

The Greenhouse Effect  
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#### Back Cover Synopsis

In the not too distant future, all the protestant denominations have united under the World Wide Worship Convention (W3C), formerly known as the Baptist Mafia. Sam, a devout Christian, accidentally discovers one of the deep dark secrets of his Pastor and the vast power and resources of the W3C are unleashed upon him, his family and his friends. God steps in to comfort Sam, but allows the unthinkable, and almost unbearable, to be inflicted upon him. Sam is destined to experience the Greenhouse Effect! When he does, he discovers his own secret. It will turn science and religion upside down and shake the very core of our civilization. God is in control, and He will use Sam to demonstrate that fact.

#### Chapter 1

What makes a Man? The world knows a man by what he does for a living, what he makes with his hands, or by what he writes in a book. A wife knows a man by his fears and aspirations. God knows a man by his failures and intentions. But, the measure of a man lies between what he chooses to tolerate, and what causes him to ..... REBEL.

The Bible tells us to serve our fellow man, to love one another, and to forgive each other. Sam was thinking of these commandments as he was driving home from a brutal day at work. They reminded him that he had to stop by the church and do his tutoring that night. Sam had grown to dread this chore as much as he dreaded his job at the bank. He had volunteered to be a tutor in order to fulfill his Christian commitment at the Church, and was assigned his first student. Vira, short for El Vira, was a nice enough kid. He sure didn't need any tutoring. Vira could actually tutor Sam on just about any subject if you pressed him. For

a fourteen year old, he certainly knew it all, and his cocky attitude proved it.

From the very beginning of the assignment, Sam was hit with one nasty email after another. They were sent by the Assistant Pastor, who just happened to be Vira's father. He didn't hesitate to tell Sam about his unacceptable performance and, specifically, what he was doing wrong. Of course, the emails were not addressed to Sam personally. They just addressed something that only Sam could have done. There will be no tutoring after 7pm. That came after the first night when Sam let Vira go at 7:40pm. There will be no tutoring of students alone in the Day Care Center. It's difficult not to tutor a student alone when there is no one else there. You will not tutor students on sexual matters. Vira brought the steamy novel to the session, not Sam, and Sam promptly told him to discuss the novel with his father. Class ended early that night.

As Sam pulled into the parking lot of the church, he saw Vira waiting with his mother. Sam got out of his car and greeted them.

"Hello Mrs. Oberson" Sam said. "Hey Vira."

"Hello Sam" Vira said. Mrs. Oberson didn't speak.

"What are we studying tonight?" Sam asked.

"I'll be back at 6:55" Mrs. Oberson quipped and then shuffled into her car and drove off.

"Come on Vira." Sam said as he put his hand on Vira's shoulder. Sam was exhausted, and Vira was just getting cranked up.

"I have to practice for my presentation and then study for my math test." As they walked to the assigned classroom, Vira started telling Sam about the speech he had to give in class tomorrow. He had it all written out and he just had to memorize it. Oh boy, Sam thought.

One hour into the lesson, Sam was helping Vira with a long division problem on the black board. Suddenly, someone walked into the room behind them. Sam turned and saw Assistant Pastor Oberson take a seat in the back row. "Hello Pastor Oberson" Sam said, as he wondered why he would come by so early. It was only 6:15pm. Sam, still exhausted, turned back to the black board and realized that

Vira was having difficulty solving the problem. By that time, Sam had completely lost track of where he was in the process. Sam struggled to re-orient himself, not quickly enough though. The Assistant Pastor was on his way to the front of the room.

"For a banker, you can count our money pretty quick, but ya can't do long division huh!" The Assistant Pastor was referring to Sam's comment about the collection last Sunday. Sam can count some money now. He does it all day long. So, when he accidentally busted in on the ushers counting the Sunday collection, he quickly estimated the take to be well over one hundred grand. He made the mistake of mentioning this to pastor Oberson. Oberson had just looked at him and then turned away. Since then, Sam had realized his grave error. The church had been reporting Sunday collections of anywhere between 10 and 15 thousand. They were nowhere near one hundred thousand. Now, it was Oberson's chance to demonstrate Sam's mathematical incompetence. He quickly solved Vira's long division problem, grabbed Vira by the wrist and walked him out of the room. Sam just stood and watched them leave. He wondered what the email would have to say about his tutoring skills. No matter, Sam was done for the evening and he was heading home.

