

JOURNEY'S

END

By Andy Nonymousman

Chapter 1

Over a year had passed since George had met Charles Okinyi, the African who had helped his life drastically. As he lay in his hammock swinging gently amidst a mild breeze, he reflected how things had changed. He thought of both things he had gained and things he had hoped to have but did not yet have.

All in all, George was a blessed man with many material possessions, including a small mansion of a house, luxury cars, an excellent income from his real estate sales, and two wives. Yes, that is right, two wives. How could this be in America where it had been banned over a hundred thirty years ago? Charles Okinyi, the Central East African with the regal bearing was the cause of this. Or as least, it was he that opened the scriptures to George and a few others to reveal that it was not unrighteous in the eyes of God.

Patently, over a period of weeks, Charles demonstrated from scripture that many followers of God had plural numbers of wives and not once had God condemned any of them for the practice.

Surely, he had thought that even if it were allowed in the Old Testament times, certainly it had been outlawed with the initiation of the New Testament. Once again

though, he found out he had been wrong. The only two passages in the books of Timothy and Titus which initially sounded like there was a restricting guideline for Bishop and Deacons to be limited to only one wife, upon closer inspection and study of the Greek words, were shown not to be making such a declaration at all.

Then the "Great" Charles Okinyi, as he had been nick-named by his friends, had taken George and his first wife Juanita to Kenya where he saw first hand how a plural wives marriage could work as they watched Charles and his two wives interact with love, affection, and devotion with no jealousy or bitterness at all.

After returning to the United States and with the approval of his first wife Juanita, he had married Judy Chandler, a mid-thirties widow with two small boys. Since they lived in a large house, each of his wives had their own bedroom. Most neighbors thought that Judy was merely a house guest. Of course, since he could not legally marry her, vows were between them and were witnessed only by a few close friends and no papers were filed.

"Hi, Honey," his train of thought was interrupted as Juanita joined his side, sitting in a lawn chair next to the hammock that hung between two trees in their large back yard. "Judy's on her way out with some lemonade and cookies."

Just as she spoke, Judy appeared with a plate of home-baked oatmeal cookies in her left hand and a platter carrying a large pitcher of lemonade and three glasses in her right.

Juanita helped her place the items on a small wooden table nearby. Judy moved around the tree and on the other side of the hammock and then went over and kissed George on the cheek. Pulling up another chair and then receiving a glass of lemonade from Juanita, she took a seat next to their mutual husband. A man they both admired and adored.

As Summer had come and the three spent more time out side on weekends, rumors and innuendoes were beginning to spread amongst the neighbors. George had at one time considered not showing open affection toward his second wife knowing that it could bring persecution from people who had been fully and completely indoctrinated into the "monogamy only" sacred cow of the Western world. Still, upon reflection, he knew that it would have been blatantly unfair to refuse Judy the affection she craved in order to avoid persecution, so he boldly tried his best to treat both wives equally.

Persecution was indeed coming and coming soon and this even as George considered taking action that would heap even more criticism on his head.

Chapter 2

"Well, hello, Juanita." Mrs. Blanchard, who was a neighbor who lived down the street, greeted Juanita as she saw her in the grocery store.

"Hi, Mrs. Blanchard," Juanita replied. "How are you today?"

"I'm fine, but what's this 'Mrs. Blanchard' stuff? You know you can call me Betty." Betty Blanchard, who was at least fifteen years older than Juanita, moved her cart beside Jaunita's and leaned over to whisper in her ear. "Dear, I hate to tell you this, but I know I'd want to know if it were happening to me." She paused, giving Juanita a chance to brace herself for what was to come.

"Honey, I think your husband is cheating on you," Betty revealed.

"Oh, really," Juanita reacted. "And why would you think that?" She questioned, curious as to how she had come to her conclusion, yet knowing it had to be something she had seen as George and Judy and related to each other in some public setting.

"Well," Betty started again, expecting to see a greater reaction, but realizing that none was forthcoming. "He was seen holding hands with that red-headed house guest of your's." She said breathlessly as her widened eyes searched for the signs of hurt, pain,

and betrayal that most American women would be feeling at this point.

"Oh," Juanita said as she smiled wryly, ready to have fun with this mid-fortyish neighbor. "That's okay, she's his wife."

"What?! But...but...I thought you were his wife," Betty stuttered.

"Oh, I am," Juanita explained. "You see George is such a good husband I couldn't help but share him so now he has two of us." She paused, as the older woman's eyes widened, her eyebrows went up and watched as her mouth flew open.

Juanita smiled broadly as she saw the woman almost involuntarily draw away from her as if she was infected with some wildly contagious disease. "You do believe in sharing a good thing, don't you?" Juanita shouted out as the woman made a hasty retreat. Juanita had enjoyed the moment and yet knew it would have its own repercussions. Arriving home a few minutes later, she found her phone already ringing. "Hello," she answered.

"You're filthy!" Said the voice on the other end.

"Uh, excuse me...who is this?" *click* The phone was hung up.

Ring, ring, ring....Once again it was ringing. This time it was a male's voice. "Get out of the neighborhood. We don't want your kind around." *click* The phone was hung up again even before Juanita could make any response.

Ring, ring ring....Juanita placed her hand on her hip, took the phone off the hook and hung up immediately before unplugging it. She was feeling queasy, almost nauseous. She had known this day was coming and had thought she was well prepared for it, but it was worse than she had imagined. Glaring at her watch, she realized that George would be here in another hour and Judy would be off work in thirty minutes. While she tried to focus on what to prepare for dinner, she pondered on what or how she could tell them.

Ding, Dong...The door bell was ringing just as she opened the refrigerator door. Closing the door, she slowly walked to the front of the house to answer it. Ding, Dong..Ding, Dong...Whoever it was was becoming impatient. As she opened the door she saw another neighbor from two doors down, Ann Mitchell, a woman she had considered a close friend.

"Juanita!" She exclaimed as her eyes widened and she threw her hands over her mouth. "Tell me it isn't true!" She said as she pushed past Juanita, stepping into the foyer.

"What?" Juanita said tersely as she placed her hand on the hip and shifted her weight to one leg.

"Is it true? Is George a bigamist?!" She repeated incredulously.

"Listen, Ann, I'm busy....And I don't want to talk about it right now."

"Oh, he is, isn't he?!" Ann charged. "Girl, you know you don't have to put up with this. Put him out!" She insisted.

"Ann," Juanita responded through clenched teeth as she gently put her hand on her friend's shoulder and moved her back toward the door. "I know what George is and isn't. As long as I am happy with him, why don't you leave us alone?!" She had shoved her out the door and slammed the door. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she slumped down on the sofa. "Why, God? Why?" she cried out. "I did what you wanted. I let Judy share my husband. Why?!" After a few moments, she heard in her mind a still, small voice quoting a scripture, "all that live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

While Juanita was suffering her own particular persecution at home, George was experiencing trauma at the office.

Chapter 3

His secretary had already gone home for the day. George put the finishing touches on some paperwork and was about to turn out the lights, lock the office, and go home when the phone rang. He looked at it for a moment thinking he might ignore it and just go on home. Yet, he had trained himself to think, "Every call can be an important call. One never knows when the next one will make another fortune." At the fourth ring, he picked it up and trying to be pleasant, he still found he was more abrupt than normal.

"Yes, Meadows Real Estate. May I help you?" He answered quickly.

"Is this George Meadows? Mr. George Meadows?" the caller demanded.

"Yes, who is calling please?" George asked hoping not to give any indication that he didn't like the caller's tone of voice.

"I want to see you first thing in the morning. You be there at nine!" The caller spoke in an authoritative voice treating George as if he was some lesser human being. With the degree of wealth George had begun to accumulate, this was a way that he almost never experienced. Most people were quite deferential when they saw his house or his cars or understood who he was and what he had become in the financial realm. 'Who could this rude person be?' He thought.

"Yes," he answered slowly. "I'll be here at nine."

"Good," the voice answered. "There is a way to deal with your kind." *click* The caller was gone. George was puzzled. What did he mean, 'your kind'? As he wracked his brain trying to figure out who the caller might have been, he gradually closed up the office and headed for home.

Entering the house, both wives ran to him in tears.

"Oh, Honey," Juanita blurted out through her tears. "We're in trouble!"

"Wha...what do you mean?"

Judy looked up at him with tears in her eyes as she held him around the waist. "I'm...I..I'm sorry, George," she cried.

"Sorry?! What's going on?" George demanded.

As they sat on the couch, one wife on one side of George and the other wife on the other side. They poured out the story of the day's events.

George sat quietly as he listened with his brow furrowed. The he began to wonder, 'was the strange call at the end of the day related to this?'

"Let's get some dinner," he suggested. "And then we'll figure out..." he was interrupted by a banging on the front door. "Why is someone banging on the door?" he questioned out loud but half to himself. "Why don't they use the doorbell?" He rose and headed toward the door with a quick purposeful stride.

Bang! Bang! Bang! George reached the front door and snatched it open. "What do you want?!" He found himself yelling as he confronted the perpetrator. He was surprised to find a silver-haired gentleman who was probably in his forties dressed in a three piece black pin-striped suit, a long sleeve white shirt and a maroon silk tie, standing two inches taller than himself sneering at him as he held out a card.

"I couldn't wait until nine in the morning," he announced. "I am James C. Dewitt, attorney at law. I live one block over on Pine Crest. If you think you're going to bring bigamistic practices into the neighborhood, you've got another thing coming. I'll be bringing a class action lawsuit against you for bigamy and immoral behavior presenting a threat to the children of our community. I've got three teen-aged daughters, Mister, and you're not about to bring in some idiotic, illegal practices to destroy this community."

George rocked back on his heels as he faced this tirade of words. He knew of James C. Dewitt. He had a reputation for being a smart lawyer who had won some big suits, making him a multi-millionaire, and even wealthier than himself. "I...Uh..." George started saying, but Mr. Dewitt wasn't listening. He had already spun on his heel and headed back toward his brand new Mercedes.

"I suggest you get out while you can, or you'll lose everything you own," he called back over his shoulder.

Chapter 4

George turned slowly after closing the door. His two wives stood together with questioning in their eyes. George knew he had to try to look confident, in control, take charge, although he didn't feel that way at all. There was a sickening sinking in the pit of his stomach.

Still, he forced himself to lift his head as he gathered his ladies in his arms and began guiding them toward the family room. "Doesn't Jesus say in Matthew 5:12, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before.'" George didn't feel like rejoicing but he had to be strong for them.

"Judy, where are the boys?" George asked, trying to change the subject and at least temporarily shift the emphasis to something else.

"They're upstairs playing with toys in their room," she replied. "I'll go check on them." She said quietly and then quickly exited, sensing that George wanted to be alone with his first wife. This she gladly accommodated, knowing that Juanita would do the same for her when she needed him alone.

"Honey," Juanita began after she heard the fading sounds of Judy's footsteps as she climbed the stairs. "I think we need to call Charles and Aaron. Maybe they can come over and pray with us and maybe we can get some wise counsel, too."

"You're right," he said begrudgingly. He didn't like having to admit that he needed help. He had always thought of himself as a strong, independent man, but he was learning, ever so gradually, to rely on the Body of Christ for help when needed.

An hour later, the three men were gathered in his home. They retired to the family room and as George began to relate the events of the day, while the ladies prepared glasses of iced tea for the men. After hearing everything, Charles went into his quiet prayer mode as he seemed to stare at the weave of the bluish monochromatic color scheme on the carpeting.

Aaron finally broke the silence. "Well, if they're going to sue, we ought to counter sue!" He proclaimed.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty unto God; pulling down stronghold." Charles quoted from 2 Corinthians chapter 10. "I think our first step is prayer. We need to bind the deceiving spirits that are behind this attack and then also pray for wisdom. It could be that God may have us fight legally as well, but let's seek the Spirit's confirmation first." Charles concluded.

Aaron leaned back in his seat and bit down on his bottom lip. He was supposed to be the accepted leader of the fellowship and the 'senior elder', and yet in tough times it always seemed it was Charles who had just the right answer. Still, Charles had never challenged him for the position of leader, even though it was becoming more and more obvious that the people were beginning to look to Charles when they wanted wise counsel.

They prayed in English, then in the Spirit and then spent a time of quiet listening, and waiting for the Spirit of God to speak to them or give them a specific leading.

"Here's food, guys," Juanita announced as she entered the room with a plate full of hamburgers. Judy followed with a tray of condiments and chips and finally Aaron's wife, Cheryl, came in with more lemonade.

"What's God saying?" Juanita asked impatiently as the men each grabbed for the burgers and chips. Both Aaron and George looked to Charles before saying anything.

"Well, I think," Charles began slowly. "George should seek some legal counsel and the rest of us need to be constantly praying."

George looked forward to making an appointment to see his attorney the next day. That would bring a shock, but there'd also be a different distraction that would catch him completely off guard.

Chapter 5

George was in the office early. He managed to call his attorney who was able to squeeze him in between his last appointment of the morning and lunch. George was determined to make his appointment his appointment at 11:50 am. "At least," he thought. "I can get some idea of what strategy to take if we do need to go to court.

"Mrs. Sweetwater, hold my calls and postpone my appointments this morning," he ordered.

"Yes, sir," Mrs. Sweetwater replied. George sat at his computer, began on Internet search to see if there were any other cases like his. Maybe he could get a lead on what others in similar situations were doing. Time flew by as he immersed himself in surfing the Internet. At 11:30 am, the intercom buzzer interrupted his cyberspace study. "Yes, Mrs. Sweetwater. I thought I said I was not to be interrupted." He answered abruptly.

"Yes, Mr. Meadows, I understand, but there is a young woman here who is very insistent on seeing you," came the secretary's reply.

"Well, who is she?" George demanded to know.

"Miss Perkins. A Miss Shawanda Perkins," she answered.

George's mind drifted back as he thought fondly of the times he had had with Shawanda, the lean, attractive African-American graduate student who was so bubbly, full of life and impertinent all at the same time. He had asked to marry her, but she had

turned him down. He knew she had feelings for him, but she wanted a big wedding, a white gown, lots of relatives at the event and a husband all her own. She didn't like the idea of a plural wives marriage. And so, he had lost her. He hadn't seen or talked with her in months. The fact she would visit him at his office was quite a surprise.

"Mr. Meadows," the secretary interrupted his reflections. "Should I have her make an appointment for another day?" She asked.

"No! No," he quickly replied. "Send her in; send her in."

Shawanda strode into his office wearing a beige skirted suit with a colorful red and blue scarf tossed around her neck. she wore dark hose and matching beige shoes with three inch heels. Her long dark hair bounced as she walked over to him.

"Hey, Muscles," she said with a broad smile as she extended her hand to shake his.

"Well, hello, you beautiful doll," George responded. "Certainly I get more than a handshake." He said as he took her hand and squeezed it gently and then lifted it to kiss the back of her hand.

Shawanda blushed a little before taking a seat. Instead of taking his seat behind his desk, George sat down beside her in one of the guest chairs. He started to take her hand and hold it, but she gently pulled it away.

"What is it?" He questioned. "What is wrong?"

"Oh, nothing's wrong," she said as she smiled and the she looked down after see was the questioning in his eyes, knowing her next statement might indeed hurt him though the situation was joyous for her.

Meanwhile, Juanita and Judy were at the house waiting nervously to hear from George what the attorney might say. Judy, who was usually at work at this time, had taken the day off.

"It's all my fault," she lamented. "If I hadn't agreed to marry George, you all wouldn't be in this mess," she said as she stood in front of the living room window with her arms crossed over her chest with her hands holding her own shoulders.

"Nonsense," Juanita retorted. "Don't start that," she demanded. "We all knew what we were getting into when George asked you to be his second wife."

"We all knew that once it got out there could be repercussions." She went on as she sat in one of the plush living room chairs, gesturing with her hands. "Look, how much more disciplined the boys are now that they have a father." She pointed out.

"Yes, you're right about that," Judy said, turning around to face her sister wife. "We all prayed and we sought God's will in the matter. We thought we were hearing from Him so why is this happening?" Judy questioned.

Juanita uncrossed her legs, stood up, and walked over to her and placed her right hand on Judy's right shoulder. Then looking her in her eyes, she said, "The Bible indicates that tribulation and persecution sometimes comes because of our obedience to the Word."

"But if we're right, why does it seem most of the rest of the world disagrees with what we're doing?" Judy questioned as she moved away a few steps and threw her hands up in the air before dropping them back down to her sides.

"Well, you may remember that we discussed this before. When George and I did research on the matter, we found that the Roman Catholic Church outlawed plural wives in a marriage in the council of Trent held between 1535 and 1565. When Protestants broke away they took the 'monogamy only' golden calf with them and they've continued to worship it. The indoctrination in it continues every day in every medium as well as church and school. So it's no wonder that most of Western society has been brain-washed into thinking it is the only right way," she concluded.

"Yeah," Judy said, turning again to face her sister wife. "And the ironic thing is that while they condemn plural wives, they accept homosexuality, sodomites, and abortion which is murdering the unborn and fornication which they renamed free love as fully acceptable!"

"Oh, look at the clock," Juanita despaired. "It's almost 12:15. George will be in any moment with news from the attorney and we haven't prepared anything for lunch."

"I'll throw a frozen pizza in the oven. It will be ready in a few minutes," Judy offered.

"Okay," Juanita responded. "I'll make some iced tea to go with it."

The wives were looking forward to hearing what the attorney had said. Both would be shocked to find out that George had missed the appointment and why.

Chapter 6

"What did he say?" Both wives asked eagerly as George came in with his head bowed, something that was rare for him.

"Huh," George responded as he was awakened from his self-reflecting thoughts.

"What did the lawyer say?" Juanita replied impatiently.

"Uh... I... um... didn't see him," he said.

"What?!" They both questioned.

"Something came up," he started to say.

Juanita put her hands on her hips waiting for his explanation, while Judy moved to him and put her arms around his waist.

"It's okay, dear," Judy said. "We understand there must have been a reason."

