themselves."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, after Felicitee got in the car she told me about the assignment or should I say questions asked."

"Yes, Mr. Wellington."

"Felicitee asked me to take her shopping so she could buy one of her classmates some clothes. She said that she believes this young girl's dad lost his job."

"Oh, yes. I know who you're talking about. And yes, her dad lost his job. It's been a struggle to buy any new clothes for her."

"Well, my daughter wanted to bless her with some brand new outfits. So I asked her how we can get the clothes to her classmate without making her feel bad. So I came up with an idea to take the clothes to school tomorrow, which Felicitee purchased. We had the sales clerk put all the clothes in gift boxes. So I thought that we could give them to you. Then, you could give them to the parents. Felicitee doesn't want to embarrass her class mate. Felicitee and I were wondering if you could call her parents to pick up the clothes. We don't want them knowing who bought the clothes. We just want them to be blessed. We

had the sales clerk remove all the price tags and put the clothes in gift boxes.”

“That’s a wonderful idea Mr. Wellington. I’m sure that family would want to thank you and Felicitee personally.”

“No. There’s no need.”

“Okay, well you can bring the clothes tomorrow morning. But do you think you can get them here at least thirty minutes before school starts? That way, no one will see you and Felicitee walking in with a lot of boxes.”

“Sure, we can do that. Thank you for your help in this.”

“You’re welcome. And God bless you. Oh, before we hang up. May I speak with Felicitee?”

“Sure, I’ll get her.”

“Felicitee, Mrs. Heiler wants to speak with you.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Hi, Mrs. Heiler.”

“Hello, Felicitee. Your dad just informed me of what you did today.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“I’m very proud of you. Your dad agreed to bring you to school thirty minutes early so you two can bring in the boxes.”

“Okay.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

“Yes Ma’am. Do you want to talk to my daddy again?”

“No, I’ll just see you two in the morning.”

“Yes Ma’am. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.”

“Daddy, she said she’ll see us tomorrow morning.”

“Okay, Baby Girl.”

“Daddy, someone’s at the door.”

“Oh, it’s probably Sharon. I’ll get it.”

"Come on in Sharon. The pizza's not here yet because I got busy and didn't call it in. Give me a second and I'll call it in."

"No problem. Hey Felicitee. How are you?"

"I'm okay. But you look really tired."

"I am really tired."

"Do you want to take a nap?"

"Naw Bradford."

"Well the pizza will be here in about thirty minutes."

"Okay, Cuz."

"Daddy, I'm going to go back upstairs. Will you let me know when the pizza gets here?"

"Sure thing, Baby Girl."

"Sharon, come on inside and relax. You really look like you've been through a lot today."

"I'm just drained, emotionally and physically."

"Listen, why don't you just stay with us tonight? We have the room."

"But I have to check on Teresa's house."

"I tell you what. You stay with us tonight and after I drop Felicitee off at school tomorrow morning, I'll come back here and I'll take you to Teresa's house. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Let me show you to your room. It's right down the hall."

"Thanks Bradford. I really mean it."

"Have you spoken with your husband today? I thought he'd be here."

"He couldn't come because he had to work over. I'll call him later. I need to jump in the shower. Where's the bathroom?"

"Sharon, there's a full bath in the guest bedroom."

"Cool."

"Okay, I'll send Felicitee in after the pizza arrives."

"Okay. Thanks again Bradford."

"No thanks necessary."

Bradford heads back to the living room to relax a bit before the pizza arrives. There's a knock at the door.

"Hello. Glad you're here."

"Your total is twenty-four dollars and ninety-five cents."

"Here you go son. Keep the change."

"Sir, are you sure? This is a Fifty."

"Son, I'm sure."

"Thank you, sir. Enjoy your evening."

"Thank you, Son. I will. You enjoy yours as well."

"Felicitee, tell your cousin the pizza's here. Come on and eat."

"Yes Sir."

Felicitee knocked on the door where Sharon was resting.

"Cousin Sharon, the pizza's here. Cousin Sharon, did you hear me?"

She must be sleeping. I guess it'll be alright if I just walk on in. Yep, she's sleeping.

"Felicitee, what's taking you two so long? Come on down here while the pizza is hot?"

"Daddy, Cousin Sharon is sleeping. I didn't want to wake her."

"You did well. She needs the rest. We'll just save her a few slices so after she gets up, she can have something to put in her stomach."

"That's a good plan, daddy."

"Cool."

Twenty minutes past.

"Daddy, this pizza was good."

"I agree. Listen. Let's put Sharon's slices in the microwave. I'll leave her a note on the table right outside the guest bedroom. That way, whenever she gets up, she can have something on her stomach."

“Okay. Goodnight Daddy.”

“Night Baby Girl.”

It was about three o'clock in the morning before Sharon even opened her eyes.

Wow, I can't believe I slept so long. I'm hungry. I wonder if they left me a couple slices of pizza. Well, the only way to find out is to go downstairs to look. She opens the bedroom door and notices the note. Cool, they did leave me some pizza. Awesome. Way to go Cuz. Let me head on down to the kitchen and warm up the pizza. Um, um, good. Wow, this pizza is delicious. I wonder if they have something to drink besides water. They're such health freaks. Cool, they have soda. I can't believe this. If my cousin were still alive, she'd be disappointed to see soda in her fridge. Well, I'm full. Think I'll go back upstairs and rest some more.

CHAPTER 10

This Is The Day The Lord Has Made!

THE NEXT MORNING.

“Well, Good Morning Sharon. Did you rest well?”

“Yes, I did. I woke up hungry around three o’clock, saw your note on the table and came down to the kitchen and bashed that pizza. It was delicious. Good looking out, Cuz.”