When Sam pulled into his driveway, he saw his wife, Jackie, standing inside the door. After nearly twenty years of marriage, Sam had still not gotten over her stunning beauty. Beautiful, yet totally devoted to him. How could such a beautiful and intelligent woman be devoted? And, she was devoted to him. Jackie was a corporate attorney on the fast track up the corporate ladder. She used her beauty to her advantage, but it was her sharp intellect and pleasant personality that was moving her wherever she chose to go. She had a truly photographic memory with keen insight into complex situations involving people, numbers, relationships, feelings and regulations. Sam knew she could out maneuver anyone, but he loved her because she never chose to out maneuver him. They enjoyed each other's company so much, that neither of them would jeopardize their relationship for anything.

So, there she was standing at the door even before he pulled into the driveway. Sam could never figure out how she knew exactly when he would be home. When he asked, she would just smile and say "I always know where you are. You can't hide from me."

"Hey Honey" Sam said as he got out of the car.

"Hello Sweetheart. How was your day?"

"It was fine, but long." Sam began telling her what happened at the church as he walked into the house. Jackie started to look serious as she listened to what happened. She knew it was a mistake for Sam to begin tutoring at the church and she expressed her feelings again.

"I told you not to get involved with those people. Why can't we just go to church and worship God and mind our own business. God knows that you and I have more 'business' than any normal couple can handle. Why do you have to get into the Oberson's business? I never trusted that man, and I never will.

Sam agreed, but shrugged his shoulders and said ... "What can I do? I have already committed myself."

"Don't worry about it." Jackie said. "They already sent you an email and said your services were no longer needed."

"What! WHY? My gosh! I was only a little tired and lost track of a stupid long division problem. Who sent the email?"

"Oberson's secretary."

"His Secretary?! What is Bonnie doing emailing me at this time of night?!"

"Well" Jackie said, in her all knowing tone. "Oberson was probably over at her place ministering to her and the subject of ..."

Just then there was a pounding at the door. It was the police, several of them. Sam and Jackie looked at each other with puzzled and frightened expressions. They both walked to the door.

"Mr. Livingston?" the officer demanded.

"Yes" Sam said.

"Mr. Samuel Livingston?" the officer repeated.

"Yes?" Sam reiterated.

"You need to come with us now, Sir!"

Jackie stepped in front of her husband. Sam put his arm around Jackie and slid in front of his wife.

"What is the problem officer?"

"Sir, we have a warrant for your arrest, and the charges will be explained to you at the station. For now, you should know that you have the right to remain silent and whatever you say from here on out can be and will be used against you in a court of law."

"No Sir!" Jackie said. "You will explain the charges now, and as my husband's attorney, you are legally obliged to explain these charges now!" Jackie was not a criminal attorney, so she did not have the legal lingo necessary to fully intimidate the police officer, but he was definitely taken off guard. Jackie's beauty could be intimidating to most men, but it was the fact that this gorgeous black woman was Sam's wife and an attorney that really puzzled him. That was flabbergasting!

"Maam, Mr. Livingston is being charged with multiple counts of child molestation and he will be leaving with us at this time! Mr. Livingston, would you please turn around and face the wall."

"What?!" Sam Said. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. "You said what? What am I being charged with? You must be joking! Jackie! What's going on? What do I do?!"

The two policemen behind the officer stepped forward and pressed Sam against the wall and cuffed him. They dragged him out of the house and slammed him into the back seat of the caged in police car. Sam, totally disoriented, turned and looked at his wife. She was right beside the car door. He had never seen her look so helpless. There was nothing she could do. There was nothing Sam could do. What was happening, Sam wondered. How could this be happening? Why was this happening?!

## Chapter 2

Sam and Jackie sat in the sterile interrogation room, quietly and anxiously looking at each other. The door

opened and their lawyer entered with a rushed and determined stride. He stepped to the table where they both were sitting.

"Sam, this is the lawyer I was telling you about. Richard, this is my husband, Sam."

Sam stood and shook Richard's hand. "What's going on?" Sam asked as calmly as he could.

"Well" Richard said, "It looks pretty bad. The State Attorney tells me that they have a boy named ....." Richard pulled out his note pad and read off the name. "El Vira Oberson" Richard announced. "Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Oberson actually filed the complaint."

Sam jumped to his feet and reached for the note pad. "You have got to be kidding! What is he complaining about? I didn't solve his math problems fast enough! What else could he complain about? Oh! I wasn't prompt enough to our tutoring sessions! What?"

Richard sat down and Sam joined him at the table. Jackie was leaning forward. They both looked horrified. Richard explained that Vira was accusing Sam of repeated sexual encounters during their private tutoring sessions. Sam and Jackie were absolutely perplexed. They looked at Richard and knew that they didn't have to deny the accusations. Richard had known Jackie since law school and had worked with her on minor criminal cases within the corporate world throughout their careers. Richard was the best criminal attorney Jackie had ever met. He was a master for the underdog, especially the wrongfully accused underdog. Jackie's temperament changed from helpless victim to determined opponent as she realized they were not the underdog, but they were definitely wrongfully accused. Her cool steel nerves tightened as she began to focus on the case to save her husband and pursue retribution for these outlandish accusations. Sam, on the other hand, was in a confused daze. Once again, he was wondering how this could be happening.