This was another one of those times that irked Juanita. Generally, she and Judy got along just fine except when Juanita was perturbed with George and Judy would go to his defense. It was a sort of one-upmanship that Juanita deplored.

George kissed Judy on the forehead and held out his left hand in a gesture toward Juanita, as he looked up, saying without words, 'come and join us.'

Juanita had almost no choice, lest she appear to be the meanie of the two. As Juanita joined his side, he spoke, "She's getting married."

"Who?" Judy asked.

"Shawanda, Shawanda Perkins."

"Oh, I see," Juanita said knowingly.

Although Judy knew that there had seemed to be some flirtations between George and Shawanda at one time, only George and Shawanda knew the full extent of his feelings for her.

Juanita now had the advantage and knew why George was down and probably the cause of the missed appointment with the attorney. Whereas, Judy could only pretend to be sympathetic and caring, trying to show she was not the lesser of the two wives.

"The time just flew by," he explained. "When she left, I looked at my watch and it was ten minutes past my appointed time. By the time I got there, he was already gone from his office."

"Did you reschedule?" Judy asked.

"Yes, but he can't see me now for two days. He is in court with a big trial." George said, providing more details.

Just as the three sat down to eat lunch, the doorbell rang. George took a deep breath and sighed before Judy jumped up, volunteering to answer it. As she opened the door, bright lights were shown on her face. She instinctively recoiled, raising her hand to shield her eyes. A microphone was shoved in her face as a TV reporter began the questioning.

"Are you one of the wives living at this address?"

"What?" Judy responded, being caught off guard.

"Are you one of the wives of George Meadows?" The question was repeated.

Judy backed away from the door, but the news reporters and cameraman only followed her inside.

"George!" Judy finally cried out. George came around the corner of the foyer in just an instant only to be besieged with questions.

"Are you the bigamist that lives here? Why did you decide to have two wives, knowing it is against the law? How did you coerce these women into such a situation?"

The questions came hard and fast. One on the heels of another without time to respond to one before another was forthcoming. Juanita soon appeared as the news

reporters, TV, radio, and newspaper, were now crowded into their home.

There's the other wife, lets' interview her!" Someone called out as the group rushed in Juanita's direction into the living room.

"Are you the first wife or the second?" One asked. "Why would you agree to such an arrangement?" A second threw in. "Is your husband an abusive man?" A third questioned. "Would you leave the situation if you had the means?" A fourth wanted to know.

"Wait...I...uh" Juanita tried to collect her thoughts.

"What will you do if your husband goes to jail?"

"Get out!!" George yelled. "Get out! All of you! You are trespassing! This is private property! We didn't invite you in! Get Out!!" He yelled.

With that the reporters began a slow retreat as they backed toward the door. All the while the TV reporter was speaking to the camera.

"There you see have it, ladies, gentlemen. The angry response of a man caught in an adulterous, polygamous situation We understand there is a civil case about to be filed against them and who knows, with the publicity building, there may be a criminal case as well."

Chapter 7

"Charles, it's George. We need to meet. Things have gotten worse. Call Aaron for me will you?" He requested.

"Sure," Charles responded. "I'll be there in an hour."

It was about 8:00 p.m. when the pair arrived. Aaron secretly wondered why George had called Charles rather than himself as he always had before, and yet he, deep down, knew the truth. George was looking more to Charles Okinyi for spiritual guidance than himself. Although he understood why, in one sense, it still hurt to be replaced by an African.

Why? He asked himself. Why should it hurt more than if it were some white American pastor? As he thought and prayed silently, the truth was revealed to him, but it was ugly. An ugly part of himself so deep seated he never realized it before. He, Aaron Cooper, so called man of God, was a racist! No, not a Ku Klux Klan type or a Nazi, but none the less a racist, for he felt there was something special in himself just because he was white.

"What did your attorney say?" Charles asked.

"I...uh...haven't seen him yet," George answered.

"Well, let's pray," Charles said simply. The group prayed aloud in English and then in the Spirit and then sat near motionless for a long time waiting to hear from God.

"when they persecute you in the cities, flee to another," Charles finally said quietly as he quoted Matthew 10:23

"What?" Juanita questioned.

"When ye see Jerusalem compassed about with armies...flee to the mountains," Charles said quoting another scripture with his head still bowed in prayer fashion.

Finally, he looked up at George. "It may be time, my friend, for you to leave Egypt and head for the wilderness," Charles stated quietly.

Juanita began to get frustrated. "What are you saying?" She demanded. "Why are you speaking in riddles?" She paused, took a deep breath before blowing it out her mouth. "Are you saying we have to leave our beautiful home and our business? Do you expect us to just quit without a fight? Why would God have us do that?" She ended in almost a screaming tone of voice.

Charles turned to look her in the eye and spoke slowly and directly. "Maybe God knows that you love your things too much," he said.

Juanita's eyes were now ablaze. How dare you accuse me of being too carnal in my own house, she thought. And yet she also knew there was truth in what he said. She folded her arms and then turned 90 degrees so she was no longer facing him.

"Move?" George half asked and half stated. "Move where?" He asked with a quizzical look on his face.

"Where are the mountains?" Charles asked, not out of a lack of knowledge, but to provoke George to think.

"Where, the Smoky Mountains or the Rocky Mountains?" George asked.

"Or what about the Aberdare Mountains?"

"The what?" George questioned.

"The Aberdare Mountains," Charles repeated. "In Kenya, Africa."

"Africa!" Juanita and Judy screamed almost simultaneously.

Everyone in the room was shocked at the suggestion and searched Charles face for any hint that he was kidding. Charles leaned back in his chair, placed his hands in prayer fashion with the tips of his fingers under his chin, and gradually let his eyes look from one to another apparently enjoying their reaction.

Then he abruptly stood up. "I'm not saying that is what you should do. It's for you, George, to decide what God is saying to you." He stated simply and then pivoted and headed toward the door.

"Wait a minute," Juanita yelled out. "There are others involved here. Don't we get a say in it?"

Charles stopped and turned half around before speaking, "George is the husband and therefore head of your family. I'm sure he'll discuss it with you and listen to your opinions, but ultimately it's his decision." Finishing his statement, he quickly left the room and the house.

Everyone remaining was stunned. Charles was very different than anyone they had ever known.

They were shocked by his suggestion but there were more and greater shocks to come.

Chapter 8

George and his two wives sat down for breakfast the next day. A baby-sitter had been called in to handle the boys so they wouldn't be interrupted.

"Kentucky?" George announced. "I think we're moving to Kentucky."

"Why there?" Judy asked.

"I've got a farm there that I inherited from my granddad," he explained. "It's got over 200 acres, there are woods and a creek that runs through the mountains away from a lot of people."

"But what about the business and the house here?" Juanita questioned.

"We'll sell them," he stated simply. "We'll then use the equity to get established there and put some away for a rainy day."

"What about my kids?" Judy said with obvious distress. "I've heard that Kentucky's education system is light years behind our schools in the North. I don't know that I want them saddled with an unfair education. Maybe I'll just get my own place and stay here in the city."

"Judy," George said gently. "Judy, my dear, you don't have that option. You're my wife and you'll do as I say." He finished firmly.

"Not legally!" She spat out as she threw her cloth napkin on the table and stood up and walked away.

George was taken aback, surprised at her reaction. "No, not legally," he said. "But spiritually, which is even more binding. You committed to submit yourself to me as unto the Lord in our vow. Don't you remember?" He said as he moved behind her and

put his arms around her.

"Yes...but..." she began tearfully. "I..never...knew....that..." She began haltingly before being interrupted.

"None of us knew," George said gently. "But we can't let this thing destroy our family."

Juanita came up behind George and placed her hand on his shoulder. When he looked back, she indicated with a quick jerk of her head that he should leave and let her talk to her sister wife. George took the suggestion and eased away after kissing Judy on the back of the neck.

"Judy," Juanita began. "We can home school, if necessary. I'll help. Actually, it will be much better than public school. They'll have more attention, lessons can be paced as they need. Together, we can be sure they'd learn far more than public school." Juanita reassured her.

"But I have to work," Judy protested.

"Why?" Juanita asked.

"To take care of my kids," Judy explained.

"Judy, you've been working recently because you wanted to," Juanita reminded her. "It's George's job to provide for all of us. You don't have to work," she concluded.

Ring...ring...ring... "yes," Juanita answered the phone.

"I don't agree with what you're doing," the voice on the other end said. "But I don't like what they're doing to you either. A summons to appear in court is scheduled to be delivered to one George Meadows tomorrow morning and nine am." *click*

"George!" Juanita screamed. "What is it, babe?" George replied quickly, realizing the panic in his wife's voice.

She ran to him, throwing her arms around his neck as she explained, between sobs, what the anonymous caller had said.

"Start packing," he said. "I'm going to the office to get some things squared away. We'll be out of here before morning."

George drove quickly to his office and began barking orders to his employees and associates. "I want a for sale sign in front of my house at 10:00 am tomorrow morning, Not sooner, not later. Do you understand?!"

"Yes, sir," came the reply.

"I want the papers drawn up to rent the house, Mike, and ready by 3:00 this afternoon."

"Mike," he said as he turned toward his junior associate. "Today is your lucky day. I'll sell you the company for half it's worth if you'll sign the papers by 5:00 today."

"But...but...I don't have that kind of money," Mike protested.

"Have a certified check in my hand for what you do have by 5:00 and I'll let you pay the rest on a time payment plan."

"What about the pending sales?" Mike questioned. "The commissions are your, just go ahead and close them on the appointed day."

By nightfall, a moving van had pulled up in front of the Meadows mansion and the major pieces of furniture were being moved on to it.

"George," Judy came to him with tears in her eyes. "We didn't have time to pack everything," she said.

"Don't worry, leave it," he said simply. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not of the father." He quoted the scripture as he realized that much of what he had was really a show of pride.

"George, what about the house?" Juanita questioned.

"A for sale sign will be up at 10:00 tomorrow. When it sells, the money will be transferred to an account in Wisconsin."

"Wisconsin?" Juanita asked, puzzled.

"Yes, I don't think their people are going to try to trace us. After all, what they really want is for us to get out of the neighborhood. They're getting what they want. Even so, I don't want to be easily found." George's original plan was to be on the road before the 9:00 am summons arrived. but there was an extra half hour delay that he didn't expect.

Chapter 9

"Call Tabiatha and let her know we're leaving, and tell her I'll wire Charles some money for her next semester's room and board." George ordered.

In the rush of things, George had almost forgotten about his promise to the old African minister to look out for Tabiatha, a young Kenyan lady who was attending the local university. During her first semester in the United States, she had lived at the Meadow's home and it was through her that George had met Shawanda. Tabiatha had indicated she wanted the full college experience including living on campus. George, being such a wealthy and kind gentleman had agreed to cover those costs. "After you call Tabiatha, then call Charles and let him know what's going on," George continued.

George helped the workman carry out a few of the several remaining pieces of furniture and heard the phone ring. "I've got it!" He yelled.

"Hey, Muscles, I heard you're leaving town." Shawanda's energetic pleasing voice came over the phone.

"Well...uh...yes, but how did you find out?" George questioned.

"Tabiatha just called me," she replied.

"My, word does get around," George reacted as he looked at his watch. It was 8:35.

"Who's on the phone?" Juanita queried.

George put his hand over the mouthpiece so Shawanda wouldn't hear his wife's voice or his whisper. "It's Shawanda," he answered.

"What?!" At a time like this? George, she's getting married. Let her go! why is she calling you?"

"Hello, Shawanda?" Hold on a moment, please," George spoke into the phone. "Juanita, please keep packing. I'll be off in a moment."

"Who is it?" Judy asked as she came around the corner entering the room.

"It's Shawanda!" Juanita answered with sarcasm in her voice and a sneer on her face.

"George, is she the reason you missed the appointment with the attorney? We might not be having to sneak out like criminals if she hadn't showed up!" Judy stated boldly and blankly as she stood with her feet spread apart and her hands on her hips.

George looked at his watch again. It was 8:39. The summons was due to be delivered in just 21 minutes.

"Can I see you before you go?" Shawanda cooed into the phone. "You wouldn't leave without giving your old friend a good-bye hug, would you?"

"I...I..." George stuttered as his two wives looked defiantly at him. "I'll meet you at the McDonald's on Wright and Crescent in ten minutes. Be there!" He ordered.

"I will." She began before George hung up the phone.

"George! You can't be serious!" Juanita screamed.

"You've got two wives, why do you have to go chasing after this little colored girl?!" Judy hurled at him.

George quickly shot a glance at her which said without saying, I don't like that kind of statement. "I'll be back in twenty minutes," he announced. "If I'm not, take off without me.! I'll catch up."

George, they haven't finished loading the dining room set!" Juanita screamed frantically. "There's not enough time!"

"Leave it," he ordered over his shoulder as he headed for his Mercedes.

"Leave it?!" Juanita questioned incredulously.

George had hopped in his luxury vehicle and run down the window. "He that forsaketh not all he hath can not be my disciple," he said, quoting from Jesus' words in Luke 14.

George raced toward the designated McDonald's. Not that he ever ate at such a cheesy fast food place, but he knew it was a place that he and Shawanda couldn't miss and it was almost midway between the two residences.

Meanwhile, two furious wives were steaming and trying to decide whether to obey their husband when they were infinitely angry with him or just stay and take the summons for him or point the sheriff to where he'd be.

As George neared the McDonald's, he noticed a police car had pulled over a familiar looking vehicle. Yes, it was Shawanda's car. He pulled nearby and ran his window down so he could hear.

"Get out of the vehicle, ma'am." The officer said gruffly. Shawanda complied. "Turn around and put your hands on the car," he ordered as he obviously planned to frisk her.

George felt a tremendous anger welling up inside him. Jumping out of the car, he briskly moved toward the officer. "I say, there, officer. what have we here?"

Shawanda turned her head and, seeing George, moved toward them. She shook her head slightly, indicating to George he shouldn't get involved while the officer requested her to back up.

"Stay out of it, Mister. It's just a case of DWB," she called out.

George remembered that Shawanda had explained to him that DWB was short for 'Driving While Black'. "Well, officer, Officer Chaney, is it?" He queried as he read the officer's badge. "You are harassing our Negro citizens, are you?"

"Sir, she ran a red light. Now, please, stay out of this." The officer responded.

"It was yellow," Shawanda protested.

"Let's see now; I think there was regulation against a male officer frisking a female, but go right ahead, officer." George said as he looked him directly in the eye. "Young lady, I have an excellent attorney, so after he's finished with you, we'll sue him for every penny he's worth. And I don't think he'll be able to get a job writing parking tickets after I speak to the mayor." George bluffed.

"Well..uh..." the officer stuttered. "Maybe I'll let her go this time, but you watch the signals more closely, young lady." He said sternly, trying to save face as he moved toward his vehicle.

George and Shawanda watched as the officer returned to his squad car and drove away. Shawanda then threw her arms around his neck and kissed him on the cheek before pulling away and hitting him in the chest with her fist. "Hey, what's this 'Negro citizens' stuff?" She asked.

"I was just playing a role," he chuckled.

"You did it well, Mr. Meadows. And when will you be dining with the mayor next?" She teased.

George looked at his watch. It was 8:59. He was hoping his wives had obeyed and taken off. They hadn't.

Chapter 10

Juanita and Judy had helped bring the dining room chairs out to the moving van while the movers struggled with the table and the cabinet. Juanita was not pleased about leaving her beautiful home and wasn't about to go to some farm house in Kentucky and sit on crates boxes to eat.

It was 9:10 as George looked down at his watch and knew he had to finish his conversation with Shawanda.

"Serve's you right!" She was saying. "You just love women too much, ha-ha-ha!" She laughed.

"Maybe you're right," he muttered, relishing every moment of joy and sunshine she brought with her."

"You will come back for the wedding, won't you?" Shawanda asked.

"Yes, sure, I wouldn't miss it for the world," he said with a broad smile. "If you're happy, I'm happy for you." He said before adding, "although, I have to admit, I'm a little sad I couldn't have you for myself."

"Sorry, Muscles. It wouldn't work. You've got two women already. What if I wanted you one night and the others wanted you too? What would we do, draw straws to see who would get you? No way, man! I need a man that's available every night!" She concluded with a wink.

George looked down at his watch. It was 9:15. Lord, please have them on their way, he prayed silently.

"See ya Muscles," Shawanda said as she waved good-bye and entered her vehicle. "Oh, and bring the wives." she chuckled.

George looked after her longingly as she drove away. And then looked down at his watch again: 9:17. George drove to the end of the street to see if the moving van had left. He was shocked to find it hadn't. He raced down the street, put the car in park and ran into the house. "What's going on?" He yelled. "Why haven't you left?"

"You're too busy to leave, and so are we," Juanita answered dryly as she removed pictures from the wall to be loaded in to van.

"Everybody, get into your cars right now!" George demanded as he prayed that the sheriff would be delayed. The harshness in his tone told the two wives that he was now very serious and further delay would not be tolerated. They each scampered to their vehicles while George told the moving van driver to take off. The van led the caravan and was followed by Judy and then Juanita, when each had their own cars and finally by George. After one short longing glimpse of their now former home, they headed west.

It was just in time. The Deputy Sheriff, who had been on his way to deliver the summons, had been side tracked by a back-up call by the local police. However, when he met that officer on his way to the location, he told him of his stopping a black female only to be interrupted by a distinguished looking white male who knew the mayor. By the time the two finished discussing the event and its possible ramifications, it was 9:35, which was just minutes after the Meadows family had left for Kentucky.

Life on the farm would bring new and different challenges, but a dining stop at a restaurant for a break and a meal would bring questions that would have George squirming in his seat.

Chapter 11

George passed by the moving van and indicated they should all pull over for the rest stop. This was one of those that combined gasoline services with several variety stores and restaurants.

After being seated, Judy began, "George, honey, if this Shawanda girl is getting married, why did you have to run off and see her?"

"He's still in love with her." Juanita offered matter of factly.