“Glad you enjoyed it.”

“Well, good morning Baby Girl. Did you rest well?”

“Yes Sir.”

“You seem a little tired. You sure you got enough sleep, Felicitee?”

“Yes Ma’am. Daddy and I have to be at school early.”

“Why is that Bradford?”

“She has something to give to the principal.”

“Well, okay if you say so.”

"Listen, Sharon. As soon as I get back from taking Felicitee to school, I'll be ready to drive you to Teresa's."

"Okay, but afterward, I'll need you to bring me back here so I can drive to the hospital."

"No problem. I'll be back soon."

"Okay, Bradford. Felicitee, have a good day at school."

"Okay, thanks Cousin Sharon."

"Let's go Baby Girl. I've already loaded up the boxes. Do have your book bag?"

"Yes Sir."

"Sharon, see you in a bit."

"Okay."

Now in Principal Heiler's office.

"Good Morning, Mrs. Heiler."

"Good Morning, Felicitee. Mr. Wellington."

"Good Morning, Ma'am."

"I see you have everything in boxes as promised. Do you mind if I take a look?"

"Not at all. Go right ahead."

"Oh my goodness. Felicitee, did you pick these out all by yourself?"

"I had a little help from my dad."

"Well, I must say, you did good, Felicitee. Tamarah is going to really love what you've picked out for her."

"I hope so. I don't want her disappointed."

"Oh, Felicitee. I can guarantee you that she will not be disappointed."

"So, Principal Heiler, were you able to contact Tamarah's parents?"

"Yes, they will meet me in my office around nine o'clock."

"Good. Remember that we don't want them knowing who bought these clothes for Tamarah."

"I remember, but like I told you last night when we spoke, her parents will want to thank you personally. I was right. But they did understand your request."

"Good, but just tell them that the Lord just wanted to bless them and leave it at that, okay?"

"Yes, Mr. Wellington. Felicitee, you better head on to class."

"Yes Ma'am."

"Baby Girl, I'll walk you to your homeroom. I mean if that won't embarrass you, having your old man walk you to class."

"Daddy, you don't embarrass me. I love you."

"Awe, I love you too."

"That's so sweet to see a father taking time to hug his child and show interest in what she's involved in."

"Here you go, Baby Girl. Front door service. Let me peep my head in to speak with your teacher."

"Okay, I'm going on in now."

"Okay, Baby Girl."

"Good Morning, Felicitee."

"Good Morning. My dad is in the doorway. He just wants to say hi."

The teacher waved and Bradford responded with a wave.

Well I better get on out of here.

Bradford has returned home.

"Hey Cuz, you ready to go?"

"Yes, I'm ready Bradford. So how did Felicitee's classmate like her clothes?"

"We left them with the Principal. She's going to give the clothes to the parents. Felicitee and I don't feel it necessary for them to know who gave them the clothes. We just want to bless them. As you know, it was Felicitee's idea to be a blessing to this family. I am so very proud of her."

"As you very well should be."

"Come on. Let's get you to Teresa's."

"I better take Teresa's mail inside."

"Okay, do what you do. I'll wait in the car."

"You can come on in."

"No, I'm fine. I'll wait for you out here."

"Okay. Suit yourself. I'll be back shortly."

"Take all the time you need."

While Bradford was waiting on Sharon to return, his cell phone rang.

"Hello."

"Mr. Wellington. This is Principal Heiler. I have the parents in my office and they'd like to say something to you. Will that be alright?"

"Sure."

"Hi. My wife and I are very grateful for how you and your daughter blessed our little girl. Thank you so much."

"You're welcome."

"I wish I could do something for you in return."

"Well you can."

"What can I do?"

"You can just keep loving your little girl. Okay?"

"Okay, I can do that."

"You take care of yourself, Sir."

"I will. And thanks again."

Sharon returns to the car.

"Alright, Cuz. I'm ready."

"Okay, to the hospital we go."

"No, you have to take me back to your house so I can get my car."

"No need, Sharon. I got this."

"Alrighty then. I love that song. Turn your radio up a little, Cuz. What a powerful song."

"Yeah, I like Marvin Sapp songs too."

"You're awfully quiet, Bradford. What's going on with you?"

"Nothing."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"When was the last time you and Felicitee visited with my auntie?"

"Not too long ago. We've been so busy. We don't get out there to visit too often."

"Well, just as long as you get Felicitee out there at least once a month."

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, here you go."

"You're not coming in?"

"No."

"Okay. If anything changes, I'll give you a call."

"Thanks Sharon."

Sharon has entered the hospital and runs into Teresa's physician.

"Well hello, Doctor. How is Teresa doing today?"

"She's making progress."

"That's great. Is she still in a coma?"

"Yes, but everything else my colleagues and I wanted to happen, has happened. So we are well pleased. Our main concern now is the length of time she might be in a coma. But her vital signs are stabilized. This can rapidly reverse the coma if we're lucky."

"Why the concern? I mean if her vital signs are stabilized."

It's just so disheartening seeing a comatose patient. Having life and yet not being able to awake and enjoy that life. In fact, if a patient is comatose longer than four weeks, we reclassify them as a persistent vegetative state, a more serious condition."

"How so?"

"We just wouldn't want any infections to set in. Nor do we want her to get bedsores. There are just a number of things that could take place with patients who are comatose."

"Well, my friend is a fighter. I believe she's going to be just fine. She'll pull out of this. I just know she will."

"Well, I better get going. Are you going to visit with Teresa now?"

"Yes, I am."

"Have a good visit."

"Thanks. I will."