"The first thing we have to do" Richard began, "is to establish bail and get you out of here. You know you won't be able to leave the state once your bail has been posted. Will this cause any problems?"

There was a slight pause and then Sam said "I just need to make one moonshine run to the mountains across the Georgia line."

Richard was confused. There was dead silence. He didn't know how to take this statement from Sam. He turned to Jackie and she was smiling. She knew Sam tended to worry and be pessimistic, but overall, he was a well grounded Christian who trusted in the Lord. Sam was back from wherever he had gone in his daze and Jackie played along.

"Sam, you know I told you to stop your shinnen!"

Then Richard joined in, and with a smirk he said in as country a voice as he could muster "You got some Shiine. Is it goood?" Then, as if he were not amused, he became somber and said "I take it that's a No."

"No, I'll be good." Sam said. "How much is the bail?"

"We will find out in a few minutes." Richard Said. "But before we go to the bail hearing, tell me about your relationship with El Vira."

Sam composed himself and began telling Richard about his decision two months ago to volunteer more of his time at the church. "Faith without works is dead." That is what Pastor Reidsville said. It's what the Bible said. Sam took it to heart and decided to donate one evening a week to tutoring kids in the church who were having trouble in school. From the very beginning, the endeavor was plagued with problems. The first problem was being assigned to tutor Vira. Sam knew the kid was smart as a whip and he was making good grades in school. His father, Stanley Oberson, was an arrogant ass. He refused to acknowledge anyone that didn't have the proper status within the church. He was a master at referring anyone to the appropriate Deacon or Sunday school teacher. As the assistant Pastor, he blocked all access to Pastor Reidsville. His wife, Shaqui Oberson, was nice enough when she wanted to be, but she could be very stuffy at times. Sam tended to overlook Mrs. Oberson's rudeness because he always discerned her to be somewhat of a victim of her overbearing husband.

In spite of his initial reservations, Sam had agreed to tutor Vira. Then the problems came in rapid succession. After every single tutoring session, Sam would receive

emails from the church secretary. They addressed concerns regarding the time, place, lesson plan, record keeping, type of chalk, markers and pencils used, and what Sam wore to the sessions. It was particularly bad when Sam showed up on his day off and wore jeans and a polo shirt. That, according to the secretary was highly irregular and inappropriate for a Christian on Church property.

Sam's relationship to Vira was tense in the beginning. Sam could not get to know the Kid with all the petty complaints hurling about in his head as he tried to help him with his school work. It was even worse because Sam knew Vira did not need any help. He complained to Jackie that he was only fine tuning the boy to become a straight A honor roll student rather than just an A and B honor roll student. Sam boasted that he was so proud to help Vira get into Harvard rather than some slacker school like Princeton.

However, over the past two months, Sam thought Vira and he were getting along reasonably well. Vira learned to take Sam seriously, and Sam thought he was actually contributing to Vira's education and he was ready to settle in for at least a school year of tutoring Vira and watching him grow as a student. Sam and Jackie could not have kids of their own, so maybe this was God's way of allowing Sam to enjoy some of the aspects of parenthood. That was how Sam was looking at the situation. Obviously, EL Vira saw things differently.

The door to the interrogation room opened and the Clerk asked. "Mr. Richard Smith?"

"Yes." Richard said.

"The Judge will see you and your client now. She is in courtroom 6."

"Thanks." Richard turned to Sam and Jackie and waved for them to follow him.

As they walked down the hall, Sam turned to Jackie and asked. "Where is courtroom 6?"

Jackie poked him and said "Follow the Lawyer." They all hustled down the long clean corridors leading to the court house and eventually stopped outside the door of the assigned courtroom.

Richard collected himself and turned to Sam and Jackie.

"You both know that I am doing all the talking, Right?"

"Yes Sir" Sam Said. Sam had gotten nervous on the long walk through City Hall. Jackie, on the other hand, had become more determined to squash this threat to her husband, to her, and to their lives. She started to object to Richard's assertion when Sam placed his hand on her shoulder and squeezed it. "That goes for both of us, Richard."

When Sam entered the courtroom behind Richard and Jackie, he started to tremble. The Judge was sitting at her bench reviewing some paperwork. The District Attorney was standing at her table shuffling aimlessly through her papers. Richard ushered them both to the table for the Defense.