Then they both turned their heads to look at George as they waited for his answer. He didn't want to admit that he still loved her and was sorry to see her getting married to someone else. He decided to ignore the question.

"Shawanda says she's marrying a fine young man who is a young attorney, just starting out. He sounds like he is a much better man than that Jesse character with whom she used to spend time," George said.

"So, why the secret rendezvous with you?" Judy pressed.

"Oh, it's no secret," George said defensively. "She just wanted to make sure I had the invitation to her wedding."

Later George excused himself and went for a walk outside the restaurant. He quietly reflected on what Scripture had said about desiring a woman committed to another. He prayed "Father, forgive me. I thought Shawanda was to be mine. Obviously I have been mistaken. Help me, Lord. Relieve me of these feelings I have for her."

The rest of the trip to the Kentucky farm was long but uneventful. Hidden back in the hills of Kentucky and several miles from the nearest town, the location would provide the seclusion they would need for their type of lifestyle. Or so George thought.

Although the farmhouse was large and had several bedrooms, it was a far cry from the grand 'mansion' they had just left. Set back two hundred feet from the country road there was a winding drive leading to the house. Fifty feet to the rear and off to its left was a barn. It had been years since George had seen the old place, but it was much as he had remembered, only now needing a few coats of paint.

"We'll build you a house over there," he said to Judy as he pointed to one spot fifty feet to the right of the house.

"Why?" Judy questioned looking hurt and confused.
"If you have your own house, people won't be questioning why I'm living with two women. Don't worry, honey, I'll be with you there many nights and others I'll spend here with Juanita."

That eased Judy's concerns somewhat although she still wondered what this new arrangement would be like.

Over the coming days, George was able to contact his broker and cash in sufficient stocks to arrange to have a small three bedroom ranch style house with a basement built in the place he had proscribed. He then had an eight foot deep and four feet wide trench leading from the old farm house up to twenty-five feet toward the smaller ranch house.

He then went to work himself and physically built a corridor inside the trench with a floor and walls and a roof that he then covered with dirt and grass. He followed this by having a different contracting company send out a bulldozer and making a twenty-four foot trench from the basement of the ranch home toward the corridor he had built, having them stop one foot short so no one would know that he would join what would be the two corridors, making them one underground passage between the homes.

Once all this was completed, he built a fence between the two houses, making it appear that they were separate properties. This way, to outward appearances, the widow Mrs. Judy Chandler would have no relations to the Meadows other than being the next door neighbor. Yet, secretly, George would travel between the two homes underground.

"Hi, it's about time you called," Aaron responded on the phone.

"Yeah, well, when are you guys coming down?" George asked.

"Hold on a minute," Aaron replied. "Hey, babe," he called out to his wife Cheryl. "you want to go to Kentucky next weekend?"

"Sure, why not?" Cheryl responded with glee, welcoming a chance to get away from the city.

"We'll take Friday off and be there by Friday evening," Aaron informed George.

"Bring Charles with you," George asked.

"Okay," came the reply.

The weekend came and as the three men walked around the farm, they shared

their thought. "Yeah, I'm really selling insurance part time," Aaron confided. "I never thought I would have to do that, but since you guys left, we've been meeting at my home and the fellowship has not grown much," he revealed.

"Not enough tithes and offerings to keep you guy afloat?" George questioned. No. You know as I see it now, many Christians are very shallow. They don't want real spiritual growth. They're satisfied with 'fire insurance', that is enough salvation to miss the fire of hell and make heaven." Aaron almost grudgingly admitted, as he threw his hands in the air.

"Most pick a church based on the prestige of the church and their comfort level," Charles said.

"You're right," Aaron confirmed. "I thought many of the people to who I ministered when I was pastor of the church would come to our fellowship," Aaron started saying, but George broke in.

"And what you really found is that they stayed even though they brought in a young man just out the theological seminary with not much experience or real knowledge of God."

"Right!" Aaron confirmed.

"Why don't you guys move here?" George suggested. "Sell your house and build one here on the farm." George continued, getting more excited about his own idea. "Charles, you could come, too," George added.

The older man walking slightly a few steps before responding. The three enjoyed the fresh mountain air and the sound of autumn leaves crunching under their feet.

"I'd have to carefully consider my income possibilities," Charles shared delicately.

"Yeah, I know you're supporting two wives back in Kenya," George said as he dropped his head and went into thinking mode.

"Why not have them come to America?" Aaron suggested. We could have our own private community right here on George's farm." Aaron said beginning to be excited by the idea.

"Getting visas for Africans to come to America isn't easy," Charles revealed.

"If thou canst believe, all thing are possible to him that believeth." George said quoting the scripture.

"We can get jobs in the surrounding communities and all live here in one Christian community," Aaron said.

"I understand getting work for blacks in the South is even more difficult than in the North," he said pointedly.

"Look," George said. "You won't have rent, because I'm giving you a plot of land and I'll help you build the house."

"Houses," Charles reminded. "Don't forget my wives!"

"Okay, houses," George said. "And if you can't find work, we'll give you our tithes, you've been our spiritual leader for a while anyway." George concluded.

The last comment caught Aaron off guard. Officially, he had been the spiritual leader, although he realized that more and more attention had been drawn to Charles' greater spirituality. He bit his lip and walked on saying nothing. It was still a bitter pill to swallow.

"Aaron, I'll be up next month for Shawanda's wedding. I'll see you guys and if you're ready help you move down." The three were excited, but George in particular would get an unexpected surprise.

Chapter 12

"Shawanda?" George asked on the phone.

"Yes, who is calling please?" The voice on the other end asked.

"It's George Meadows, who is this?" George asked back.

"This is Mrs. Perkins, Shawanda's mother," came the reply.

"Oh, hello Mrs. Perkins. How are you?" George responded.

"Well, hello, oh I know who you are. You're the nice white man that helped Shawanda get away from that awful Jesse what's-his-name." Mrs. Perkins said, obviously reflecting on things Shawanda must have told her. George wondered how much she had told her when his thoughts were interrupted by the next question. "Are you coming to the wedding?" She asked.

"Uh, yes ma'am. I was planning to," George replied. "In fact, I'll be in town a couple of days ahead of time. I was hoping to meet the bridegroom," he offered.

"Well, good," Mrs. Perkins began. "I'm sure you'll like him; he's such a handsome young man and very successful too, I might add."

"Good," George said, resisting the urge to be disappointed that there wasn't some mighty flaw in the man that could, even at this late date, delay the marriage or even end the engagement. "Shawanda's quite a young lady and deserves the best," he said, still secretly regretting that he wasn't getting her for himself. He prayed silently, asking God to forgive him again.

"Yes, she is. Well, she's not here right now, but I'll tell her you called. We'll see you at the wedding if not before. Bye now." Mrs. Perkins said, ending the conversation.

"Good-bye," George answered and hung up the phone. He had never met Mrs. Perkins, Shawanda's mother, but she seemed to be a very pleasant lady. He sat reflecting a moment when his thought were interrupted by his first wife's voice.

"Honey, dinner's ready," Juanita called him.

"Oh...yeah...right"

"What's the matter, dear?" She asked.

"Nothing, nothing at all. I'm going to leave tomorrow to head up North for Shawanda's wedding," he announced.

"I thought that wasn't until Saturday," she questioned.

"It isn't, but I thought maybe I could meet the bridegroom before hand," he answered.

Juanita had her hand around her husband's waist, but pulled her shoulders away from him a little as she looked at him with one eyebrow raised. Then she asked, "George Meadows, you don't think you get final approval of him, do you?"

"No, dear, I just want to meet him."

"Give her up, George. I know you wanted her to be your third wife, but I guess it just wasn't meant to be," She consoled him. Their walk had brought them to the dining room where Judy was putting glasses on the table. Although the wives now had their own separate homes, they still were together as a family most of the time.

"Did I hear something about that..." Judy paused to choose her words carefully. She had upset George once before when she had called her a little colored girl and she didn't want to make the same mistake twice. "...I mean, uh, Miss Shawanda?"

"Yes," Juanita responded. "George is going up to be at her wedding."

"I hope that ends it," Judy muttered under her breath. Judy figured two wives were enough for a man and could never understand why George should have any affection for a third.

"Shawanda," George spoke into his cell phone as he drove. "I'm in town on my way to your place. I'd like to meet the bridegroom."

"Muscles!" She exclaimed. "Great, I'll look for you and I'll call him to tell him we're coming over."

Fifteen minutes later they were in George's Mercedes' headed across town toward John Winston III's home. On the way George learned that John was an attorney at a prestigious law firm, he had a very good salary with prospects of becoming the first black partner in the firm and had been a youth minister at his church for several years.

When they reached the home in the upper-middle class neighborhood, George noted to himself that it wasn't as big and luxurious as his old home yet. He knew from their conversation that it wouldn't be long before they could have such a house if they wanted one.

"Well, hello," John said warmly with a broad smile as he opened the door.

"John, this is George," Shawanda began the introduction. "And George, this is my husband to be in about 43 hours."

"Glad to meet you," George said as he was ushered into the house.

"Have a seat. I'll get you something to drink," John offered.

"I'll get it," Shawanda offered as she quickly headed toward what must have been the kitchen area. "You two can get aquatinted," she said over her shoulder as she disappeared around a corner.

John was two inches taller than George and well built. "Well at last, I get to meet the famous George Meadows. Shawanda has told me so much about you," he said.

George felt at a distinct disadvantage. He didn't know what John did or didn't know about him and Shawanda, about his wives or anything. He decided to ask John questions in an effort to divert attention away from himself. "You've done quite well for yourself, from what Shawanda tells me," George said.

"Yes, God has been good to me," John answered. "But the greatest blessing is bringing Shawanda into my life."

"Indeed," George replied.

"Yes, I've never met anyone so bright, so bubbly, so exciting, and at the same time so beautiful." He said as he expressed himself with numerous hand gestures.

Shawanda appeared with a tray of three glasses of iced tea. As she sat the tray down, John grabbed her by the arm and pulled her onto his lap and kissed her. George looked on with jealousy, trying as hard as he could to conceal it. "Lord help me," he silently prayed.

After the kiss, Shawanda playfully pushed John on the chin with her forefinger and asked, "Have you been talking about me?"

"Sure," John answered as he smiled back at her. "I just can't resist telling everyone how wonderful you are."

Shawanda pulled herself off of John's lap and sat beside him. "How are your wives, George?" She asked.

George cringed. That meant she had told John about his two wives. "Well...uh....they are fine, thank you," he answered.

"that was quite a stir around here for a while," John added. "The media put you in quiet a bad light, I'm sorry to say."

"Yes, it did," George said sheepishly.

"Some of the guys at the office were talking about the possibilities of that becoming another test case on the first amendment protection of freedom of religion. It's about time that was revisited. Don't you agree, George?"

"Yeah, it should be revisited," he said.

"Then you just disappeared. Why didn't you stay and fight it?"

"I...uh...well it just seemed to be the right thing at the time."

"George probably didn't want his wives to go through all the trauma and publicity of a long, drawn out court case and appeals that could take years," Shawanda offered, trying to help get George out of an awkward situation.

What a turn about. George had always considered himself her protector and not vice versa. At least, he thought as he considered himself, she cares enough to look out for me. After finishing his tea, George excused himself. John had agreed to return Shawanda to her apartment and George was eager to get away and be alone with his thoughts.

He had lost her. And to a man that to the outward appearance was flawless. That made it even worse. Yet, he was glad that Shawanda would realize her dream of marrying 'Prince Charming'. She'd have her fairy tale wedding, white gown, veil and all. She'd then live her fairy tale life, or so he thought.

Chapter 13

George had started the long drive back toward Kentucky. He hadn't stayed for the reception, although he was sure Shawanda might be disappointed that he hadn't. He had stayed long enough to meet her mother, a very charming lady and he had seen the wedding go off without a hitch.

There had been beautiful music and singing. There had also been a few white faces in the audience besides his own, which was a pleasant surprise and made him feel a little less awkward. "I am happy that she is happy," he thought. He then reflected on how they'd met. The basketball games. The playful interchanges.

Ring...ring...ring...His car phone was ringing and shook him out of his daydreams and the hum drum of the long tedious night drive.

"Hello, what is it?" He sang out.

"George! Are you driving?" Juanita asked.

"Yes, honey. Why?"

"Pull over," she demanded.

"Why? I'm fine. What is it?"

"Pull over!" She demanded a second time.

This time George slowed the vehicle, pulled over on the shoulder, and stopped, realizing the urgency in his wife's tone. "What?! What is it?" He demanded to know.

"They've been in an accident."

"Who?" George questioned.

"Shawanda and her new husband," came the answer.

"What!? How?" He asked. "Are they all right?" He questioned further without waiting for a reply.

"I don't know," Juanita replied. "Aaron called. It was on the news. Apparently, their rented limousine was on it's way from the reception when it was broadsided by a speeding drunken driver."

"No!!" George screamed. "I'm going back."

"Honey, get a hotel room," Juanita started. "There's nothing you can do. You're probably tired."

"No! I am on my way now! You call Charles and Aaron. Tell them to meet me at the hospital. I'll be there in soon as I can."

George turned his car around and sped back up the road exceeding the speed limit and just hoping there would be no radar traps to slow him down. He drove and prayed. "Oh God, let them live. Let them be okay."

"Why?" He said out loud. "Why now? this was supposed to be the happiest day of her life."

It was 3 am as he pulled into the emergency room parking lot. He raced to the door where he was met by Charles and Aaron. "How is she?" He begged to know with pleading in his eyes.

"She's alive," Charles said as he put his arm around his friend's shoulder. "But she is in critical condition," he added.

"What about John. her husband?" He asked.

Aaron looked down as he gave the report, "Sorry, he was DOA."

"No!" George yelled. "Does she know?" He queried.

"She's still unconscious," Charles added as they marched toward the waiting room.

"George, you ought to call Juanita and Judy and let them know you arrived all right. They're concerned about you."

"How did this happen?" George asked, ignoring Aaron's suggestion.

"A drunk driver apparently ran a red light while he was also speeding, rammed them broadside. They were not wearing seat belts and John was thrown across the car and his head went out the opposite passenger side window.

"Why God, Why!?" George questioned aloud. "they were so happy. All of life's best years were before them. They had plans and..." he said and then drifted off.

The three walked several steps in silence, hearing only their heels clicking against the sanitized tile floors. Then Charles spoke quietly quoting scripture. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth..."

As the three reached the waiting room, they saw her mother pacing, crying, wringing her hands and praying. A few others who George assumed were relatives of friends were also there. All were deeply concerned. Time crawled as they waited for word from the doctors about her condition. Finally a nurse came in to say she was out of surgery. the group besieged her with questions.

"How is she?" Her mother asked.

"Can we see her?" asked another.

"Will she be okay?" another asked.

"The doctor will be here in a moment to answer all your questions." The nurse replied dutifully. Although she tried to be reassuring, it was obviously something she had said dozens, if not hundreds, of times.

More time crawled by until finally the doctor came in. "We've done everything we can for now. She had several broken ribs and some internal bleeding. We believe we've stopped the internal bleeding, but there is some swelling in the brain and that'll give us the most concern. She's in a coma right now. We want to wait to see if the medicine we are giving her intravenously will help with the swelling. Right now she has maybe a 40 percent chance of making it." He paused.

The small crowd took in the information for a moment, then her mother asked, "What if the swelling doesn't stop?"

"Then," the doctor began his answer. "We'll have to ho try surgery to release the pressure," he said. Then he continued with a question of his own.

"Does anyone know if she is an organ donor?"

Rage flashed through George as he remembered some of the conversations he had with Shawanda. "Many blacks won't sign organ donation cards?" She had said when he had asked why. She explained, "We don't trust the doctors. The majority of which are white. They may let us die just to have the organs available for exotic transplants." At the time, George laughed it off, thinking it just part of the larger black paranoia, but now he wasn't so certain. Before anyone else would answer, he blurted out, "Just save her, Doc. don't worry about her organs, she'll need all of them herself."

Several of the others looked appreciatively at George, glad he had said to the white doctor what they were feeling. Tragedy had struck in a way and yet there was more to come.

Chapter 14

"Code blue!" The intercom sounded and almost instantly the hall was filled with doctors and nurses headed toward the recovery room.

"Is it my baby?" Mrs. Perkins questioned as tears filled her eyes and streamed freely down her cheeks.

George and Mrs. Perkins tried to follow down the hallway to see what was happening. One of the nurses stopped and commanded them to turn back and insisted they return to the visitors waiting room. "We are doing everything possible," she assured them.

Once again time seemed to crawl at an interminably slow pace as each person in the waiting room prayed silently.

Finally, a doctor appeared. He pulled down his mask as he exited the recovery room and headed the several yards toward the waiting room. George could tell from the look on his face the news was not good.

Everyone gathered hoping against hope that there was something good he could report. "There was complications that caused a coronary embolism," he said. "Despite our best efforts we were unable to save her."

"NO!!" Her mother screamed and then fainted. One of the relatives behind her caught her and lowered her to the floor. Her body had gone limp and then went into a spasm.

"Stand back," the doctor ordered as he bent over her. "Tell the nurse to order a code blue and get in here!" He yelled.

Aaron gave the nurse at the nearby station the message and once again there was a rush of gurneys and doctors and nurses. In a moment's time, they had her up off the floor and down the hall toward another room. George, Charles, and Aaron watched as they whisked off down the hall.

George then turned to head toward the room where Shawanda lay and then went marching down the hallway.

"Where are you going, buddy?" Aaron questioned, all the time knowing the answer even as he asked it.

"I've got to see her!" He spat out. As they entered the room and were startled to see her lifeless body. What had only hours before was vibrant, alive, and happy wearing a beautiful wedding gown now lay still and lifeless, wearing only a hospital gown.

George went to one side of the bed while Charles went to the other. Aaron remained at the door.

Her face was bruised and swollen. Tubes were still attached to her arm, since the nurses were obviously pulled away by the next emergency before being able to detach them all. George knelt down beside her. Tears welled up in his eyes. He tried to wipe them away before the other men saw them. After all, he was a man, he thought, he wasn't supposed to cry or so he had been taught. "Why? Why did God do this?" He questioned.