Sharon has caught the elevator to the floor Teresa is on.

"Hey, Sharon. How are you today?"

"I'm fine, Nurse Galligher. How's my girl doing?"

"I just left her. She's doing better. But we're hoping she comes out of the coma soon."

"Yeah, that's what her doctor just told me. I saw him as I was walking into the hospital."

"Well, you have a good visit."

"Thanks. I will."

"Hey friend. You're looking good today. You've got to come out of this coma. The doctor says it's very important that you come out of this coma. I've been praying for you. I believe the Lord will bring you out. But, you have to want to live. Don't give up on life now. Bradford stopped by briefly yesterday. He prayed for you. So see, you can't give up now. Come on, you're my girl. Will yourself out of this coma. I love you girl."

The doctor enters the room.

"How's your visit coming along?"

"Okay. Doctor, did you see that?"

"What?"

"She opened her eyes, briefly."

"Nurse, come in here please. Let me check her eyes."

"Do you see anything Doctor?"

"Sharon, would you mind waiting outside?"

"Why?"

"Please?"

"Okay."

"Nurse, I want you to check her eyes for me. I just want to know that what I saw, is actually what I saw."

"Yes, doctor. But what am I looking for?"

"Just check out her eyes."

"Oh my goodness. Her eyes are following the light. Do you think?"

"Yes, I think she's pulling out of this comatose state. I've never been so excited."

"I know what you mean doctor."

"Teresa, if you can hear me, squeeze my hand."

"Doctor, did she squeeze your hand?"

"Yes, she did."

"Thank the Lord."

"Yes, nurse. Thank the Lord. But we have to be upfront with Sharon. Have Sharon come back inside."

"Yes, doctor."

"Sharon, you can come back inside."

"What's going on Doctor?"

"I believe she's coming out of a coma. She can understand what I say. I asked her to squeeze my hand if she could understand me and she did."

"Hallelujah! This is truly the day the Lord has made. I shall rejoice and be glad in it. Thank you Lord. Lord, thank you for answering my prayers. So what does this mean?"

"Well, I have to be honest with you. Usually patients who are in a comatose state can sometimes show signs that they are able to hear and understand. They exhibit signs like reflexes, or

squeezing a hand, or even sucking, all response to a simple touch. The medical field truly believes that a comatose patient hearing a familiar voice can help them feel calm within themselves.”

“Will Teresa fully recover from the coma?”

“It’s very important to understand the outcome may remain unknown for months. However, nothing is impossible with the Lord.”

“Yes, you’re right, doctor. Nothing is impossible with the Lord.”

“Doctor! Doctor!”

“Yes, Nurse.”

“Look. She’s trying to get our attention.”

“Oh, my God! Lord she is going to be alright. I said it before and I’ll say it again. This is the day the Lord has made. I shall rejoice and be glad in it.”

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CHAPTER 11

I Really Love This Girl

I JUST CAN'T GET *this girl off my mind. But I guess I better so I can get some work done. Shucks, forget this. I've got to call her.*

"Hello."

"Hi there. Were you busy?"

"Not at all, Bradford. What's up?"

"I just needed to hear your voice."

"Oh, yeah? You needed to hear my voice?"

"Yes. I can't get you off my mind. Truth be told, I can't get you off my heart."

"Wow, what brought all this on?"

"I don't know. I'm just tired of being alone. I like you a great deal."

"I like you too, Bradford."

"Good. That's really good."

Silence.

"Bradford, are you still there?"

"Yes."

"Why so quiet?"

"I'm just overwhelmed."

"Overwhelmed by what?"

"Overwhelmed that you like me. Why the giggle?"

"No reason. You're just so cute. I only wish I could see the expression on your face."

"I can make that happen."

"What do you mean?"

"I can come over now if that's alright with you."

"Sure, come on over."

"Okay, I'll be there in ten."

"I'll be waiting."

Wow, I can't believe she wants me to come over now. Lord, you gotta help me. The way I feel about this woman. Lord, all I can say is that you're really gonna have to help me. Real talk, Lord.

He boyishly walks to the front door and knocks.

"Hello, Mr. Wellington."

"Hi, Amos."

"Ms. Eloquence is in the parlor. Go on in."

"Thank you, Amos."

"You're welcome, sir."

"Hi, Beautiful."

"Hey there, handsome."

"You are truly blowing my mind about now."

"Really?"

"Yes, really?"

"Why the boyish smile, Bradford?"

"I can't help myself. You bring this side out in me."

"I wonder what else I can bring out of you."

"Woe!"

"Why 'woe'? I mean woe in my book is used to express grief, regret or distress. Are you trying to tell me that I'm bringing that kind of effect on you?"

"No. Just the opposite. I feel all tingling inside. My heart is fluttering out of control. I'm so nervous right now."

"Why would you be nervous? Isn't this what you wanted?"

"I mean yeah. But, I'm speechless."

"Okay, come over here big boy."

"You look beautiful sitting behind that desk."

"You've gotta to be kidding me, right?"

"No, I'm not."

"Okay, now you're being funny. I'm only sitting behind a desk."

"Yes, but, you're just so beautiful."

"Wow, the way you're talking someone would think you were looking at me in some sexy lingerie or something."

"No. I'm so sorry. I'm just mesmerized by your beauty. It's hard to describe how you make me feel. I mean, just looking at your face, gets me all giddy. You're completely dressed in a very nice suit. I don't know. Please forgive me."

"Don't worry about it, Bradford. Give me a hug, silly man."

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For making me not feel more stupid than I've made myself feel."

"Listen, you're welcome. But let's sit out by the pool. That is if you don't mind."

