

Chapter Two

(Ephesians 6:10 NKJV/NASB)

I should have known something was amiss when Cameron did not return my message. Minutes after I lost control, I was running down the three flights of stairs and into the parking lot. I could feel a neighbor’s eyes on my back, but I did not care. I had spent too much time holding it in already so that neighbors would not overhear us arguing all the time. However, I could not hold it in any longer.

I hopped into my baby Malibu and swiped my runny nose. My fuchsia lipstick left a smeary residue on the back of my hand. I backed out sharply. I could not even stand to see my husband’s blue Ford truck parked next to my silver Malibu. I imagined so many times some woman sitting in there with him enjoying a nice country ride to some faraway place. Of course, his half of the household money would be wining and dining her. I knew there were many stops at some faraway hotels, too. I had found enough teeny shampoo bottles in his gym bag or fishing box already to confirm that. Surely, he frequented the best that he could afford since he stopped putting money into my checking account for the household bills. As usual, we ended another day hostile towards each other.

“I can’t believe as much as you work, you don’t have any money again this pay,” I said as I figured out the bills. It was frustrating. “I don’t know how we’re going to make it.”

“Look, I already told you my insurance was due on my truck. I had to get new tools again, too. Somebody stole my stuff again during lunchbreak.” Cameron did not bother to look at me. I listened to him fall onto the black leather sofa. I heard him pop open a beer and slide the remote control toward him. Then on came the television. Now I would be ignored for the rest of the evening. Cameron was average height and pretty-boy Black. He was also vain. I was an attractive ginger brown and crushed. I looked over my shoulder and raised my voice, determined I would have the last word.

"Yours. Mine. That's not how married couples live. It's gotta be a team effort, Cameron." I closed the household checkbook and licked a postage stamp for the gas bill.

"Stop bitchin'," Cameron shouted back as he turned up the volume on the TV. That was the last thing he said to me. I dropped the bills into my purse and stood. Sometimes, Cameron could be just plain ole mean and nasty. Sometimes, he was just young and irresponsible. I glanced at him on the sofa and walked out of the dining area and down the short hall to our bedroom. I was tired of always feeling like I had to be his mother and make him do the right thing. I never heard my parents bickering over money. My father went to work. He gave my mother the money for the house. She paid the bills and shopped for us. I had a fantasy childhood, and I expected a fantasy marriage.

I sat on the bed and pulled the chain on the lamp. Under the glow of the lamp, I pulled open the top drawer of the oak nightstand on my side of the bed. In its usual place was my *Holy Bible* and pocket-sized copy of *Black Pearls*, a book of inspiration and devotions. Sometimes, I read my Bible; I would just open it and begin reading whatever page I happened to open it to. I believed in my heart that's how God communicated with me. "Lord, what are you telling me?" I whispered as I began to read the page I opened to. "Speak to me, Lord. Speak."

"The Armor of God..."

'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the ... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms...' Ephesians 6:10."

I curled my feet up behind me and rested my head on the pillow. I closed my eyes and let various scenes from the many arguments between Cameron twist and turn jaggedly around in my head. My Bible was open and faced down on my left thigh as I meditated. I thought, "Of course, Satan wanted to see turmoil in my marriage." It just made perfect sense that

Cameron changed right after we were married. When we dated, he gave me money all the time. All the time. I was constantly shopping for clothes, jewelry, and accessories when we dated. I even had an account at the upscale Garfinckel's all the way in D.C. because of Cameron. Of course, since we got married, the account went into default. I shifted and thought about how we were young and just starting out as a married couple. I realized I had to have more patience with Cameron's transformation into the husband I dreamed about all through college. It seemed only logical to me that Satan was stalking our marriage. I repeatedly told Satan to get to stepping. He was not going to steal my marriage. After all, money was the root of all evil, Ma always said. I should have never provoked Cameron to curse me over money.

"Get ye behind me, Satan," I whispered over and over and stretched out more on the bed.

When I awoke several hours later, my Bible had slid onto the bed beside me and *Black Pearls* was beside it. I put the books back into my nightstand and looked over at Cameron. He was sound asleep. He looked so peaceful, like a sleeping baby. I quickly undressed and nestled behind him. "Get ye behind us, Satan," I whispered into Cameron's ear. "I love you, Cam," I whispered tenderly and wrapped my arms around his waist before drifting back to sleep.