"Don't blame God," Charles replied. "It's the thief (Satan) that comes to steal, kill, and destroy."

"But where's God?" George questioned further. "He's bigger and tougher than the devil. Why hasn't He helped?" He demanded to know.

"I don't have all the answers," Charles said slowly. "But the Bible says 'if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' Let's ask Him."

Charles grabbed George's right hand and Shawanda's left. George still held onto Shawanda's right hand. "Our precious heavenly Father," Charles prayed. "We don't understand much of the why's of these events. Please give us your wisdom. In the name of Jesus we ask it; amen."

They waited a moment in silence. Then Charles spoke again. "You raised people from the dead through Elijah and Elisha, and Peter and Paul. We don't claim to be in the league of those great men of God, but we would ask that you return the soul of Shawanda Perkins to her body and allow her to live."

Even George was shocked by such a bold request and looked up at Charles in astonishment. Then after a moment, he closed his eyes and said, "Yes, Lord, please." They looked at the body. There was no change. George was about to let go of Charles' hand feeling that the answer was obviously 'no', but Charles held on and quietly began to sing.

"I know it was the blood,
I know it was the blood,
I know it was the blood..."

After he said the line the third time and before he could go on there was a heave of Shawanda's chest as she took a breath.

"Did you see that!?" George reacted excitedly.

"One day when I was lost,
He died upon the cross," Charles continued to sing.
"And I know it was the blood for me."

There was another heave and another breath. Then a moan came from her lips.

"Shawanda, Shawanda..." George called out.

"Oh...ooooohhhh..." she moaned again.

"Aaron, get the doctors in here," George ordered. "She's alive! She's alive!" Aaron rushed out to find the doctors.

Shawanda moaned once again then tried to open her eyes, which was difficult due to the swelling around her face.

"Muscles," she murmured softly. "Is that you?" What happened?"

"Don't worry, it's okay. You're gonna make it!" He smiled excitedly. "Uh, just rest, take it easy." The doctors will be here in a moment.

Meanwhile, Aaron had found the doctor who was working exhausted and frustrated. "Doctor, come quickly!" Aaron yelled as he drew near him. "She's alive!" He announced.

"What!?! Who?" The doctor asked.

"Miss Perkins, the patient you just pronounced dead a few minutes ago."

"Impossible!" He said as he looked at his watch and mentally noted that it had been at least fifteen minutes since he determined the time of death. "You may have seen some involuntary twitching of the muscles that occurs after death. It's quite common," he explained.

"No! She's breathing I tell you!" Aaron yelled.

The doctor finally began a quick pace toward the recovery room where Shawanda lay. As he entered, he couldn't believe his eyes. There she lay, eyes open as far as she could get them, breathing and trying to talk.

"Where's John?" She muttered.

The doctor moved to the side of the bed. "Relax, miss. We're doing everything we can." He buzzed for the nurse. And as she appeared, he asked her for something in medical term which he later told the trio was a sedative.

Shawanda slept and George stood vigil by her bedside.

After several hours, Charles and Aaron pulled him out into the hallway. "There's nothing more you can do here," Aaron said. "Why don't you come to my place and get

some rest."

"No! I've got to stay with her." He mumbled. "You two go ahead and get some rest. I'll see you later."

Then he turned to Charles and, raising his finger to him, he raised his voice and said, "You, mister! You never have to work another day of hard labor in your life! You hear me?! From now on, I'm your source of income," George announced.

Charles put his hand on his friend's shoulder. "I appreciate the sentiment, buddy, but God is my source! You may be one means of income, but God is my source!"

Shawanda had come through a major hurdle, but there were several more to come.

Chapter 15

"Juanita, It's Cheryl. How are you?" She asked in the phone.

"Fine," came back the answer. "How's George?"

"Well, exhausted but otherwise fine, but wait till I tell you what happened!" Cheryl said excitedly. "Get Judy on the extension. She'll want to hear it, too."

A moment or so later, Cheryl was describing for George's wives the events of the preceding evening. "I am going to fly up to be with George," Juanita announced after the phone call. "Judy, I suggest you stay here at the farm with the boys," she said, being careful to make a suggestion rather than give an order to her sister wife. All things considered, they had gotten along well up to now and Juanita didn't want that to change.

Meanwhile, the doctors at the hospital kept Shawanda sedated wanting her to rest and heal before having to share the bad news about her new husband and her mother, who also had died. The unexpected heart attack had removed Shawanda's closest relative. All the relatives had gone to their respective homes, most of which were out of state.

Still there remained one who George came to understand was her uncle. He was a man about fifty years old with a rounded face and sagging jowls. A stout man, but slightly shorter than George, he eyed the young white man with suspicion. Every time he came to see how Shawanda was doing, they passed each other with only the slightest acknowledgment until finally, the older man faced George squarely. "What's your angle?" He asked.

George was caught off guard. "I...uh...I just wanted to make sure she'd be okay," he stuttered.

"What's it to you?" The uncle queried further.

"She was, I mean, she is a friend," George responded.

"I have never known a white man to show interest in a black person unless it was to gain some type of advantage. So, I repeat: What's she to you?" He demanded to know.

"Sir, you've got it wrong. I'm not..." he was about to say, 'I'm not prejudiced, some of my best friends are black', but Shawanda had long ago warned him about that statement, so he changed what he was about to say. "I'm not...going to gain any advantage."

"Excuse me," the nurse said as she walked in abruptly. "I need to speak to the next of kin," she said.

George eased out in the hallway but left the door open so he could hear what was

gong on.

"I need to know who is going to be responsible for the medical bills."

"She should have still been on her university insurance program," the man offered.

"Yes, I have that information, but that will only pay for eighty percent of the costs. I need to know who'll be responsible for the other twenty percent, which I suppose at this point could amount to several thousands of dollars.

"Well...I...uh...I'm not sure.." the uncle began.

George stepped in, "I'll take care of those charges," he said boldly. The uncle looked up at him surprised and then narrowed his eyes becoming even more suspicious, but said nothing.

"Fine," the nurse said as she twirled around toward George. "I'll need you to sign here and here." As she pointed toward the papers, she held on her clipboard.

The doctor explained that she'd have to reduce the amount of sedative so they could get her up and moving. To eventually be able to take her off of intravenous feeding tubes, she had to begin walking to cause the intestines to work again and bowel movements to take place. The unfortunate thing about all this though is that they knew she'd be asking about John and her mother. The psychological shock of losing them both could easily send her into a relapse. "The more familiar faces she has around when we break the news, the better," the doctor explained.

"How you doing, honey," Juanita whispered to George as she came up behind him and slipped her arms around his waist.

George turned to see his first wife had come. "Thanks for being here," he said gratefully.

"Here, I brought you something to eat," Juanita said concerned about how haggard he husband looked. "Why don't you go over to Aaron's and get some rest."

"no," he said stubbornly. "I'll get some rest on one of the couches in the visitor's lounge," he said groggily. "But you come and get me if she wakes up. Do you understand."

"Sure, dear. I'll do as you say. Now get some rest," she replied. Juanita called Aaron and Cheryl and asked them to bring Charles so that they all would be there when Shawanda awakened and the doctor shared the bad news.

They hoped for the best while fearing the worst. Only time would tell what the

outcome would be.

THE END OF PART ONE

Part II

Chapter 16

“Shawanda” the doctor addressed his patient, preparing to share bad news and then sedate her once again.

“Yes,” she said groggily.

“We have some bad news for you.” he paused again to give her a chance to prepare herself.

“Your husband John was killed in the accident” he said simply.

“Nooo!” she screamed out, and then “aaaugh” as she grabbed herself around the stomach. The doctor gave her a pillow to hold over her stomach for he knew that she was not only hurting emotionally but physically as well. Each heave as she sobbed in crying would also hurt her midsection where they had operated.

“NOOO!” she screamed again.

“Shawanda” the doctor said to her to get her attention again. She looked up at him through eyes blurred with tears. “I’m sorry to tell you that your mother also passed away.” he said, believing it best to get it all out.

“Nooo! No! No!” she screamed again writhing in pain each time she cried out.

George, who was beside her on the other side of the bed, put his hand on her shoulder gently and whispered “I’m sorry dear, but I’m here for you.” Shawanda paid no attention to him but turned her head onto her bed as she held the pillow tightly to her stomach and curled into a ball and sobbed. The doctor gave her a shot which he said was a sedative and in five minutes she was asleep.

The uncle who George had learned was named Roy Watkins from New York stood at the foot of the bed glum faced but saying nothing. Aaron, Cheryl and Juanita, who were also there, joined hands and prayed for their sister in the Lord that Jesus Christ the savior would ease her pain and that the Holy Spirit would comfort her during this time of anguish.

As the days went by Shawanda gradually improved physically but there seemed to be no light in her eyes. She refused to talk. Each day George was there and when ever he took a break to rest he made sure Juanita was there. Still, Shawanda refused to talk to anyone. Not the doctor, not the nurses, not to George or Juanita or her uncle Roy. It was as if life had lost all its meaning for her.

Finally, after two weeks, the doctor indicated she’d be ready to leave in a day or so, but wanted to make arrangements for follow up with a psychiatrist.

“We don’t need no shrink!” her uncle Roy reacted.

“She obviously needs some follow up from a mental health standing point” the doctor replied.

“I’ll take care of her,” George interrupted. “I’ll see that she gets the help that she needs.”

The doctor looked at George curiously but said only “Fine, I’ll let the two of you work it out.” He then walked out of the room and continued on his rounds.

“What do you mean you’re going to take care of her?” Roy demanded. “She’s going home with me to New York. I’m her closest living relative!”

“Look Mr. Watkins,” George began in a pleading tone “I have a farm in Kentucky. I’ll take her there. I’ll provide for every . . .” he was interrupted.

“Kentucky!?” Roy Watkins yelled. “Kentucky!?” he yelled again. My family came north to get away from those racist southern crackers and you, a white boy, want to take my niece back to the south?!” he paused and took a breath and blew it out his mouth. “No way!” he screamed.

A nurse came to the door and warned, “Gentlemen please keep your voices down. This is a hospital!”

George turned around and faced the window. His back was now toward the angry looking Mr. Watkins. George was desperate. He felt Shawanda should be his responsibility and yet he had no legal rights in this situation. He put his right thumb on his right cheek and his other four fingers on the other cheek scratching the stubble of a beard he’d grown after not shaving regularly. He thought there must be a way. Finally, he whirled around.

“Suppose we let her decide?” he said.

“What?! Let her decide?” Mr. Watkins said as he began to raise his voice again.

George raised his right fore finger to his lips in a “quiet” sign to remind him to keep his voice down. The older man lowered his voice and continued on.

“She doesn’t even talk. How is she going to decide?” he said with a sneer.

“Let’s ask her,” George said simply as he moved to the side of her bed. George knelt beside the bed and gently turned her head toward him. “Shawanda,” he said, Shawanda, do you hear me?”

She didn't respond.

"Shawanda," George went on. "You're going to be released in a couple of days. Do you want to go home with me or with your uncle Roy?"

Her eyes were blank. George wasn't sure she'd understood what he'd said.

He waited.

Gradually her eyes began to focus on George's face and then she slowly shifted them to her uncle Roy who was now standing at the foot of the bed. After a moment she shifted her eye back to George and barely parting her lips she murmured "Muscles."

"Yes!" George yelled.

"Yes what?" Roy questioned.

"She said 'Muscles,'" he answered. "That's my nickname" he explained further. "It's the name she gave me" he went on.

The older man bit his bottom lip and then moved to the other side of the bed and took her left hand. "Peaches," he said, calling her by what was obviously a nickname he had used for her. "Peaches, if you need me, you call. I'm in the book. You can call information. If this guy doesn't treat you right, call me. I'll be there. You hear me, Peaches?" he questioned.

Shawanda didn't answer verbally, but did squeeze his hand. With that the older man motioned for George to join him in the hallway. "Listen, that's my niece. You take care of her. You understand me? You hurt her and I swear neither you're white skin nor your money will protect you from my wrath! You hear me boy?"

"Mr. Watkins, you have nothing to worry about. No one, I mean no one on this planet will take care of her like I will. Take my word on that," he said firmly and sincerely as he looked directly into the older man's eyes.

"What does your wife feel about her coming to stay with you?" Mr. Watkins asked.

"I am the head of my house." George said firmly. "I decide who comes and who goes." he paused as the older man gave him a curious look. "But you've seen my wife here. You've seen her help feed Shawanda and bath her and help nurse her back to health." he reminded the older man. George thought it would not be wise to mention that he had another wife. Still, he hoped his other wife, Judy, would be as receptive as Juanita. Unfortunately, his hopes would prove to be in vain.

Chapter 17

The caravan of vehicles proceeded south to Kentucky, composed of Aaron and Cheryl, Charles, and George and Juanita, who were taking Shawanda with them. Shawanda was still not speaking, using only a slight nod of the head to give a positive response and a very slight shake of the head from one side to the other to indicate a “no” response.

At every restaurant stop along the way George, Juanita, as well as Aaron and Cheryl would try to engage her in some conversation. Nothing worked. She continued to gaze into space giving the sense that nothing mattered anymore.

. . .

Finally the line of cars and SUVs pulled into the long driveway of the Meadow’s home. George honked the horn several times to get Judy’s attention. In a moment she appeared and ran toward the approaching vehicles. With a big smile on her face, she yelled out “welcome home.” Then she saw Shawanda in the back seat and her smile quickly faded.

As George climbed out of his silver Mercedes, now covered with dust, she pulled him aside.

“What’s she doing here?” she asked.

“She’s sick, depressed and needs our help” George began firmly “And we are going to help her!”

“Not me!” Judy replied loudly as she began to walk away.

George grabbed her by the arm firmly and walked with her in the direction of the house. He was hoping that Shawanda hadn’t heard the interchange. Shawanda made no indication she had heard or cared. She remained seated in the back seat staring straight ahead. As George continued toward the house giving Judy a stern lecture, Juanita began to get Shawanda out of the back seat.

“Why do you always have to go running after her?” Judy questioned. “You have two wives already; aren’t they enough?”

“Listen, I’m not going to argue with you about this.” George said sternly. “We, including you, are going to help her. That’s final.”

Meanwhile, Charles, Aaron and Cheryl exited their vehicles and began enjoying the beauty of the Kentucky landscape.

“Wow!” Cheryl exclaimed. “Look at the beauty of God’s creation!”

“Wait till you see the lake just over that ridge,” Juanita called out to them as she placed Shawanda on the swing on the front porch.

Minutes later the four were climbing the hill crunching the autumn leaves under their feet. As they reached the brow of the hill their eyes feasted upon the surrounding hills covered by a canopy of rustic colors. There were reds, browns, yellows, and oranges, and sprinkled with a few evergreen trees here and there. Down in the valley in between them was a beautiful lake around which a flock of geese flew.

“If God’s natural creation can be this beautiful, think of how much more the heavens shall be” Charles remarked. The four sat together watching the magnificence of the setting sun as it cast a warm red glow through the thin wisps of clouds that were moved by a gentle breeze away from the horizon.

In the meantime, George felt he had no time for watching sunsets. Instead he had a full time job of trying to help Shawanda reach a full recovery. He sat down on the bench swing that hung by chains from the roof of the porch beside Shawanda and put his arm around her shoulders. Shawanda didn’t move.

“I think you’ll like it here.” he said. Shawanda said nothing. “Are you cold?” he asked.

Still she neither moved nor spoke.

“Would you like to come inside?” he tried again to get a response.

Still no response. So they sat for a half an hour or so swinging back and forth ever so gently in silence. Silence, that is, except for the occasional chirp of a bird or the rustle of the wind through the leaves on the trees surrounding the house and the creaking of the chains that held up the old style swing.

As the four returned to the house, Judy came out on the porch and made a slight sneer at George and Shawanda and then called out that dinner was ready. AS the seven adults and two children sat down at the extended dining room table for dinner, George asked Charles to ask the Lord’s blessing on the meal and to give thanks for their safe travel.

“Our precious heavenly Father,” he prayed, “we thank you for your goodness, and

for your mercy and grace. Thank you for safe travel. Thank you for the family of God that can work together, play together, pray and worship you together. Thank you for your love and your love that we experience through each other. We bless this food that is before us in the name of Jesus Christ and thank you for it as well. Amen.”

Six of the seven adults and the two kids then eagerly began to dip food on to their plates and pass bowls of food around and then began to eat. They feasted on fried chicken, corn on the cob, green peas, mashed potatoes and gravy, and home made biscuits. Juanita put some food on Shawanda’s plate which Shawanda only nibbled at. This was especially a concern for George because Shawanda was losing weight. Nevertheless there were many other concerns. One of those posed a difficult decision for Charles.

Chapter 18

Two weeks had gone by since Charles and the others had arrived and already the construction of the third house was underway. It was also a ranch style but on the other side of the farm house.

George had devised a plan whereby each house would have it's own driveway leading to the main road and a fence between the houses, so that to the world it would appear that each house was on it's own plot. Yet underground there would be connecting tunnels but finished to such a degree that they appeared to be underground hallways. This way he reasoned he and the others could travel from house to house without the outside world knowing what was going on. They were building their very own Christian community.

"I think its important that our community become sufficient in and of itself without dependence on the outside world" George said to the gathering of the men.

"Elaborate on what you mean." Aaron suggested.

"Well, the land is paid for so we have no debt there. The buildings are being paid for as we go, so there'll be no mortgages." he began to explain. "Still, we need to be self sufficient food wise and power wise. I'm going to buy some generators to help with that area and we'll expand our supply of kerosene lamps to be used if and when they're needed. In the basement of the main house, we have a wood stove that can be used for heat if necessary."

"Oh, I see the plan" Aaron broke in. "then we'll need to grow the food we need. Expand our number of chickens for eggs and for meat, along with canning vegetables and storing them for the winter," he said.