"No, going outside would be good."

Bradford notices her sweet smile.

"So, Bradford, what's really going on with you?"

"Can I be totally honest?"

"Yes."

"Okay, I hope my forwardness doesn't put a wedge between us. Here it goes. My feelings toward you are more than just a 'like'. More than just a strong like. I love you."

"Woe!"

"Oh, so now I'm making you feel a state of distress."

"No. Not at all. You just took me by surprise."

"I see."

"Why the somber look?"

"I'm just hoping that I didn't overstep any boundaries. Did I?"

"First of all, you can take that somber look off your face. Secondly, you have not overstepped any boundaries. And third, I'm glad your feelings are finally out in the open. Now, if you don't mind, can I be candid with you about my feelings?"

"I'm worried, but sure, go ahead."

"Well, the first time I set eyes on you in that park so long ago, I was attracted to you. But I really wasn't ready to get involved with anyone. Then, when I saw you in the store, I knew then, that hey maybe something can happen between us. So, I've fallen for you as well."

"Wow, that's good to hear. So where do we go from here?"

"Well, Bradford, we take things slowly. We do have children to consider."

"I know you're right. So when do we tell them?"

"Slow your role. Let's spend more time together with the children. Then at the right time, we'll sit them both down and tell them together. How does that sound to you?"

"It sounds like a good plan. So when do we get together?"

"Wow."

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to sound so desperate. I just don't want to waste any more of your time. I mean, look how long it's taken already."

"It's going to be alright. We'll do something together this weekend with the children. Just be patient. Remember, good things come to those who wait."

"I know. You're right. I'll be patient. So what would you like to do with the children this weekend?"

"Maybe we can take the horses out for a ride."

"Felicitee would love that."

"Okay, I'll let my son know. He'll be excited."

"It's gorgeous out here today. I love your yard. It's so serene."

"Thank you. Yes, it is gorgeous out today."

"Your hand is so soft."

"Thank you, Bradford."

They sat in silence, looking at one another periodically.

"I'm sorry for being so silent. I just like being in your presence."

"Bradford, sometimes, silence speaks volume. I enjoy sitting with you. One thing you will learn about me is that I enjoy being with the one I love in silence. Sometimes, I think talking is overrated."

"Yeah, I agree. Listen, it's really getting late. I have to pick up Felicitee from school."

"Okay. Oh, I meant to ask you. How is your friend?"

"As far as I know, she's still comatose."

"Well, I will be praying for her. We just have to keep trusting in God to bring her out of it."

"Yes, that's the same thing my cousin-in-law says. They're best friends."

"Will you be going to the hospital today?"

"I'm not sure. I don't want to take Felicitee to the hospital with me."

"Then why don't you just bring her over here. We can spend some girl time together."

"Where will your son be?"

"He's going to read poetry with some friends at a local Recreation Center."

"And you're not going?"

"No. He wants to do this one on his own."

"Okay. If Felicitee agrees, then I'll bring her over here after I pick her up from school."

"Just let me know either way."

"I will. I better get going. Do you mind if I give you a kiss on the cheek?"

"No, I don't mind. And for future reference, you don't have to ask my permission to kiss me."

"Thank you, Eloquence."

"Go ahead. Get going. Call me."

"Okay, I will. Thanks."

"You're welcome."

CHAPTER 12

Joyful, Joyful

“H I DADDY.”

“Hi Baby Girl. How was school?”

“It was good.”

“I spoke with your classmate’s father.”

“Why? I thought we weren’t going to say anything?”

“Yes, I know. But your principal called me because your classmate’s father wanted to personally thank me.”

“Okay. But she doesn’t know we gave her the clothes, does she?”

“No, her father said that he wouldn’t say anything.”

“Good. I just don’t want her to feel bad.”

“Don’t worry about it. He won’t say anything.”

“Okay. Good.”

Silence.

“Daddy?”

“Yes, Baby Girl.”

“Why the smile?”

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Your Aunt Sharon is still here sitting with her friend, Ms. Teresa at the hospital. Do you mind if I visit with her?"

"Okay. But do I have to go? I don't like hospitals."

"I remember. And no you do not have to go. But if it's okay with you, Ms. Eloquence said you can hang out with her while I visit with Ms. Teresa."

"Okay, I'd like that. When am I going?"

"We're on our way there now."

"How long will you be at the hospital?"

"Not very long."

"Okay."

"Here we go. I'll walk you inside."

"Okay, Daddy."

Bradford once again knocks on the door.

"Hello again Amos."

"Hello Mr. Wellington. Ms. Eloquence is in the living room."

"Thanks man."

"Hello, Mr. Amos."

"Hi Ms. Felicitee. How are you?"

"I'm fine."

"Bradford, I'm glad you made it back."

"I'm going to head on out ladies."

"Okay." They said simultaneously.

"Hello, Felicitee. How was school today?"

"It was good."

"Your dad shared with me how you blessed your class mate."

"Yes Ma'am. I just wanted to do something for someone less fortunate than me."

"That's to be commended. You have a big heart to be so young. So is there anything in particular you'd like to do before your dad gets back?"

"Not really. I have a little homework to complete."

"Okay, go ahead and complete your homework. Then maybe we can go to the Mall or whatever you'd like to do."

"Okay."

One hour passed.

"Ms. Eloquence. I'm finished with my homework."

"Where is your son at? I haven't seen him."

"He's at a poetry reading."

"Oh. Okay."

"Maybe he'll be back before you leave."

"Okay."

"So, are you hungry?"

"A little."

"Okay, I'll make us something to eat."

"Can I help?"

"Sure, let's see what we can raid in the fridge. Oh this looks good."

"What is that?"

Laughter.

"I don't really know. I guess I need to tell my cook to get rid of this old stuff before someone gets sick."

"Yes Ma'am."

"How about we make some salmon patties, brown rice and mixed veggies?"

"That's fine."

"Okay, let's get this done."

Matthew finally returns home.

"Mother, where are you?" he yells out.

"We're in the living room, watching a movie."

"Who's 'we'? Oh hi, Felicitee. Long time no see."

"Hello to you too, Matthew."

"Son, how did the poetry reading go?"

"Very well. I came in second place."

"That's wonderful, Matthew."

"Thank you, Felicitee."

"Would you like to see my award?"

"Sure Matthew. This is awesome."

"Thanks Felicitee. Mother, here you go."

"Yes, son, it is awesome."

"So, how long have you been here Felicitee?"

"For a couple of hours now. I'm waiting on my dad to pick me up."

"Where is your dad?"

"He's visiting a friend at the hospital."

"Is your dad's friend going to be alright?"

"I guess so."

"Son, are you hungry?"

"No, we stopped off to get something to eat."

"Okay."

Bradford has finally made it back.

"Hi Daddy."

"Hi Baby Girl. You alright?"

"Yes Sir."

"Hello Mr. Wellington."

"Hello Matthew. How have you been?"

"I've been doing well."

"Matthew, show Mr. Wellington your award."

"What award?"

"I just won second place at a poetry reading tonight."

"This is awesome Matthew. You should be proud of yourself. I know your mother is."

"You got that right, Bradford. I'm very proud of my son. He's Awesome. Have you eaten, Bradford?"

"No."

"Would you like me to fix you a plate before you go?"

"Sure, that would be fine just as long as Felicitee has eaten."

"Yes, I ate daddy."

"Okay, then I'll eat a little something."

"Here you go—a warm plate of food."

"Thanks Eloquence."

"Felicitee, why are you so quiet?"

"I'm just a little tired, Matthew. It's been a long day for me."

"Okay."

"I better get Felicitee on home."

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight, you two. Bradford, I'll speak with you tomorrow."

"Okay, Eloquence."

CHAPTER 13

What's Eating At My Baby Girl

“BABY GIRL, YOU sure you’re alright?”
“Yes Sir.”

“You were completely quiet during the entire ride home. That’s just not like you. What’s eating at my Baby Girl?”

“I’m just tired. I’ve had a long day.”

“Okay, get yourself some rest, okay?”

“Okay. See you in the morning.”

“Tomorrow is Friday. Do you want to do something special, just the two of us?”

“Sure, whatever you’d like.”

“Can I get a hug before you go to bed?”

“Sure Dad.”

“Baby Girl, please tell me what’s eating at you. I know something is bothering you. Please don’t shut me out. I’m here for you.”

“I said I’m fine.”

“Okay, don’t snap now. I’m still your dad.”

"I'm sorry. I'm going to bed now."

"Okay, Baby Girl."

Wow, Lord, what's going on with my baby? I'm so worried about her. She has never shut me out of anything that bothered her. I don't know how to get her to open up. She's always been so open with me. God, help me. My heart is broken. I need her to be honest with me. Lord, please help her to tell me what's going on.

Bradford just set in complete silence; trying his best to analyze what was going on with his Baby Girl. The phone rings and startles him.

"Hello" he answers sadly.

"Hey, Bradford. What's wrong?"

"I don't know, Eloquence."

"What do you mean?"

"Something's bothering Felicitee, but, she's not opening up to me. I don't know what to do. How did she seem to you?"

"Well, she seemed very quiet; like she had something on her mind. But she didn't bring anything up and I didn't want to pry. Where is she at now?"

"She went to bed. I don't like this."

"Maybe we should put off our news for another time."

"Yes, I agree Eloquence. Listen, I'm going to go and check in on her. Can we talk tomorrow?"

"Sure. Whenever you're ready."

"Thanks, Eloquence for understanding. Goodnight."

"No problem. Goodnight Bradford."

Bradford checked in on Felicitee. She was fast asleep.

The next morning.

"Wake up sleepy head. It's time to get ready for school."

"Yes Sir."

"Hurry along. Breakfast is almost ready."

"Yes Sir."

"Well, Good Morning Baby Girl. Did you rest well last night?"

"Morning. Yes, I got some rest."

"How are you feeling this morning?"

"Fine."

"So what's with the short responses? What's been on your mind these past few days?"

"Daddy, can I spend some time with my grandparents? I miss them a lot."

"Sure thing. When do you want to go?"

"Since it's the weekend, let's leave right after school today or tomorrow morning. And I'd really like to stay there all next week as well."

"Well, I'd have to call to make sure it's okay with your grandparents. But I thought that maybe you and I could do some things together next week since school won't be in session."

"Oh."

"Baby Girl, don't sound so disappointed. You and I can do something together some other time, okay?"

"Thanks Daddy. I just miss them so much."

"Is there anything else that's troubling you?"

"I'm missing mother. All week long at school, for whatever reason, a lot of mothers were coming up to the school just because. And when I saw that, I just wanted to run and hide. I miss my mother."

"Oh Baby Girl, I know you do. It's alright to cry. Listen, sometimes I want to do just what you want to do."

"What's that?"

"Run away and cry. Even after all this time, I still miss your mother. Sure, it gets easier as time goes by. But I have to say, sometimes it's not as easy as I'd like for it to be."

"So, can I call grandmother now before you take me school?"

"Why don't you wait until after school? Your grandparents may still be sleeping. It's awful early for them."