"Right!" George said eagerly, glad that his friend was catching on. "Eventually, it'll be rare that we need to buy anything. We'll store up quantities of salt, sugar, pepper and things like that" George added.

Charles leaned back and smiled. He could see that his protégé had learned well. What George was doing on a large scale was the same thing he had done in Africa with his two wives.

"Excuse me," Juanita said as she walked into the den. "The mail has arrived and there's something for Charles from Kenya."

Charles eagerly reached for the letter and tore it open. He read silently. He smiled and then he frowned.

"What is it?" George asked as he watched his spiritual leader's reactions.

“Rachel is coming for an interview for a job at the State University as a linguistics professor,” he explained. “However Elizabeth is having difficulty getting a visa to get into the country.” He paused, stood and walked over to the window. “We’ve been through a lot of separation” he said. “At least when I was away from my wives, working here in the US, they had each other.” He paused again as he turned to face his younger friends.

“It would not be fair to Elizabeth to leave her there by herself with her kids” he said simply. “If I can’t get her and our kids in the country, I just won’t be able to stay. I’ll return to Kenya with Rachel and we’ll have to stay there.”

“Hold on a moment,” George spoke up boldly. “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”

Charles smiled before replying. “Or more scripturally, ‘If thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth,’ Mark 9:23,” Charles said.

“Yeah, right! That’s what I mean,” George said. “Look,” George went on, “whenever I’ve needed you, you’ve been there.”

“The same has been true for me,” Aaron added.

“You leave it to us,” George reassured him. “We’ll make sure your wives and all your kids can get in the country.”

“OK” Charles said. “I’ll write and tell her not to worry, that God will make a way.” He then exited the room leaving the two younger men alone.

“How are we going to do it?” Aaron asked as soon as he was sure Charles OKinyi was out of hearing rang.

“Ummm . . . I don’t know yet,” George replied. “Let’s pray and ask God for wisdom.”

The men prayed and then listened, waiting for God to speak His wisdom into their hearts.

“How are you set for money?” Aaron asked.

“Money?” George responded. “That’s no a problem. I’ve got money coming in from the sale of my business and the money from the equity in my house that I sold up north, plus I had a fairly substantial stock portfolio even before. In addition to that, I’ve been doing some day trading,” he answered.

“Day trading?” Aaron questioned. “Isn’t that risky?”

“Yes, it can be. But I always pray for wisdom first, then I look for IPO’s of various stocks.

“IPO’s?” Aaron interrupted with a question, not as aware of stock lingo as his friend.

“Yes, Initial Public Offerings,” George explained. “Usually they have a pretty good initial upward climb before declining. I buy as they start the upward trend and when they fall back more than ten percent of a high, I sell and then wait for another one. So far, I’ve made quite a bit.”

“How much is quite a bit?” Aaron asked.

“Oh, a few hundred thousand” George replied.

“Wow!” Aaron exclaimed. “Who is your congressional representative?” he asked after a moment’s thought.

“Uh, I don’t really know,” George responded, “but I can find out! I see where you’re headed.”

The two put together a strategy that they hoped would work to get Elizabeth and her children a visa to enter the United States. The plan, however, was tricky and if not handled exactly right could easily backfire.

Chapter 19

Having put up a basketball goal behind the main house, George hoped it would get Shawanda active again. He walked her out to the court and then dribbled the basketball a few feet away and turned back toward her. As he threw a two handed chest pass he said “here, shoot.” Shawanda turned her body slightly, let the ball bounce off her shoulder and turned and slowly began to walk back toward the house.

George stood there helpless, wondering what he could do to bring some life back into this once vibrant beauty. Judy, who had been playing with her boys nearby, saw the incident and decided to comfort her. She waited till Shawanda got to the front of the house and took her usual position sitting in the swing on the front porch.

“Poor Miss Shawanda!” Judy began “You lost your prince charming in a drunken driver accident! So get over it! You think you’re the only one who ever lost somebody they loved?””

Shawanda did something she rarely did. She lifted her eyes to look the speaker in the eyes. Still her face was placid.

Judy continued: “I’ve been there! My first husband was killed by a drunk driver over three years ago. Only I didn’t have the luxury of sitting around doing nothing but sulking all day, every day!”

She paused, but seeing no reaction she went on. “I had two boys to take care of. I had to get out and get a job and make a living . . . I did what I had to do!”

Still, there was no reaction from Shawanda.

“Look girl! Snap out of it!” Judy screamed. “You were dead. You hear me. You were declared dead by the doctor. That DEAR man along with Charles helped pray you back to life. He sat by you day and night in the hospital making sure the doctors and nurses were doing everything they could to make you well.

They were anxious to get your organs after you died. He made sure that didn’t happen.

Then he brought you here to our home and took time away from Juanita and me to try to make you better! You don’t care! Do you? You just take and take and take, and give nothing back!”

Shawanda’s eyes narrowed ever so slightly, but still she said nothing.

“Judy!” George yelled. “Get away from her!”

“She needs to hear the truth!” Judy retorted.

“Not like that!” he yelled again.

“George!” Juanita screamed as she came out on to the porch. “What’s going on?” she said as she stepped between her husband and his second wife.

George’s face was red with anger. Judy stood behind Juanita with her hands on her hips for a moment, glaring back at him; then she pivoted and entered the house slamming the screen door behind her.

“George, you need to calm down and go talk to her” Juanita insisted.

“You talk to her!” he retorted. “I told her to leave Shawanda alone.”

Still, Shawanda didn’t move or say a thing.

Juanita looked at George silently for a moment. She then quickly kissed him on the cheek and whispered “I love you even when you’re wrong.” With that she turned and went inside the house to console her sister wife.

“Shawanda,” George addressed her as he knelt down on one knee in front of her and took her hands in his. “Listen, honey, I told the doctors and your uncle Roy that I’d do every thing I could to make you well. If you don’t start talking, I’m going to have to take you into town to see a psychiatrist,” he explained.

Shawanda’s eyes narrowed once again, indicating she didn’t like the idea at all.

Meanwhile, Juanita was making a cup of tea for her sister wife who sat at the kitchen table crying. “Why? Why?” Judy cried between sobs. “He has two wives and yet he spends his every spare moment with her.”

“I understand what you’re feeling, but you have to understand that our husband is a man with a big heart. He loves you and he loves me and he loves her too,” Juanita consoled her.

“But . . . but . . .” Judy started again, “he was already spending part of his time with you and part with me before she came into the picture. So what are we to do now . . . let him marry her, make her a third wife and reduce even further the time we’re supposed to have with him? How can you stand it?” She cried tearfully.

“George is a very special man” Juanita replied. “I know he’ll do his best to meet all our needs.” She paused as she poured two cups of tea.

“But if you continue to try to separate the two of them its only going to draw him closer to her and further away from you.” Juanita paused again as she took a sip of tea.

“Well, what am I supposed to do?” Judy asked.

“You think of Shawanda as the enemy,” Juanita began her answer. “Well, the Bible says love your enemies.”

“What?” Judy said incredulously.

“Love her,” Juanita said simply. “If you show her love, George will surely show you love.” she concluded.

Judy took a sip of tea and then looked away but kept her thoughts to herself.

Juanita spoke again almost as if she could read Judy’s mind. “Is the fact that she’s black part of the problem?”

Judy turned her back again quickly looking at Juanita with widened eyes as if to say ‘how did you know?’

Juanita continued “We’ve grown up in a predominantly white society that has taught us subtly that we’re better than anyone who isn’t white. So it feels like a put down when our man seems to care more for someone who isn’t a part of our race.”

“Yeah, it does,” Judy admitted as she closed her eyes.

“I believe God is using these circumstances to bring out the sin of pride and selfishness in us.” Juanita stated. “Once we recognize that is what it is, we can begin to repent of those sins and grow more in His nature of love and humility,” she finished her sermonette.

George promised Shawanda if she didn’t start talking he would take her to a psychiatrist the next week, but that was to prove to be a difficult, if not impossible task!

Chapter 20

“Good morning dawling” George said as he entered the reception area adopting an affected Southern accent. “And how are you doing this fine day?” he asked.

He was wearing a specially made navy blue pin striped wool blended Armeni suit that cost him well over a thousand dollars, a brand new long sleeve silk shirt and a maroon colored silk tie.

“I’d like to see the congressman please.”

“Do you have an appointment, mister uh . . .” the receptionist began and paused, waiting for him to fill in his name.

“Mr. Meadows. George Meadows” he responded.

“How’s little Timothy and Billie Jo?” he asked as he pointed to the picture her children on her desk.

“How do you know my kids?” She queried.

“Why Ma’am, I make it my business to know things about important people like yourself” he said as he smiled and then drew out an expensive cigar from his inside suit pocket and chomped down on it with his teeth.

“Oh, I’m sorry, you all probably don’t allow smoking in heah, do you?”

“Well . . . uh . . . no, but . . .” the receptionist, who was obviously caught off balance, began to respond, while George threw her another curve.

He pulled out a was of \$100 bills from his pocket, peeled off three of them, and put them on the desk in front of her. “Here, you go Mrs. Gadfelt why don’t you buy your kids some extra nice things.”

“Why . . . uh . . . I can’t accept . . .” she began to speak again before being interrupted once more.

“Sure you can, besides its not for you its for the kids. Now is the congressman in?”

““Uh . . . yes, but he’s busy at the moment,” she replied.

“Well, what I have to say won’t last long. And I’m sure he won’t mind an extra check to help with the campaign.”

“Well . . . uh . . . I . . . give me a moment to check with him,” the receptionist responded.

Meanwhile George walked around the office like he owned the world. He stuck his chest out and his head was held high.

“Congressman, there’s a Mr. Meadows here to see you” the receptionist spoke into the intercom.

“A Mr. who?” came back the angry response “I thought I said I was not to be disturbed,” the congressman spat out.

“He wants to make a donation to the campaign, sir,” she replied.

“Well let him leave it. I’m busy.” came the reply.

“Never you mind, Missy” George said as he walked toward the congressman’s door. “I’ll handle this myself.” With that he entered the congressman’s office as if he owned it.

“Well, bless the Lord, Congressman, are you trying to keep extra money out of the campaign?” George said as he walked around the room and extended his hand toward the shocked congressman.

“Who are you?” the congressman replied.

“Meadows, George Meadows, but the important thing for you to know is I’m here to make sure you get re-elected. You got tickets left for that \$500 a plate dinner you’re having this weekend. I think I’ll just buy em all.”

“Well, I appreciate that, Mr. . . . ah . . . Meadows, but . . . have a seat, sir,” the congressman said, now beginning to appreciate the potential value of his uninvited guest.

George sat down, crossed his legs, and pulled out his checkbook.

“As you know, Mr. Meadows, there is a limit to how much an individual can give to a . . .”

“Yeah, I know, I know,” George interrupted, “so let me donate the maximum and then I’ll help form one of those, what do you call it -- PACS?”

“Yes, a political action committee,” the congressman began to explain. “If the committee wanted to advertise to help the party that would be just great.”

“Okay, congressman, do you think a hundred thousand dollars in advertising money might help you get re elected?”

“Well, yes sir,” the congressman said as his eyes widened, “That indeed would be a big help. A very big help.”

“It’s a done deal, then” George said as he began to write out the check. “You put your people on it, fill in whatever name you want on the check here and get it done.”

George placed the check for a hundred thousand on the congressman’s desk, facing him so he could see it, and then stood up as if to leave.

“Well thank you Mr. Meadows, and if there is ever anything I can do for you, just --”

“In fact,” George said, pivoting on his heels and turning around, “there is one little thing you might be able to do for me.”

The congressman’s face turned from exuberant enthusiasm to one of dread, fearful of what his rich benefactor might want.

“You must have connections with somebody in emigration, don’t you?” George asked.

“Well, uh, yes, I suppose I know someone.” he said hesitantly.

“Well, I know this little Negro girl in Africa. Met her on a trip a year or so ago. I’d like her to come work in my firm.” George then lowered his voice and leaned toward the congressman. “You know these so called African Americans are getting more uppity by the day. My Grandpa used to pay \$10 a week and they were happy to get it. Nowadays, they want eight to ten dollars an hour!”

“I see” said the congressman.

“Anyway, if you’d contact somebody in emigration and make sure she got a visa to come in the country and a green card so she could work, her name is Elizabeth OKinyi. Why I’d be eternally grateful to you sir!” George concluded.

The congressman’s mood lightened again. “Why I don’t see that being a problem at all, Mr. Meadows,” he said. “In fact, I’ll make a call now.”

“Thank you, congressman,” George said over his shoulder. “I’ll see my way out.”

With that he exited the office, said goodbye to the receptionist, and was on his way. He then entered his car and drove away, only to stop just around the corner, where Aaron hopped in.

“How’d it go?” he questioned with anticipation.

“It worked like a charm,” George said. “It’s amazing how money talks.”

“Still,” Aaron interrupted, “Do you think God approves of bribes?” he asked.

“Bribes?” George scowled. “What bribe? There was no bribe!” he stated definitively. “I gave a gift to a political action committee, no strings attached. He then offered to do me a favor. I accepted his offer. What else could I do?” he gestured, throwing his right hand up in the air as he drove with the left.

“Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves” he quoted Jesus’ words from Matthew 10.

“Okay,” Aaron said, “Let’s go give Charles the good news.”

George had solved this problem using money and the image of wealth, but there were to be other challenges that would not give way to finances alone.

Chapter 21

“Come on, Shawanda,” George coaxed, “it’s time to go see the psychiatrist.”

Shawanda stayed seated on the swing where she was usually perched for most of the day. George took her by the hand and tried gently to coax her to her feet. She resisted. He pulled harder. She resisted more and glared at him with a cold stare.

Shawanda had once told him of how blacks had a culture in which they could talk to each other with facial expressions. He was now getting a first hand demonstration. With only a slight change in facial expression using the fewest muscles possible, Shawanda communicated to him that she didn’t want to go and she wasn’t going and she resented him for trying to force her.

Although George shivered at the thought of her disdain, he was determined to get her help. He reached underneath her legs and around her waist and scooped her up in his arms and began carrying her toward the car. When he put her down a moment on her feet to open the car door, Shawanda stomped on the top of his foot as hard as she could and then took off running.

“Ow!” he yelled. “Well, that’s an improvement,” he thought as he bent over to grab his foot. “She usually only walks and then very slowly. At least she’s moving faster.”

George then took off after her. Shawanda, who was wearing a sweater, jeans and tennis shoes, was able to be more agile among the leaves, bushes and trees than George who was wearing a suit, tie and dress shoes. He’d lose sight of her and then stop and listen to hear the sound of her footsteps and then take off again in that direction. Eventually all sounds of her movement stopped.

George, now huffing and puffing, continued to search. As the sun reached higher in the sky, he realized he needed help. After carefully marking the spot in the woods where he had last seen her he went back to the house to enlist the help of his family, natural and Christian.

Noon came and went and still there was no sign of her. George, Charles, Aaron, Juanita and Cheryl all called out for her but there was no response. Judy, who had stayed back at the house to watch her boys, eventually came out as well. The sun was close to going down when finally Charles OKinyi called out. “Here!”

There was Shawanda perched out on a limb high in a tall tree. Taking off his jacket and tie, George immediately began to climb the tree. It had been years since he had done such a thing. He was trying to be very careful in as much as she was thirty feet up. When he got to the limb she was on he tried to coax her to come down.

“Shawanda, please come down,” he pleaded.

She stared at him blankly. “Shawanda, hold still, I’m going to climb out there with you,” he said as he slowly shifted his weight onto the limb. Once he had gotten his full weight on the limb there was a loud cracking sound as the limb began to give way.

“Nooo!” Judy and Juanita both yelled from the base of the tree.

George immediately backed off.

Shawanda held on tightly to the limb on which she was perched but still looked at him blankly. She was in danger of falling thirty feet to her death, but she showed not an ounce of fear.

“Okay, okay” George said as he relented in his position. “I won’t take you to the psychiatrist, but would you please come down?” he begged.

She didn’t move.

George backed down the tree. Still she remained where she was. “Go on home,” he whispered to the others. “I’ll move out of her sight and watch her until she decides to come down.”

Judy opened her mouth about to express her disgust but a look from Juanita reminded her to hold her peace.

George moved far enough away that she couldn’t see him and then bent down behind a tree from which he occasionally peaked out to see if she was still okay.

The sun was down, night was falling. The stars were beginning to shine as crickets began their chirping. When finally Shawanda slowly but surely made her way down from the tree.

George decided not to say anything nor even to expose his hidden position. He followed her at a distance, being careful to avoid any loud noises lest she know he was following her. In the dark he eventually lost sight of her but since she had been headed toward the house, he assumed that was where she was going.

Just as he was approaching the edge of the wooded area behind the houses, she jumped out in front of him from behind a tree and stood looking him squarely in the eyes. Apparently he had not been as quiet as he had supposed. He could see her face dimly lit in the moonlight shining through the few remaining leaves in the trees.

Her expression said it all without her verbally uttering a single word. “How dare you, George Meadows. How dare you put me in a situation like that.”

George had to develop a new plan but still it was questionable that any plan would work. Still, he had to try.

Chapter 22

“Charles, Charles,” George called out excitedly.

Charles, who was working on the new house next door, yelled down from the roof. “Yeah, what is it?”

“I just got an E-mail from your wife Elizabeth. Her visa came through and they’ll both be arriving next Saturday at Dulles International Airport,” George reported.

“Hey that’s great!” Charles said as a broad smile crossed his face. “Can you drive me over to pick them up? Or can I use your car?” he asked.

“Hey, no problem, brother. My car is your car, and I’m your driver.”

The air was cool and nippy in late November. Shawanda had taken to wearing both a sweater and a jacket yet she still sat on the swing most of the day and still she said nothing.

A blue lexus came up the driveway and stopped in front of the house. A mid-forties balding down the middle, slightly stocky man with a mustache and goatee got out with a brief case in his hand and walked up to the porch where Shawanda was sitting.

“You must be Shawanda,” he said.

She said nothing and stared straight ahead.