"Okay. I'll call them from your cell when you pick me up today."

"Sounds like a plan to me Baby Girl."

"But daddy, I don't want you being all alone. Can you stay with us?"

"No. But I'll be alright. I'm sure I'll find something to keep me occupied. Don't you worry about your old man, okay?"

"Okay."

"You promise?"

"Well, I don't know about that Daddy. But I'll try not to worry."

"That's good enough for me. Come on, I better drive you on to school. I'll see you later. Have a good day."

"Thanks daddy, I will. You too."

"Give your old man a hug. I love you."

"I love you too, Daddy."

Wow, she really is growing up faster than I want her to. So what am I going to do while she's away for a week?

Bradford's cell phone rings.

"Hello."

"Hey Cuz-in-law. Were you busy?"

"Not really. I just dropped Felicitee off at school. What's up, Sharon? Is Teresa doing okay?"

"She's making progress."

"That's good news. So did you need something?"

"Not really. I was just wondering if you were coming out to visit with Teresa today if you're not too busy."

"I won't be able to. I have a few things to take care of. But you know, I was just thinking."

"Thinking what?"

"I need to pick you up so you can get your car so you can have transportation. I'll be taking Felicitee to her grandparents after school today."

"I agree. I will need transportation. Okay, I'm ready whenever you are. But what about this weekend since Felicitee will be with my uncle and aunt? I know they've been wondering why you haven't brought Felicitee up there in a while. They'll be glad to see her."

"Well, maybe you can visit Teresa next week."

"Yeah, maybe."

"I won't keep you Cuz. Call me when you're on your way."

"I'm on my way now."

"Okay."

I wonder what Eloquence is doing. I think I'll give her a call.

"Hello."

"Hi. How are you?"

"I'm fine Bradford. How are you?"

"I'm missing you. That's how I'm doing."

"You're silly."

"So I've been told."

"By whom?"

"By you. Who else?"

"I don't know."

"What are you up to today?"

"I have meetings all day."

"Awe, I hate to hear that. But I guess I need to really be setting up meetings myself. I've been putting things off for about a week now. I've got to get back on the wagon."

"I don't mean to be rushing you off the phone, but I am running a little late now for a meeting. Can I call you later?"

"Sure, Eloquence."

"Well, I better call you tomorrow instead. I have some things I need to do with Matthew this evening."

"I won't be available this weekend, Eloquence."

"Oh?"

"I'm driving Felicitee to her grandparents. She wants me to stay for the weekend. She'll be there thru the end of next week."

"She's going to have a nice long vacation, uh?"

"Yeah, she is. I'm going to miss her dearly."

"I know you will. She'll miss you too."

"I hope so. Anyway, I know you're rushing. Be safe and we'll talk with one another sometime next week."

"Um, okay."

"What did you say that like that for?"

"No reason. I'll talk with you next week, Bradford."

"Okay. Bye."

I wonder what's wrong with her. She was a little snippy. Well, I guess I'll go on to the hospital.

"Well, hey there Cuz-in-law. That didn't take long."

"I know. Let's get you to your car. I have a lot to do."

"Okay. But don't you want to talk with her a little before leaving?"

"So how is she doing, really?"

"Well, a few times she opened her eyes. She tried to speak a few words."

"That's wonderful."

"Yeah, I think she's going to pull through completely."

"Oh. My goodness! Look Sharon. Her eyes are opened."

"I'll get the doctor."

"Okay. Hey girl. How are you?"

All Teresa could do was look Bradford in the eyes with a tear slowly streaming down her face.

"Hey, don't cry" he said as he gently wiped away her tear.

"Hey Teresa. You're awake." The doctor said.

"Doctor, is she going to be alright?"

"Yes, Mr. Wellington. I believe she's going to be just fine. It may take some time, but, she's going to be alright."

"That's good news, doctor."

"Yes, Sharon, it is."

"Well, Sharon. We need to get out of here so I can take you to get your car."

"No need, Cuz. If I need to get to my car, I'll just catch a cab. I'll call you later."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. You get going. I've kept you here long enough."

"Hey is David coming out here? He'll be here this evening. He's missing me. But he'll have to leave Sunday afternoon. You know cause he'll have to go to work on Monday morning."

"I understand that. Tell him 'hello' for me."

"I will. Talk with later. Give my little cousin a hug for me."

"I will. Bye."

Bradford went home, made phone calls. Then he looked up and realized that it was time to pick up Felicittee from school.

"Hey, Baby Girl. How was school?"

"Good."

"How is your classmate doing? The one you blessed with clothes."

"She's doing well. In fact, the school hired her dad as a janitor."

"That's wonderful."

"She smiles a lot more, especially when she sees her dad around the school. They are very happy."

"Good."

"So can I use your cell phone to call grandmother?"

"Sure. Here you go."

The phone rang continuously.

"Hello."

"Grandmother. Hi."

"Hi sweetheart. How are you?"

"I'm fine. I was wondering if I could come visit this weekend."

"Sure sweetie. I've missed you."

"I've missed you too."

"So when is your dad going to bring you?"

"We're driving up tomorrow morning."

"But that will only give you Saturday and part of Sunday to be here. I don't like short visits."

"I can stay up til next Friday."

"Don't you have school next week?"

"No, we're out."

"Well, then come on up tomorrow. It's going to be so good having you here. Is your dad around?"

"Yes Ma'am."

"Let me speak with him."

"Yes Ma'am. Daddy, grandmother wants to speak with you."

"Hello."

"Bradford. I'm so happy that Felicitee is coming to visit for more than just a couple of days."

"Yeah, she's been missing you both."

"We've been missing her as well."