“I’m Doctor Crenshaw” he introduced himself as he sat on the railing which ran at a ninety degree angle to the swing. Reaching inside his brown plaid jacket with patches on the sleeves, he pulled out a pen and then proceeded to pull out a writing pad from his briefcase.

George and Juanita, who were watching the events through a window with blinds, both wondered what would happen next.

“Did you see that?” George whispered excitedly.

“See what?” Juanita questioned.

“She just told him she thinks he’s a real jerk and she can’t believe he has the nerve to come out here and think he can help.”

“When? She didn’t open her mouth” Juanita protested.

“No, but she said it nonetheless,” he affirmed. “You see, black people can talk

with their facial expressions and since she told me that well over a year ago, I've been studying it."

"Tell me, Shawanda," the doctor said, "how did you feel when you found out your new husband had died in the auto accident?"

Shawanda rolled her eyes, which was more expression than she had made in months, and got up and started walking toward the woods.

"Did you see that?" George asked Juanita, exited again.

"What?"

"She just told him that she thought he was a total nut case to ask such a stupid question," George explained.

"Are you sure, George?" Juanita queried.

"Yes, I'm sure. She's talking. She's talking, only not verbally. She's making progress," George said definitively.

The doctor, shocked at her reaction of merely ignoring him and walking away, started walking after her. She walked faster and so did he, to keep up. Soon she was jogging through the woods. An hour later the doctor came back, dragging himself wearily and carrying his coat over his arm. As he made his way back to the house, he was surprised to see Shawanda sitting on the swing on the porch. George met him at his car.

"How did she do that?" he asked George.

"Do what?" George questioned.

"I followed her into the woods. I lost her, and then she somehow got past me beat me back here," he replied.

George smiled. "She must have jogged all the way around the lake."

"Well, we didn't get much done today but I'm still charging you my \$600 home visit fee for the hour."

"No problem, Doc, just send me the bill," George replied. "Can you come back next week?"

"Uh . . . I don't know . . ." the doctor said hesitantly as he rubbed his chin. "I'm a psychiatrist, not a physical therapist. If she's going to run through the woods every time, you'd just be wasting your money, and besides, I don't want to chance getting poison ivy

or something worse out there.”

“But Doc,” George protested, “I tell you she made progress today! She was communicating more than she has in a long time.”

“Strange” doctor Crenshaw said. “I don’t remember her saying a word.”

“All communication is not verbal, Doc -- not all communication is in words,” George repeated.

Indian summer, a set of beautiful days with warmer weather were ahead, but there were changes coming that no one expected and no one could have predicted.

Chapter 23

Beep . . . beep . . . beep . . . The horn on the Mercedes sounded as Charles returned to the farm with his two wives, Rachel and Elizabeth, George, who was driving his car, followed by a rental S.U.V driven by Charles carrying the luggage and kids. It was late Saturday, almost midnight, but immediately a light flew on and almost everyone gathered on the front porch to welcome the additional members of this growing Christian community.

Even Shawanda came into the living room as introductions were made and managed a slight nod and a bit of a smile to the newly arriving wives and children. The new house was almost finished, with only painting and trim work to do on the inside. George and Charles had agreed that Charles and his family would occupy it temporarily until they could build more homes in the spring and Charles could then live in the lifestyle with which he was more accustomed.

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Charles' children were fascinated by indoor plumbing, flush toilets and lights at the flip of a switch. Having lived in the very rural areas of South Nyanza district in Kenya, these were items they had rarely seen.

“Let's all join hands and give thanks for the safe travel,” Charles suggested. As they formed a big circle, Judy took Shawanda's hand and placed her between herself and George as she gave her hand a little squeeze to say it was okay.

“Dear Lord, we thank you for all your goodness. We thank you for safe travel and for our families being together once again. We ask, oh Lord, that you would continue to lead us and guide us into your perfect will. And Lord, once again we lift Shawanda up to you Lord asking that you restore her to what she once was. Amen.”

The prayer was short but powerful. Charles OKinyi was not a man of many words but when he prayed everyone somehow felt his prayers, especially, reached the throne room of God.

Juanita got with Rachel and Elizabeth and had them join the other ladies in the kitchen over a cup of hot tea. “I see you have come a long way,” Rachel said as she nodded toward Judy, George's other wife.

“Well I guess you would say I have,” Juanita replied.

“It's not horrible like you thought it would be, is it?” Elizabeth asked.

“No” Juanita said before taking a long sip of tea and then continuing, “It's not. I guess when you really grow in love you learn to share good things.”

“And George is a good thing!” Judy added gleefully.

Shawanda sat quietly, not saying a word.

“And so is Bwana OKinyi,” Rachel added.

“Well, I think we can all agree on that,” Juanita added.

The men, who had sent the children to their respective places to bed down for the night, now joined the women in the kitchen.

“Hey Charles, ”Juanita chirped, “Since tomorrow’s forecast is to be unseasonably warm, why don’t we combine our worship and word time tomorrow with a picnic by the lake?”

“Sounds like a good idea to me,” he responded. “I’ve always said the church is not a building, nor is it a particular meeting place, nor is it an organization. No, the church is the family of God. And where that family meets the church is meeting.”

“Great idea” Aaron added. “We can take some fishing tackle. The kids can fry some chicken and make some potato salad and biscuits. We’ll have a great time.”

The ever enlarging Christian community now had nine adults and eleven children. Breakfast was composed of scrambled eggs and toast, the children scattered into the living room to eat on the floor of the big farm house while the adults sitting at the large dining room table which was lengthened even more by adding a card table at the end. After breakfast the ladies began cooking for the outdoor worship services. By 11:00 a.m. they all started the trek toward a grassy spot near the lake.

As they began to praise the Lord, the American ladies were almost bowled over by the enthusiasm and exuberant clapping of their Kenyan sisters and their children. The singing went on and on and gradually blended into slower and slower more worshipful songs with which the Americans were much more familiar and comfortable. Even so, as they did this they felt the presence of the Lord in a way that most had never felt before.

Even Shawanda was seen to be lip syncing with some songs, although no sound came forth from her lips. They came to a point where everyone became quiet and just enjoyed the beauty of the landscape and the presence of the Lord. The Charles began to speak forth a prophetic word.

“Thus saith the Lord,” he said, “I have you together at this place at this time. I have brought you to a deeper understanding of my will and my ways and you have grown much in the fruit of the Spirit. Continue to seek me with your whole hearts, for there will be further tests and more advancement to be made. Remember, I am yours and you are mine, and I will be with you always even unto the end.”

Charles ended and there was silence again.

“Wow! That was powerful!” George said. “But what does he mean, ‘further tests.’”

“When he is tried he shall receive the crown of life” Charles quoted from the book of James. “We all,” he continued “go through one trial after another. As we yield to the Spirit’s methods of working in us and through us we are brought from one measure of glory to another. Remember it is Jesus’ purpose to bring us into his own likeness. 1 John 3:2 says,

‘Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’

“As we grow in the likeness of Christ we grow in love. There was a time when Juanita wouldn’t even think of sharing her husband with another woman. She went through some trauma to get where she is now, but look at her. She loves her husband George and her sister wife Judy as well. Remember 2 Corinthians 3:17,18 says

‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and the Lord is that Spirit. But we all beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord.’

“Now we know that the glory of the Lord is like the glory of the sun from Matthew 17. Right?”

“Amen!” Aaron replied.

Charles continued to quote: “‘are changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ As we yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we grow in fruit of the Spirit, we grow in faith, we grow in power and we grow in anointing.”

“Man, that’s deep” Aaron stated.

“Yes, and no!” Charles replied. “It has always been God’s purpose to raise believers to be disciples who would follow in the Master’s footsteps. It has been the churchy organizations that have watered the gospel and down and changed it to follow man’s traditions rather than God’s word. We each must decide, ‘Are we going to follow truth or tradition.’ If we choose truth, we’ll stand out and be persecuted for it. But doesn’t the word say ‘All that will live godly shall suffer persecution’?”

“But if we suffer with him we shall also be glorified together. Isn’t that what it says in Romans 8:17? It’s not a popular message but you’ll find as you study the word that not all believers will receive the same rewards.

‘There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and each star differeth in glory one from another. So is the resurrection.’

“We need to each ask ourselves are we willing to do all that is necessary to go through all that’s necessary to have glory like the sun.”

Charles paused and allowed everyone to reflect on what he had said. Finally after a few moments he ended he sermon with a prayer. “Heavenly Father, help us to choose right rather than wrong, Love rather than hate, Truth rather than tradition, and you rather than the world. Amen.”

The anointing, the message and the prayer were so powerful that no one moved for a long time. Finally after a while, Aaron said “Hey, Cheryl and I will take the kids on a hike through the woods.”

“Fine” Judy said “but I told Tommy I’d take him fishing in the canoe,”

“No problem, we’ll take all the others” Aaron replied.

Juanita and I are going to walk over the hill over there and talk for a while,” George stated.

“Well, I’ll just show my ladies the property or as much of it as I can before lunch. What time are we meeting back here?” Charles added in.

“How’s 2 p.m.?” Aaron suggested.

“Sounds good to me” Charles replied.

Shawanda sat alone on a blanket looking at the lake as each headed out in a different direction. George looked back and said “Shawanda, you guard the food, okay?”

She didn’t respond, but he hadn’t expected her to. Judy put Tommy’s life jacket on and then her own. They grabbed the fishing tackle and then Tommy, her six year old, climbed in the boat while Judy pushed into the water and then jumped in.

When they were about 50 yards from shore Judy stopped paddling and began to prepare their rods. Suddenly Tommy was standing up. “I don’t want this thing on. It’s too hot!”

Judy stood to move toward him to make him put the life jacket back on when the canoe tipped. Splash. Tommy was in the water, and went under. Judy was in the water too as the canoe had turned over. Having her life jacket on she stayed afloat. “Help! Help! Tommy’s drowning. Help!”

In a flash Shawanda was on her feet running toward the water. As she reached it she dove in and swam out as far as she could. When she reached a point near where Judy was holding on to the canoe, she lowered her head, raised her bottom and feet up and dove under the water.

After what seemed like an eternity she came up but without the boy. She took a deep breath and dove again. It was hard to see under the murky water but finally she saw him. His feet were caught in some underbrush. She quickly freed him and brought him to the surface.

She headed toward the shoreline with him while Judy began a dog paddle style kick and followed them. Tommy was unconscious and not breathing.

Shawanda checked the mouth for obstructions and then put him on his stomach and pushed on his back to remove as much water from his lungs as possible. Then she turned him over and began mouth to mouth resuscitation.

“My God! My God!” Judy screamed as she finally reached the shore. “Is he alive?”

Shawanda ignored her and kept working on the boy. Finally Tommy coughed up some water and began breathing on his own. George and Juanita, who had heard the screams, were running toward them now. Judy scooped her oldest boy in her arms and said with tears in her eyes “Oh, thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”

George and Jaunita arrived. “What happened?” he demanded to know.

“She saved my boy!” Judy cried tearfully as she looked at Shawanda.

Shawanda looked at Judy. A slight smile crossed her lips. “Couldn’t let you brag again about how you could handle tragedy better than I,” Shawanda said coolly.

Everyone was shocked. Shawanda had spoken!

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Shawanda” Judy began. “I didn’t mean to . . .”

Shawanda stood up abruptly and walked away.

“George, go after her” Judy pleaded. “Tell her I didn’t mean to hurt her.”

George caught up with Shawanda, who of course was dripping wet and heading toward the house.

“That was a brave thing you did back there,” he said.

Shawanda continued to walk but said nothing.

“Well now that you’re talking won’t you talk to me?”

Shawanda kept walking, saying nothing. George stayed with her. “Okay, what is it?”

Shawanda reached the house and moved toward her room. George was behind. She opened her door part way and then turned to face him. “How dare you bring a shrink to ask a black woman a bunch of stupid questions! I thought I taught you better than that, George Meadows!” she yelled angrily and then slipped inside and slammed the door.

“Yes!” George yelled. He was ecstatic that finally Shawanda’s road to recovery had begun.

Still, the prophecy given by Charles had hinted at dangers or trials to come. If the prophecy was a true one, it would come to pass. George had never known Charles to be wrong about such things and he was to be proven to be right again.

Chapter 24

“Charles, may I speak to you alone?” Cheryl asked.

“Why sure” Charles replied. “Would you like to walk along the driveway or would the den be better?”

“The driveway is fine,” she replied.

As they began to walk, Cheryl began: “There were a lot of good things in the sermon you gave yesterday, but one thing I didn’t like,” she said.

“Oh, and what was that?” Charles asked.

“The part . . .” Cheryl started and then hesitated before starting again . . . “the part where you said Juanita had grown in love because she stayed with her husband even though he married another wife.”

“And why did that bother you?” Charles queried, even though he was beginning to figure it out.

“Its like you’re saying I haven’t grown because Aaron only has one wife, me.” she blurted out.

“Ha, ha” Charles chuckled.

“I don’t think it’s funny!” Cheryl pouted.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Charles said. “Its not a question of how many wives your husband has or doesn’t have. Its a matter of how much you love God and how much you love your fellow believers.” Charles began his answer. “If you love God enough, you’ll come to a place where you’ll say not my will but thine be done. You won’t want what you want. You’ll want what God wants.” Charles said.

“I see,” Cheryl replied.

“Have you come to that point?” Charles asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied.

“Good!” Charles said. “That’s an honest answer. If you had said ‘yes,’” Charles continued, “then I guarantee you’d be tested on it.” Charles paused, then smiled as he added “Of course God may be getting ready to give you a test anyway.”

“What!?” she queried with fear in her voice. “Do you know something?”

“I’m not saying anything,” Charles said. “It’s just that as you walk with God, you begin to learn His ways.”

Thump, thump, thump.

“Hey, what is that sound?” George asked his second wife Judy.

As Judy looked out the kitchen window she reported. “It’s Shawanda dribbling and shooting the basketball.”

“That’s great!” George said excitedly. “Honey, I’m going to go out and join her,” he said before kissing her on the lips.

“Can I come too?” Judy called after him as he began to bound toward the door.

“Sure” he called over his shoulder, “the more, the merrier.”

“Hey give me a shot” George called out to Shawanda.

Shawanda stopped dribbling and turned and gave him a two handed chest pass. The shot missed. Shawanda rolled her eyes and smirked but didn’t say anything.

“She’s still not her old self,” George thought. “Back in the old days she’d be making smart alec remarks about my lack of shooting skill.”

“Can I have a shot too?” Judy called out as Shawanda got the rebound. Shawanda turned and sent her a bounce pass. Judy tried dribbling but did it in typical girlish beginner fashion slapping at the ball with the palm of her hand before grabbing it and pushing it up toward the goal. The ball fell woefully short of its target and Shawanda must have felt sorry for her. She went over and showed her how to dribble with her fingertips.

Judy tried again and was better but still needed practice.

“Use your fingertips,” Shawanda said.

“Thanks,” Judy responded with a smile.

Shawanda held a thumbs up on her right hand to say its okay. She then turned and walked into the house.

George came over and put his arm around his wife. “Thanks, hon. You’re helping.” He bent down and kissed her on the forehead. “She’s progressing but still has a way to go.

“I want a fifty pound bag of sugar, five large boxes of salt, and three gallons of that maple syrup,” Aaron said to the female clerk at the whole discount grocery store.

The young lady was in her early twenties. “Why Suh, you must have an awful large family” she commented in a typical southern drawl.

Aaron smiled back before answering. “Let’s just say its an extended family,” he said.

“You and your miss got a lot of chilluns?” she asked.

“No, I don’t have any children. How about you?” He returned the question without admitting he was married.

“Why Suh, you don’t see any ring on my finger,” she said demurely as she held out her left hand to indicate she was single and available. “How could I have any little ones.”

“Don’t call me Sir,” Aaron offered. “I’m Aaron Cooper, you can call me Aaron” he said.

“Well, Aaron, my name is Beatrice but my friends call me Betty and I’m pleased to meet you.” she said as she extended her hand to shake his.

Aaron took her hand; it was soft and warm. He shook her hand and could tell by how she squeezed gently that she wanted to prolong the contact.

“Well, uh, Betty we have a sort of Christian gathering with a meal afterwards up on our farm. Would you like to come Sunday?” he asked.

“Well, uh . . . Aaron,” she said as she blushed and giggled a little. “I don’t know as it would be proper to show up at a gentleman’s house alone. Do you mind if I bring my friend, Jessie May?”

“No, not at all, not at all. We’d love to have you both. Come up Cold Creek Road, at the edge of our driveway you’ll see a mailbox numbered 177” Aaron said.

“Let me get your goods” she said as she blushed again and moved to help Aaron get the things he had ordered.

On his way back to the farm, Aaron tried to figure out the best way to tell his Christian family that he had invited some outsiders.

George and Charles were in the back of the big house shooting baskets when Aaron came back, so he joined in. Coming down from a jump shot he began, "I've been thinking, guys. A church should be growing in several ways."

"Yeah," George said as he got the ball, dribbled toward the basket for a lay-up. "We've been growing in our understanding with the help of Charles' deeper teachings and we have grown a lot in fruit, I think. Our faith has grown tremendously since we first decided to visit Africa, but I don't see us growing in size." he said.

George passed Charles the ball who did a hook shot that missed.

"So" Aaron continued "I've invited some guests for Sunday" he concluded.

"What!" George yelled. "You did what?" he said again, dropping the ball moving toward Aaron with an angry look in his face.

Charles held up his hand to George to indicate he shouldn't get too emotional.

"Why?" George questioned. "Why would you do that, when you know its when outsiders found out about our lifestyles that we had to move here in the first place."

"Yeah, well what are we going to do? Isolate ourselves forever? How can we be salt to the earth like that?" he asked.

"Jesus said," George came back "'Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' I don't think what you did was very wise."

"Well Jesus also said 'Let your light so shine that men may see you good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Nobody's seeing anything from us so how is that glorifying him" Aaron shot back.

"Brothers!" Charles said loudly to get their attention. "What's done is done. We now need to see how to handle this Sunday and then decide what our future course of action will be."

"Okay, okay," George said, seeing the wisdom in Charles' suggestion. "Let's go have some iced tea and sit down and discuss it."

"I would suggest" George began as he was seated "that we not reveal anything more than our first wives."

"How will that make Judy and Elizabeth feel" Aaron asked.

"We'll have to make sure they understand why. I don't think that will be a problem, do you Charles?" George replied, hoping to get their senior on his side.

“Well, I suppose that will work for now.” Charles said thoughtfully. “But we still need to talk about how we plan to evangelize in the future,” he said.

“Well maybe not every church is supposed to evangelize” George said.

“No, I disagree,” Charles responded. “I think we should. The question is how. Perhaps you and Aaron and Juanita and Cheryl should begin a meeting in a rented hall in town. That way you can reach out to people without them initially knowing what we have here. As you find those that are mature enough, you can gradually bring them into the truth of plural wives marriage and then when they have accepted the concept we can gradually reveal what we have here,” Charles concluded.

“Yeah, otherwise we’re likely to get run out of this place, like we did up north,” George threw in.

“In the mean time lets fast and pray that Sunday goes well.” Aaron suggested.

Sunday would indeed go well in one respect, but there would also be consequences that none anticipated.

Chapter 25

It was 11:10 a.m. on Sunday when Betty and her friend Jessie May rolled and settled up the driveway of the farm house in an old pickup truck. As they stopped and hopped out Aaron went out to meet them. Betty wore a blue A Line dress with a petticoat underneath that made it stand out. It also had a the neck line plunged enough to show a touch of cleavage.

Jessie May wore a tight shirt with a white blouse that a very ruffled collar that also plunged toward the neckline. A neckline that also plunged more than one might expect for a church service.

They each grabbed a pan covered with tin foil that they carried in with them.

“I just know you’ll love my homemade oatmeal cookies” Betty gushed as she handed them to Aaron.

“Hello, Mr. Aaron” Jessie May said as she extended her hand. “You’ll love my homemade sweet potato pie as well” she said in her delightfully innocent but very southern country accent.

As Aaron brought the young ladies in, they both gasped audibly and involuntarily. Then turning to Aaron Betty exclaimed “Why Aaron you didn’t tell us this was a black church.”

Aaron was taken aback; he hadn’t thought of the group as a black church or a white church. They were all his brothers and sisters in Christ. But as he looked around the house, he realized that with Charles, Rachel, Elizabeth and their nine children and Shawanda there were thirteen blacks in the room. Aaron, Cheryl, George, Juanita, Judy and her two boys made up only seven whites. Even with the two visiting females the whites were outnumbered.

Shawanda raised one eyebrow and pulled her head back a few inches as if to say “I know she didn’t say that!”

Jessie May must have realized Aaron’s shock at the statement and tried to soften it by adding “Well, I guess we need to reach out to the colored folks and tell them about Jesus too!”

Shawanda’s mouth fell open as she turned her head to the side and rolled her eyes. George saw her and was hoping that this was one time when she would remain quiet. He wanted her to be talkative again, but this was not the time.

Charles spoke up. “We thank God for people who will share the gospel to all people no matter what their color or background is,” he said. “Pastor Cooper, would it be

all right for Mr. and Mrs. Meadows to give us in some choruses before you give the sermon today?"

It was a disguised message and cleverly worded. Charles had indicated he would take a back seat and let the whites in the group lead, which is what the visitors would expect. It gave the appearance that the whites were spiritually superior, which is what most whites assumed anyway.

It takes a man of great humility to do what Charles just did, George thought. He thought he had respected Charles highly already but then and there it took another step up.

Cheryl moved forward toward the visitors. "Aaron aren't you going to introduce us to your new friends?"

"Uh . . . well . . . yeah," Aaron stammered. "This is Beatrice, her friends call her Betty," he started.

"Oh really," Cheryl said smiling and exaggerating her friendliness to make up for what she was feeling inside.

"And this is her friend Jessie May" he concluded.

"Ah yes, well I'm his wife Cheryl" she said "I guess he forgot to mention that" she said sweetly.

"Oh Aaron, you didn't tell us you were married." Betty said as she blushed. "Well, I am charmed to meet you Mrs. uh Cooper and may I say you're quite attractive for a middle aged lady."

Cheryl's eyes blazed. She wasn't thirty two yet; how dare this little cotton seed post teenager call her middle aged, she thought. Still Cheryl bit her lip and withheld any further comment. Instead she took the pies and cookies into the kitchen where she could seethe in anger by herself for a couple of minutes.

Although Charles OKinyi's wives were still enthusiastic in their hand clapping and praise, most of the others were a little more reserved than usual. Still it was probably one of the most enthusiastic praise and worship services the visitors had ever been in.

Aaron preached a message on love from 1 Corinthians 13 and afterward they all went into the dining room for the fellowship meal. Once again Charles stepped aside from his usual place at the end of the table and allowed Pastor Cooper (as he was being called this day) to have the more honored position.

"Why Mr. Meadows I say your sure are generous Suh. I don't know any of the farmers down here that would let the colored help sit at the same dinner table as the

Master of the Manor” Betty said. “No offense” Betty went on talking to the Charles and the other blacks sitting at the table. “I know you all have had a hard time and I believe the colored section in heaven will be almost as nice as that part reserved for white folks” she said sincerely, believing she was showing how generous and liberal she was.

Juanita couldn’t stand it any longer. “What makes you think we’ll be separated in heaven?” she demanded to know.

“Why ma’am, don’t you read your Bible?” Betty asked incredulously. “Everybody knows God separated the races at the tower of Babel and he made people of color to serve the white folks. And the New Testament says things down here are a reflection of heaven. So it’d have to be that way in heaven,” she said as if explaining a simple math problem to a child.

“Wait . . .” George began before being interrupted by Charles.

“We thank the Lord that he allows us to miss hell and make heaven. If it had not been for Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection, none of us could qualify to make it in,” he said.

“Oh, excuse me Pastor Cooper, I see you’re about to bless the table so we can begin.”

Every one held back their emotions and understanding of God’s word to avoid offending the first time guests. As they began eating the desserts Betty asked Aaron “Pastor Cooper, how do you like my oatmeal cookies?”

“They’re very good” he answered.

“How about my sweet potato pie?” Jessie May asked.

“It’s very good as well” he answered.

“Well, I want to thank you all for inviting us” Betty said as she rose from her seat. She moved around behind Aaron’s seat and gave him a short gentle massage of his neck and shoulders as she continued talking. “It was so sweet of .. Pastor Cooper to invite us. Uh will you be coming into the store this week Pastor?” she asked.

“Well . . . uh I’m not sure.”

“No!” Cheryl jumped in “If we need anything from the store, it’ll be my turn to come in” she said smiling but not showing her teeth. She wanted to get the point across that she did not appreciate their obvious flirtations with her husband.

After the visiting two had left the grounds, Cheryl lit into Aaron. “Why did you invite those two dingbats?” She said with her hands on her hips.

“Listen, I didn’t know what kind of doctrine they held” Aaron said apologetically.

“You owe Charles, and all the rest of our “colored” brethren an apology, don’t you think?” she said.

“Man,” George said speaking to Charles, “I don’t know how you could do it. I would have blown my top!”

“Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound” Charles said, quoting from Romans chapter six. “God gave me grace” he concluded simply.

“How is it you have a verse for every occasion?” George asked incredulously.

Charles smiled. “I try to study to show myself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” he said, quoting Second Timothy 2:15. “However,” he went on, “even when the Spirit is willing to bring all things to remembrance, we must avoid pride, for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble,” he concluded.

Later Cheryl approached Charles. “Did you pray in those two dimwits just to irritate me” she asked.

“No,” Charles replied, “but can you love them although they’re arrogant racists who have their eyes on your husband?” he asked.

“Well, to be honest, I don’t know. That would be a real challenge” she admitted.

What they wanted for the young ladies and what the young ladies wanted were vastly different. That difference would fuel the fire to a conflict far beyond anyone’s expectations.

Chapter 26

“Man I am sorry” Aaron said to Charles. “I know they were very offensive.”

“Yeah,” George began to add as he entered the living room with a cup of coffee in his hand. “You were so gracious considering their obnoxious racial bigotry. How do you do it?”

“Love is not puffed up,” he responded quietly. “Love does not seek her own.”

As all of the adults in the compound made their way into the living room and took seats, Charles continued to speak.

“They are babes in the Lord,” he explained. “When a child that’s just learning to speak says something wrong or uses incorrect syntax, do you chastise him or her or do you ignore it and continue to encourage them?”

It was a rhetorical question so no one answered aloud, but each reflected on his words.

Rachel, Charles’ first wife, moved behind his chair and began massaging his shoulders, while Elizabeth, his second wife, sat by his feet but reached up and held his hand.

Aaron is on the right track

“We shouldn’t stay cloistered to ourselves. We need to go out and evangelize the world.”

“But what about the problem we’ll face when people find out?” Juanita started crying before she left the end of the sentence hanging in the air.

“She’s got a point,” Charles said slowly as his eyes stared straight ahead but seeing nothing.

The entire group could tell Charles was in what was his prayer mode. A time when he silently talked to God. They waited, wondering what God would be showing him.

Finally he spoke. “I believe that each family should start a new group.”

“What?” Aaron and George yelled incredulously and almost simultaneously.

“We are a part of the body of Christ,” Charles began to explain. “The body grows through multiplication of cells through cell division. We have three families here that are

anointed and knowledgeable of God's word. Sure we will continue to fellowship together and build each other up, but we should also reach out to the lost in the community and the babes in Christ that aren't growing."

"O, I see" George chimed in. "So on Sunday for example we meet together but on different nights we separate and go start Bible studies or fellowship groups in other areas of the town or on other farms."

"Right!" Charles confirmed.

"I'll take one of my wives and we'll go to the black community," he went on. "George, you get with the wealthier land owners and business people and Aaron, you work with the poorer whites around.

"Wait a minute!" Aaron protested vigorously. "Isn't that catering to exactly the same old prejudices and bigotries and separations that have divided our society? Shouldn't we be trying to remedy that?"

"Yes, we should be trying to remedy that and we will, but here's how. We have to meet people where they are. We can't immediately force them to be where we think they should be."

Aaron rocked back in his chair with his arms folded as he raised one eyebrow, listening to see how Charles would smooth this over.

"We meet them where they are," Charles repeated. "We establish our spiritual positions as leaders. Then as we see various ones progressing spiritually we can preach love and understanding of those that are different. As we disciple them we can then give them the opportunity to prove what they say by having them meet and fellowship with people who are different than they are."

"What about the plural wives issue?" Judy questioned. "When do we tell them about that?"

"Well dear," George interjected, looking at his second wife and hugging her around the shoulders, "I don't think that will come for a while."

"You're right," Charles agreed. "First they need to reach certain levels of maturity and then we will lead them into a Bible study where they can discover that truth for themselves. When they discover it and believe it then we can acknowledge that we agree with them and only then reveal how we live."

Everyone began to nod, seeing the wisdom in Charles' words.

Still there was one thing they hadn't counted on and that would bring more trouble than anyone could have imagined.

Chapter 27

Over the next several months the plan was carried out. George and Juanita joined the local chamber of Commerce and met and got to know other businessmen and farmers in the area. Aaron and Cheryl started a fellowship group that met in a vacant store front in the downtown section of town and soon had a dozen or so young families meeting on Thursday nights for food, fun, fellowship and Bible study.

Charles and Rachel began to visit a small predominantly black Pentecostal church on the east side of the town on Wednesdays. It was not long before he was asked to share his testimony which went over so well that he was asked to teach or preach quite frequently. Still, on Sundays the groups met as they had been.

As they sat down for the Sunday meal Aaron began to question. “We’re all doing well. We’ve made some contacts. I’ve seen some get saved and a few receive the Holy Spirit, but when do we go to the next level.?”

“What do you mean?” George asked.

“Well, when do we start calling it church? When do we get these people together? I mean . . . the blacks, the whites, the rich and the poor?”

There was silence for a moment as everyone thought. Gradually, heads began to turn toward Charles as they all expected he would have the answer.

“First . . .” he began slowly and quietly, “we must teach more about love. Love for God and how that is expressed through our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must bring that down to the practical plane and give examples of it. Then as we detect those that are truly willing to step up to a new stage in their Christian walk, we’ll each encourage the one in our circles to meet with the others of a different circle. At first maybe we should just propose a one time meeting. If it works well, we can go on from there,” he concluded.

“Sounds great!” George said.

“Yes, it does sound like a good plan,” Aaron agreed, “let’s teach about love for the next few weeks and then this special coming together meeting should be easy.”

As Aaron and Cheryl taught about love for one’s fellow man the following week, Betty and Jessie May were quite enthusiastic about the teaching and the concept of practical display of love.

“How can we practically show love?” Betty asked.

“You can feed the hungry . . .” Cheryl said.

“Clothe the naked,” Aaron added. “Help out where help is needed.”

“Visit those in prison,” Cheryl added again.

“Oh wonderful!” Betty said as she clapped her hands together with glee. “I know just what I’m going to do first.”

“What?” Aaron questioned.

“No,” she said with a sly smile as she turned her head and looked at him out of the corners of her eye. “I’m not going to tell you. It’s a secret.”

“Okay. No problem,” Aaron responded.

He had no idea that the secret, when executed, would boomerang to reign terror down on the farm.

Chapter 28

It was a beautiful warm early June Sunday afternoon. The men sat on the porch of the old country farm house on the swing and in a rocker watching the kids play out in front of the house. As they enjoyed the gentle breeze and chatted amongst themselves, the children threw a rubber ball back and forth to each other. Judy's two boys and Charles OKinyi's nine children by his two wives played and had fun together without any regard to skin color. Since they were home schooling all the children they hadn't been contaminated by peer pressures or adult pressures to be racist.

A familiar blue pick up drove up to the edge of the driveway and stopped. Out jumped Betty Lou and Jessie May. "Come here little girl" Betty Lou called to one of Charles' daughters. "I've got some presents for you" she said. "What's your name?"

"My name is Deborah" came the eight year old's response.

"And what's your mama's name?" Betty continued her inquiry.

"She's mama Paul" came the reply. The child had naturally referred to her mother in the same way Kenyan's often do, which is by mama plus the name of the oldest child.

Betty drew back a little and frowned at what seemed to be a strange name for a woman. Jessie May then followed up.

"And what's your daddy's name?"

"Bwana OKinyi is my dad, ma'am" the little girl said as she pointed to her father who was now standing on the porch.

Although Charles, George and Aaron could all see that there was some conversation going on they were too far away to hear what was being said.

"Is this your brother?" Betty Lou asked as an eleven year old boy moved close.

"He is my half-brother," came the reply from Deborah.

"Oh and what is your name" Betty Lou asked as she turned toward the boy, who was now standing next to his half sister.

"I am John, ma'am" he said. "I am the son of his second wife Elizabeth" he stated bluntly, thinking nothing of it.

Betty Lou and Jessie May recoiled and their eyes widened before asking the next

question.

“Your dad has two wives?”

Charles had started toward the guests but George indicated he should wait and let he and Aaron handle the situation and find out what they were saying to the children.

“Yes, maam!” came the next reply from the youngster.

Betty Lou and Jessie May looked in horror at each other, not believing their ears. Judy Chandler’s kids now had also approached and although they were younger, the pairs of women couldn’t resist.

“And does your daddy have two wives too?”

“Uh huh” the oldest boy said as he nodded in the affirmative.

Aaron and George reached them just as they had climbed back into their truck.

“Howdy ladies” Aaron called out cheerfully.

“Don’t howdy us!” Betty snarled. “We came out here to show the love of God to these poor colored folks by bringing them some clothes only to find out you’ve got some weird communal cult thing going on!”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!” Jessie May added.

“Wait till the town folks hear about this!”

They put the truck in reverse and spun its tires trying to back out in a hurry. In a moment they were gone in a cloud of dust. Aaron and George both threw their hands up in the air and then let them fall back down to their sides, as their heads dropped low.

Charles was still standing on the porch but he could tell that the news would not be good.

Chapter 29

“The truth!” Judy spat out angrily. “We always teach the children to tell truth!” Now look, its going to happen all over again!”

The rest of the group sat motionless, stony faced, realizing that she was right.

“Well, what are we going to do now?” Juanita questioned.

“It was your husband that convinced us all to move to Kentucky. We’d have our own secret place on the farm, he said. No one would know what our life styles were, he said.” Cheryl spat back at Juanita angrily.

“Sisters, please calm down,” Charles OKinyi interjected.

“Calm down! Calm down!” Judy screamed. “You are supposed to be Mr. answer man!” she charged. “You’re the one who said we need to go out and evangelize! Reach the lost, you said. Help babes in Christ to mature, you said. Now where has all that gotten us?” she growled. “I’ll tell you where!” she went on.

“Honey, this isn’t doing any good,” George said, trying to stop her tirade.

“No, no” Charles said as he waved his hand at George indicating he should let her vent her emotions.

Rachel and Elizabeth, who knelt on either side of the chair in which Charles OKinyi was sitting, tensed but held their peace. Both wanted to speak up to defend their husband’s actions but at the same time knew he would not be pleased, so they remained silent.

“Maybe . . .” Charles began slowly “Maybe we were a little . . .”

Crash! The window was broken as a hurled rock came flying through it.

“Jesus, help!” one of the women shouted as shreds of glass hit the floor and shattered into pieces.

They had heard the hooves of horses approaching the house but had all assumed it was Shawanda returning from an early evening horseback ride. George charged to the door, closely followed by Aaron and Charles.

“What?” he gasped, as he couldn’t believe his eyes. There was Shawanda, a rope around her ankles, lying bruised and bloody about twenty feet behind the horse, who was now being ridden by a large, menacing looking stranger. The stranger untied the rope from the horn of the saddle and threw it onto the porch.

“Let this be a warning to you!” he yelled. “We don’t like nigger loving bigamists around here!”