"We'll drive up tomorrow morning. But is it alright if she stays til next Friday?"

"Yes, that will be just fine."

"You sure she won't be disrupting you all's plans?"

"What plans? No, we would love to have her here with us. I'm so excited."

"Okay, is there anything I can bring? Food? Anything?"

"No, don't worry about that Bradford. We got this."

"Okay. We'll see you two tomorrow morning."

"Okay. Bye."

"Daddy, grandmother sounds happy that we'll be there tomorrow morning."

"Yes, I know."

"I miss them so much."

"I know you do Baby Girl. I want you to really enjoy your week with them, okay?"

"I will Daddy. I promise."

"Okay, that's good enough for me."

"So what do you want for dinner?"

"I have a taste for some spaghetti and garlic bread."

"Okay, we need to stop by the store to pick up some spaghetti sauce and garlic bread."

"Okay."

Now inside the store. They got everything needed to make spaghetti with garlic bread. They have now made it home.

"Daddy, I'll make dinner tonight. You just relax."

"Sounds good to me. But don't forget to pack your clothes this evening before going to bed tonight. We'll be leaving first thing in the morning. We'll stop by a restaurant for breakfast."

"Okay."

An hour passed and dinner was ready.

"Daddy, come eat."

"I'll be right there Baby Girl."

"Okay."

"Felicitée, this is so good. It tastes just like the way your mother seasoned her spaghetti. It's delicious."

"Thanks Daddy. Well, I'm going to put the dishes in the dishwasher then pack my clothes for the week."

"Okay. I'll check up on you later."

A couple of hours passed. Bradford checked in on Felicitee. She was fast asleep.

Well, I guess I'll call Eloquence.

"Hello."

"Hi Eloquence. Are you busy?"

"Matthew and I are in the middle of doing of some things."

"I'm sorry. I'll talk with you some other time."

"Okay."

Ump, I wonder why she's been so cold toward me lately. I wonder what I did or said wrong to her. Well, I guess she'll tell me eventually. I'm going on to bed. I need my rest.

This next day, Bradford and Felicitee made it to her grandparents' home.

"Well, hello sweetheart. Hi, Bradford."

"Hi."

"How was the drive up?"

"It wasn't bad at all, sir."

"Are you two hungry?"

"No Ma'am. We stopped at a restaurant for breakfast."

"Okay. So Bradford will you be staying the weekend with us?"

"No Ma'am. I have to get back. I have some work to get caught up on."

"Awe, Daddy. You're not going to stay tonight?"

"No Baby Girl. In fact, I can only stay for about twenty minutes."

"Okay Daddy."

Twenty minutes have come and gone.

"Baby Girl, it's time for your old man to hit the road. Come give me a long hug since I won't be seeing you for a week."

"Okay Daddy. I wish you could stay."

"I know. But I really have to get caught up with some things. I'll be back to get you next Friday. You enjoy yourself and help your grandmother around the house."

"Yes Sir. I love you."

"I love you too, Baby Girl."

Felicitee watched as her dad drove away. She began to miss him. She has never been away from her daddy for more than two to three days at any given time.

"Come on Baby Girl. Close the door. Your dad will be back to get you next weekend."

"I know grandmother."

"Why so somber?"

"Granddaddy, I miss my dad. I've never been away from him for so long."

"You'll be alright. You do realize that you can call him every day. In fact, you can call him anytime you want to talk with him. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Now, let's go help your grandmother in the kitchen. I think she's making your favorite homemade chocolate cookies."

"For real?"

"There's that smile. Come on let's go help her."

"Grandmother, do you need any help?"

"Yes, I need your help." they laughed.

"Awe, so I assume that my assistance is not needed."

"You assume correctly. Now get out of my kitchen." she snickered.

"Alright then, that's my cue. See you two ladies later."

"Where are you going granddaddy?"

"I've got to run to the market to pick up a few items. I'll be back."

"Okay. Be safe."

"I will young lady." he gives his wife a kiss on the cheek and proceeds to leave.

"So, Felicitee. What have you been doing lately?"

"Honestly, Grandmother, I've been missing my mother a lot."

"I know. Me, too. But guess what?"

"What?"

"She's right here in both our hearts."

"I know. But it's not the same as having her right here in front of me."

"I know sweetheart. But, in time, things will get better for you."

"That's what Daddy says a lot of the time. I know he misses her too."

"How can you tell?"

"He gets really quiet when he starts thinking about my mother. Then when I ask him what's wrong. He'll say something like, 'Oh, I'm just missing your mother'. But, he never tells me what it is about my mother that he misses. I wish he would share some of those thoughts with me sometimes. It would be nice to hear."

"I know. But sometimes adults try not to burden their children with their concerns. It's not that he's trying to shut you out. He's trying to be a good dad. That's all. You understand?"

"Yes Ma'am, I do."

"Okay, let's get busy making these cookies. The day is young and we have lots to keep you busy."

"Yes Ma'am. I love you Grandmother."

"Oh sweetie, I love you too. Grandpa loves you also."

"I know."

CHAPTER 14

The Hospital Visit

“HEY CUZ. WHAT brings you out here?”

“I just wanted to see how Teresa was coming along.”

“She’s actually coming along wonderfully. The doctor just left.”

“Oh yeah? What did he say?”

“He said that she’s about seventy-five percent uphill. He does expect her to reach one hundred percent. He doesn’t know when that will happen. But at least she’s making progress.”

“That is good news.”

“I know, right? Anyway, did you get Felicitee to Auntie’s house this morning?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I just drove back from there. Thought I’d stop by here first for a short visit before heading back home.”

“That’s good.”