George flew into a rage. He hopped up on to the porch railing and from there he jumped onto the rider, taking him off the horse. The two bodies hit the ground with a thud. George wasted no time; he was on top of the villainous thug pounding away at his face with both fists.

Aaron tried to pull him off, but George, charged with adrenaline, threw him off with one arm and the began choking the rider.

“Stop! Please! George, stop!” some of the women yelled from the porch.

George was now choking the man with both hands. Charles and Aaron both pulled at George until they were finally able to break his grip and pull him away. The stranger now lay on his back on the ground, bleeding and coughing and gagging as he rubbed his throat. The ladies ran to Shawanda, who lay on the ground moaning.

George’s eyes were still ablaze while each of his arms were being held on to by Aaron on one side and Charles on the other. The intruder struggled to his feet and bent over to grab his hat off the ground. His left eye was beginning to swell and blood poured from his nose.

“Dont you ever come back on my property! Or bother me and mine again or I’ll kill you!” George yelled.

As the man stumbled and staggered from the driveway and out the front gate the women took Shawanda inside to nurse her wounds.

“This ain’t over!” the man yelled back as he reached the end of the driveway. “It ain’t over yet!”

Chapter 30

All five of the ladies, Juanita, Judy, Cheryl, Rachel and Elizabeth carefully carried Shawanda to her bedroom in the farm house where they cut off her clothes , cleaned all the wounds and put ice on the parts that were swelling. The left side of her arm was swollen and there was a cut on her lip and the area around her eyes were turning black and blue. In addition they wrapped the leg which was scraped up pretty badly along with bruises and scrapes on both arms.

“Maybe we should take her to the hospital” Judy suggested.

“No!” Shawanda groaned through cracked lips.

Meanwhile Charles and Aaron sat in stunned silence, while George paced back and forth across the room, still seething with anger. After a long while George sat down on the big easy chair and the wives began to filter back into the room.

“How is she?” George inquired.

“She’s trying to sleep” Juanita said.

“What are we going to do now?” Judy asked.

“You’re right back in the same position you were in before you came here, but only now we’re in it with you!” Cheryl spat out angrily.

Aaron moved over to his wife and put his arm around her shoulders. Its okay babe, God will make a way,” he said soothingly as he brushed away a tear from her cheek with his other hand.

Charles sat quietly rocking back and forth in an old rocking chair looking down at the floor.

“Well Charles . . .” Aaron began to say before being interrupted by the sound of Shawanda limping down the hallway toward the living room where they all were.

Wearing pajamas, she slowly made her way into the room. George then leapt to his feet swept her up in his arms and sat back down with her laying in his lap. He held onto her and cradled her as one would a small child who had been hurt. Shawanda turned her head slightly to see Juanita and Judy who were seated on a couch across from them. They both smiled and nodded indicating that it was okay. They didn’t mind what their husband was doing.

Shawanda looked at George. “Why? she moaned her one word question.

“Why?!” Aaron began an answer from across the room. “Because Satan is a liar and a murderer!” he spat out.

“Why? Because the thief comes not but for to steal, kill and destroy!” he said with disgust.

“Why? Because we live in a racist, bigoted, narrow minded country where people claim to be Christians but don’t study their Bibles or make any attempt to live out the word,” he concluded.

“And,” Charles spoke up, “there has been an ongoing conspiracy amongst the Prince level fallen angels in the spiritual dimension to bring the western world under the domination of the spirits of Rome.”

“What?” was the collective response. Some in the room verbalized it. Others only said it with a questioning look on their faces. But now all eyes were on Charles as they waited to hear what deeper truths he was about to reveal.

“In Daniel chapter 2” he began, “we read of a dream that the king had of an image which had a golden head a breast of silver thighs of brass and legs of iron and toes of iron mixed with clay.”

“Yes,” Aaron said, knowing the story well. “Go on.”

“Daniel said there were four kingdoms. The first was Babylon. Babylon was followed by the Medes and the Persians. they were followed by Greece and Greece was followed by Rome. Rome was a conquering world power. It officially practiced monogamy and it had a worship of goddesses. Diana was one, who was called Istar, Venus, Astarte and other names by other cultures. A goddess of sex and lust.”

Charles paused as he looked around the room to see if everyone was absorbing what he was saying.

“In Daniel chapter seven we have another dream and the interpretation given by Daniel is that these four beasts represent four kingdoms. There was a lion with eagles wings, a bear, a leopard and a beast with iron teeth.”

All eyes were steadfast on Charles as he paused again. Even Shawanda, who still lay across George’s lap, had turned her head slightly to catch each word.

“Then if we look at the beast in Revelation Chapter thirteen” he continued “we see these four creatures combined in one beast. The beast has seven heads and ten horns and the beast is like unto a leopard and his feet were as a bear and his mouth as a lion and the dragon gave him his power and authority..

“Now the dragon is obviously Satan” Aaron interjected “we can see that from

Revelation 12:9.”

“Right!” Charles confirmed. “And the lion in sequence in Daniel lines up with Babylon, the bear lines up with the Medes and Persians, the leopard lines up with the Greek empire, and the beast with iron teeth lines up with Rome. So the nature of this final beast combines the attributes and traits of the previous four world powers.”

“So Babylon, which was a great city, would represent industrial, well developed nations” George proposed.

“Yes!” Charles confirmed again. “And it had a false religious system where they were required to worship an image when they played the music. In Revelation 13: we see there is an image made that can both move and speak and those that don’t worship the image and receive its mark in their right hand or forehead shall be killed.

Back then images could not move or speak. Today we have images moving and speaking on television and computer screens.”

“Interesting,” Juanita commented with a look of revelation on her face.

“There is a type of false religion being preached through these images. The religion of humanitarianism. the movies and the soap operas, the dramas, the comedies and the talk shows preach that homosexuality is okay, it is merely an alternative life style. That murdering an unborn baby is a woman’s right to choose. That fornication is not immoral. That western society and values are the only right ones. That women are smarter than men and should be in control. That government knows better than parents. And that romance is the best form of love. In fact there is a reason why the spirits behind all this push romance as being best.”

“Well go on then . . . tell us,” Cheryl encouraged.

“Perhaps in the morning,” Charles said after looking around the room. “Maybe we’d better all get some sleep tonight. We’ll talk more in the morning.”

Chapter 31

After breakfast the ladies hurried the children out behind the big house to play, so they could join the men in the living room, all being curious of the concepts Charles had on romance.

This time George sat on the couch between his two wives Juanita and Judy. Charles again sat in the rocking chair and was about to begin when Shawanda made her way to the room limping slowly. the swelling in her face had gone down but the bruises left dark spots around her eyes.

Juanita jumped up and helped her to her own seat next to George and then moved to another chair on the other side of the room. George winked at his first wife Juanita and put his arm around Shawanda's shoulders. She then leaned against his strong chest, while looking at Charles and waiting for him to begin.

"Romance." Charles began "The word comes from a French word that comes from a Latin word which means of Rome. That by itself should make us suspicious. The Romans were outwardly monogamous and when Rome took over the church and it became the Roman Catholic Church, or iron mixed with clay, it too became monogamous over a period of time. The Roman Catholic Church departed from Hebrew traditions and laws. In fact it proclaimed that its traditions were equal to Scripture.

At the counsel of Trent, held between 1535 and 1565, the Roman Catholic Church banned plural wives in a marriage. Most Christians don't know that. They think Jesus or Paul banned it. Of course as we know, they never did." He paused, took a breath, and looked around before continuing.

"Romantic love requires exclusiveness. The man is supposed to pledge undying love for only one woman whom he places on a figurative pedestal. He is to bow down on one knee (a sign of worship) and request her hand in marriage. This is not what the Bible teaches. Some would be shocked to hear that. But it is what is taught, no it is more than taught. It is the indoctrination and brainwashing that takes place everyday to people in Western countries; and it is spreading to more and more countries as the money of the West and influence that goes with money goes to other nations and cultures.

Since there are usually more Christian women than men, the romantic ideal of "monogamy only" requires some women cannot have a husband. Therefore Romantic love is not of God and works against God's agape love!"

"Whew! Aaron said. "That's something you can't just tell anybody. Most women would be ready to stone you, if you took away the possibility of romantic love."

"Yes, Charles responded, "but there's something much better than romantic love. Its God's agape love. Its based on obedience to God and loving now with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength. With God's love, I can love several women. With God's love women won't be jealous of each other and they are willing to share a godly man. With

God's love no woman who wants a husband has to be without one.

Charles paused.

George bent his head down and whispered into Shawanda's ear. "I love you with God's agape love. Will you marry me?"

Shawanda raised up a little, kissed him on the cheek, and whispered into his ear. "Yes."

Chapter 32

Judy, who was unaware of what had happened between George and Shawanda, used Charles' pause to ask a question. "What about the other nations you mentioned? How do they play into all this?"

"I'll set the board up and get the markers" Aaron offered as he moved to the closet where they kept the easel, board and markers for special teaching sessions Charles would do.

Charles stood after the board was set up and drew up a chart.

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Babylon = | False Religion | Lion with Eagle | Satan imitates Church: Spiritual |
| Medea-Persia = | Tolerance & Love of Money | Bear | Huge Size |
| Greeks = | Government | Leopard | Speed cannot change his spots |
| Rome = | Military Power & worship of goddess | Beast with Iron Teeth | Military Power to Devour |

"So we can see" Charles went on, often writing on the board. "Today we have a false religious system that instituted the romantic worship the woman system. That religion is given license to function by a government system. Without the government's approval the religious system cannot escape taxes and therefore the government is in bed with this whore of a system and backs it in certain ways. This includes passing laws requiring monogamy only and the registration of marriage with the state.

The governmental systems are tolerant of every kind of sin and perversion such as sodomy and the murder of unborn children, fornication and other things and it is the major military power in the world and allied with other European countries can bully any country in the world.

As we see this is the spiritual realm as an evil canopy of interwoven Prince level spirits hovering over the western world and rapidly spreading to the entire world. these

spirits of domination goddess worship, lust, Jezebel, murder and others influence the minds of men and women in the world and initiate hostility toward anyone that is bold enough to stand up against them.”

Charles paused. All eyes were wide with revelation and new understanding of the magnitude of what they faced.

“Wow! That’s something, Charles. But what are we to do now?” Cheryl asked.

“First Shawanda and I must make our vows to each other for she has finally agreed to marry me!” He announced with a broad grin. At that everyone spontaneously broke into applause.

As the two stood together looking into each other’s eyes and holding hands, George spoke first. “I take you as my covenant wife. I will provide for you and protect you. I will love you like Christ loved the Church. I will ever strive to be the husband that you deserve and do all that is in line with the word of God.”

Shawanda spoke next. “I will submit to you as my husband and reverence you always as the Scriptures command.”

The answer to George’s prayers and dreams had finally come true. That night the marriage would be tenderly consummated.

Chapter 33

The sound of the rumbling of a line of pickup trucks rumbling down the road and honking their horns.

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Everyone ran to the front porch to see what was going on. What they saw was a series of vehicles mostly pickup trucks rumbling past their front gate down the gravel and dirt road each honking his horn.

The children came running around the house to see what the commotion was.

“Get back!” Judy screamed as she ran to shoo them back behind the house, not knowing what the occupants of the dozen or so vehicles might do. Once they had all passed the farm. The honking stopped.

“What are we going to do?” Judy questioned frantically as she looked to George and then to Charles.

“I . . . I . . . I . . .” George stuttered, looking for what he could say.

“We need to fast and pray” Charles said quietly.

“Fast and pray?” Aaron questioned. “We don’t know what this group of crazy people might do, and you want us to just fast and pray?”

“What would you suggest?” George asked, looking directly at Aaron with a slight edge in his voice.

“Well, call the sheriff!” Aaron responded, realizing he didn’t have a good answer either.

“The sheriff?” George repeated incredulously. “The sheriff or his deputies may be among them for all we know.” He paused and then went on. “Besides, what are you going to tell him? ‘Hello sheriff would you come out right away, some people drove by our farm honking their horns. Wh . . what? No, we didn’t see any license numbers but they made us nervous so would you go and arrest them please?’”

“George!” Juanita called his name as she grabbed her husband’s arm, indicating that maybe he had said enough.

“I’m sorry, Aaron,” George said as he dropped his head and threw his other hand up in the air for a moment before letting it fall back down to his side. “I guess . . . I guess we’re all upset and frustrated. Let’s do as Charles’ suggests and spend the rest of the day in fasting and prayer.”

The group went back inside and began to pray in earnest. They prayed for wisdom. they prayed for direction. They prayed for their enemies. They prayed in the Spirit and they prayed with the understanding. Then they listened but no one seemed to be hearing God say anything.

As night began to fall they could hear the rumble of thunder in the distance. They assumed there would be a rainstorm that night, and perhaps would all sleep well, but this evening was not over yet and there was still a surprise to come.

Chapter 34

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! There were the horns again, only this time they grew louder. As the men sprang to the front porch with the women and children standing behind them, they watched as the dozen or so vehicles pulled into their drive and then spread out in the front yard all shining their headlights on the house.

The George, Aaron, and Charles stepped out off the porch and moved toward the lights.

“Take all the women and kids through the tunnels to the other houses” Charles whispered to Juanita.

BOOM! A gun went off into the air. Apparently some of the men were carrying shot guns. The three stopped their forward motion. George turned to yell to the woman and children, “Get back inside!”

As George turned back, a net was thrown over his head and he was dragged to the ground. Aaron was grabbed by two men at the same time and the butt of a shotgun was thrust into Charles’ stomach.

“Ugh!” Charles groaned as he fell to his knees and bent over. As he looked up another hard right cross hit him on his jaw, knocking him down to the ground. While Aaron and George were being held down most of the punishment was poured out on Charles. Other men came into kick and stomp on the fallen figure.

“No!” George yelled as he struggled to free himself to no avail. The men, who were clothed in the white sheets and hoods of the Ku Klux Klan, ignored George and continued to beat Charles. It was as if they knew that there would be no chance that they’d be punished in that county for beating a black man.

POW! a rifle shot sound pierced the air and was followed by the tinkling of breaking glass and one car light disappeared.

POW! POW! POW!

Three more shots and three more lights were out. All action stopped as a lone figure, a female, stood feet spread apart with her left leg forward and a rifle in her hand. “Hit him again and I’ll put the next bullet through your head!” Shawanda screamed.

“Thank God for Shawanda,” George thought. “And thank God she found my uncle’s old rifle.”

It began to rain lightly as thunder in the distance grew louder. Dark clouds blocked out any stars or light from the moon and for a moment time stood still as everyone wondered what to do next.

“Aw, she ain’t got the nerve to shoot a white man here!” The leader shouted out

as he kicked Charles again, just as he had pulled himself up to his knees.

Shawanda took aim at the speaker's head and placed the crosshairs right between the two eye holes in his hood.

Just then Charles climbed to his feet between the Klansman and Shawanda.

"No!" he shouted to Shawanda. "Don't do it!"

The Klansman grabbed Charles and used him as a shield. "Come on nigga!" he challenged her. "See if you can hit me without killing your pappy here!"

The flashes of lightning were coming from the west, the direction from which the storm was approaching.

Distracted by what was in front of her, Shawanda didn't hear a Klansman approach from the side of the porch. In one giant leap he tackled her and pinned her to the floor of the porch. The chief Klansman was now handed a machete. He forced Charles to his knees. "Beg, boy! Beg for your life!" he demanded.

"Heavenly Father" Charles prayed "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Angered by the prayer, the Klansman drew his arm back with machete in hand intending to decapitate Charles with a single swipe of the razor sharp blade.

CRACK!

A lightning bolt came out of the clouds, striking the machete and sending a great electrical charge through the Klansman's body. He fell backwards to the ground, writhing with the pain of the burns!

The men holding Aaron and George let go, being aghast at what had just happened.

CRACK! CRACK!

More lightning bolts came, hitting the ground near the feet of various Klansmen. The men ran to their cars.

"Take this trash with you!" George called out, referring to the burnt and dying man on the ground.

Two men came back, slung their partner in crime into the back of a pickup truck and then jumped in and sped off.

George and Aaron carefully carried Charles inside and tended to his wounds.

Then they prayed. “Dear God, we thank you for the miracle of deliverance from the hands of our enemies that you did this evening. Still, Lord, we ask you for wisdom and guidance for the coming days.”

“I’ve got it!” George said. “I know what we are to do!”

Chapter 35

“What is it, George?” his wife Juanita asked.

“It’s time to shake the dust off our feet and move on.”

“What!?” several responded simultaneously.

“Where?” Judy asked.

“Africa!” he responded. “The continent of Africa. the nation of Kenya, the district called South Nyanza. We’re moving to Charles’ place there.”

“George!” Juanita almost screamed with tears in here eyes. “George are you sure? They lack so much. No running water, no electricity, no malls. Why Africa?” she questioned.

“Plural wives is an accepted practice there,” he began. “and besides with the resources that we have we can have running water, indoor toilets and have our own generator for electrical power.”

“George, honey that may be fine for Charles and his wives and their children but how would the people accept us?” Judy asked.

“It’ll be no more dangerous for us there than it is for them here,” he replied.

“Committing to being a disciple means we must forsake all to follow Jesus” Aaron said reflectively.

“How will God use us there?” Cheryl asked.

“God can use us anywhere he wants to” George replied. “As Joshua said in Joshua 24:15, ‘as for me and my house (including all three of my wives) we will serve the Lord.’”

“I believe George is right,” Charles spoke up -- wincing as he talked through a split lip. “I believe it is Africa where our journey is to end. The wilderness areas of the world are not affected by the canopy of evil prince level spirits in the same degree that the industrialized world is. It will be a place of refuge for us and yet is will be a base of operations from which we will go out to minister to other countries in Africa and back to the USA at times as well. And only the Lord knows where else.”

“Thank you, Lord,” Shawanda began to sing.

“Thank you, Lord,” the others began to join in.

“Thank you, Lord, I just want to thank you Lord.”

The End