“Can Teresa understand what’s said to her?”

“Yes. She can either blink her eyes or squeeze your hand. You just have to tell her which one you want her to do. One blink or one

squeeze means yes. And two blinks or two squeezes of the hand means no. Why? You want to say something to her?"

"I was just wondering."

"If you want, I can leave the room and you can say to her whatever is on your mind. Would that be alright?"

"Sure, I would appreciate that Sharon."

"Okay. Teresa, I'm going to go down to the cafeteria for a while. Bradford will be here with you."

Teresa blinked her eyes once for yes.

"Hey girl. You sure know how to exact excitement, don't you?" he said with a smile.

"Oh. Oh. You squeezed my hand once. So you agree?"

She squeezed his hand once again in agreement.

"Well, I'm sorry for the way I spoke with you the day your car hit the tree. Am I the reason you ran your car into the tree?"

She didn't respond. He gently kissed her on the cheek.

"You don't have to respond to that. I just want you to get better. Is that a smile I see? It sure is. You have such a lovely smile."

She squeezed his hand once.

"So you agree, uh? Cute. Listen, Felicitee will be with her grandparents for a week. So I'll be able to come visit you more often. Will that be alright with you?"

She really squeezed his hand to emphasize how much she would love his company.

"Okay, then I'll be here after church tomorrow. I won't stay long today. I have really fallen behind with some work. And, if I want to keep my clients, I better jump back on that 'work hard band wagon'. I can't afford to lose not one client. You understand?"

She gently squeezed his hand one time hoping that he'd understand that she loves him and understands his dilemma. Sharon returns from the cafeteria.

"Hey there you two. Did you have a good visit?"

"Yes, it was a good visit. Did you get yourself something to eat?"

"Yes, in fact I did. I also took some time to call my husband. I miss him a lot."

"I believe you do. Listen, Sharon, I'm going to head on out of here. I'll be back sometime after church."

"Cool Cuz-in-Law. I'll call you if anything transpires."

"Thanks. I would appreciate that. See you two tomorrow."

"Okay. So, Teresa, you two had a good visit, uh? I knew you would. You love my cousin-in-law, don't you girl?"

Teresa squeezed Sharon's hand once.

"Well, just remember that good things come to those that wait. I know you must be tired. You rest now. I'll be here when you wake up. I'm not going anywhere."

Teresa fell asleep.

CHAPTER 15

Why Won't She Call?

WELL, ANOTHER SUNDAY. *I better get up and start moving around so I won't be late for morning worship service. I can't get Eloquence off my mind. It's as though she changed after I told her how I felt about her. I just don't understand any of this. Maybe I'll try calling her again before going to the hospital this afternoon.*

He was suddenly startled by his cell phone ringing.

"Hello."

"Good Morning Bradford. Are you busy?"

"I'm preparing for church. How are you?"

"I'm alright. I know I haven't had much time to spend with you lately. I do apologize."

"I was wondering if I offended you by how I expressed my love toward you."

"Don't be silly."

"I was thinking about calling you again after church. Just to give it one more try."

"Well, I'm glad I called you because you sound as though you were never going to call me again."

"I have to say, the thought crossed my mind."

"I hope you've put that thought out of your head."

"Yes, I have now. So, do you have plans for today, Eloquence?"

"Nothing out of the norm. Matthew is spending the week with his grandparents. So I'm free all week long. What about you?"

"I drove Felicitee to her grandparents as you know."

"Yes."

"So, outside of visiting with my friend in the hospital, I'm pretty much open."

"That's right. How is your friend coming along?"

"She's progressing the doctor says. She's able now to answer you with a squeeze of her hand or a blink of the eye."

"That's good."

"Yeah, it is. I just will be glad when she can speak again. It is difficult watching someone who is full of life, and yet unable to live that life. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, I most certainly do. Listen, I know you're preparing for church. So stop by after your visit with your friend."

"Okay, I look forward to it. Can I bring anything with me?"

"Just yourself, will do just fine."

"I can do that. I'll see you this afternoon."

"Okay, Bradford, til then."

DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROMISES OF GOD?

Do you trust God to bring forth His promises to you? Or do you doubt He will do what He promised?

Evangelist Audrey Green has been worshiping the Lord since the age of seventeen. She believes in the power of Intercessory Prayer. She has been given the opportunity to share her experience with women in Arizona, California and Ohio. Evangelist Green is walking in her destiny because she does believe in the promises of God. Her writing ministry stems from the scripture St. John 14:13-15:

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

What does it mean to trust God for His promises to you? If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. And to know the love of

Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. Unto him is glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Evangelist Audrey Green is a chosen writer for those who are hurting, desiring to live a better life. She is a dedicated mother and travels sharing her book ministry with many.

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EVANGELIST AUDREY GREEN

Evangelist Audrey Green resides in Ohio. She is the proud mother of three wonderful adult children and five grandchildren.

Evangelist Green is the Owner of Chosen To Write Publishing LLC. She has received from Dayton Christian Writers' Guild, Inc., the Red Rose Award.

She has traveled to the Midwest and West Coast sharing her experiences and victories as a Woman of God living in today's society. She is an inspirational speaker. In her ministry of writing for God's glory, the Lord has anointed her to evangelize to hurting women of all nationalities.

To her credit, Evangelist Green has written:

~When Love Hurts, I'm A Survivor~
(Reprint 2013)

~A Daddy's Love~
(May be purchased on Amazon.com)

Upcoming novels:

~Can You Hear Me Calling?~
(2013)

~Torn Between Desires~
(2014)

SO YOU THOUGHT SERIES: SO YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD ME!

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