"Judge Carol Sodd Presiding in Case Number F10912 El Vira Oberson versus Samuel P. Livingston" the clerk declared. Sam heard his name and once again had a surreal feeling of this whole situation being just a horrible nightmare. He looked at the judge and the judge peered at him over her reading glasses. She was a stern and sturdy woman. Sam prayed for fairness and revelation. It's Not True! None of it! He felt like screaming it out loud, right now, right there in the courtroom.

The judge turned to the District Attorney. "Ms. Peters, what are the charges?"

"Multiple counts of sexual battery against a minor, your honor. We ask that bail be denied in this case due to the fact that Mr. Livingston's wife is a highly paid executive attorney for a multi-national corporation with ties to countries that do not have extradition treaties with the United States. Mr. Livingston is therefore a flight risk and should be denied bail."

The judge turned to Richard. "Mr. Smith?"

"Your honor, both Mr. and Mrs. Livingston are upstanding citizens in this community, and they have been for years. They both have their families and their extended families in this community and neither of them have a criminal record."

"Your honor, Ms. Livingston earns a salary in excess of two million dollars per year and she can more than afford to

move herself and her entire family to another country if she had to."

Sam turned to Jackie in surprise and whispered just loud enough for the judge to hear. "You make that much money? How come you never told me?" Jackie cracked a smile and elbowed Sam and then placed her hand on his thigh to calm him down. She knew Sam was getting more and more nervous and worried by the second. But, he did have a way of finessing his way through tight situations with well placed statements at just the right time and with the exact tone needed to convey an important underlying message. Sam and Jackie are a loving couple, in support of each other, and they are going through this together. That was the message Sam was conveying. Sam looked at the judge as innocently as he could and the judge nearly smiled.

"Bail is set at five hundred thousand dollars. Both Mr. and Mrs. Livingston will turn over their passports to the Court, and Mr. Livingston is not allowed to leave the county until the trial. The trial date is set for June 30<sup>th</sup> at 9am." With that, the gavel hit the stump and the hearing was over.

Richard turned to Sam and Jackie and tried to seem perturbed. "I thought you both agreed to let me do all the talking. I have never seen such shenanigans in this court room." Then, in a grin he said, "I think judge Sodd almost smiled! That is a first! And, don't get me started on how your little show stopped Peters in her tracks!" Richard became somber once again. "You have good instincts Sam, and that was very courageous for a novice in the courtroom."

Sam took Jackie's hand and looked at Jackie and then to Richard. "I'm a coward at heart, but I had to do something. My faith in God gives me courage and often spurs me on to do brave things without thinking. I have learned how to listen to the Holy Spirit. We are in the right and God will guide us."

Richard contemplated what Sam said and slowly stood up. "You talk as if God speaks to you directly, and you talk as if there are two Gods, God and the Holy Spirit."

"God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Three in One. It is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. And,

yes, God does speak to me directly, but quietly through the Holy Spirit. The closer I get to God, the clearer the communication becomes, but it is always a very quiet communication."

"I can have you out of here in an hour if you have the fifty grand."

Back to reality, Sam thought and turned to Jackie. There were tears flowing down her face. She slapped him on the shoulder and said, "Let's go home."

"Can you lend me fifty big ones honey?"

"I suppose so." Jackie said as she put her arm around her husband and he put his arm around her. They walked out of the courtroom with Richard following behind.

### Chapter 3

Matt Reidsville sat at the breakfast table studying his newspaper as the maid bustled about him. The huge screen plasma TV played silently on the wall to the right. Matt's trophy wife, Monique, sat next to Matt and directly in front of the television. She patiently flipped through a glamour magazine as she waited for her breakfast. Something caught her eye on the TV screen and she looked up. There was no need for audio. She was strictly a visual person. Information outside of her glamour/fashion world was unnecessary and patently irrelevant.

On the screen were Sam and Jackie being interviewed on the courthouse steps. Monique focused in on Jackie. Jackie was the only competition she had in the church. They were both beautiful black women and Monique always studied Jackie very, very carefully. She noted her dress, hair, jewelry, makeup, shoes, stockings, belt and the overall coordination of the outfit. Monique secretly felt inferior to Jackie when it came to fashion, makeup and her hair. She needed to know who did Jackie's hair, but didn't dare ask her or anyone else. That would be admitting defeat.

It's not that Monique ever intended to use Jackie's hair dresser. She needed to find out who she was, and then determine who trained her and go to the teacher. It is beneath the First Lady to use a member's hair dresser. It is much more appropriate to use the Master of the Student.

The only thing that Monique had on Jackie was her husband. They were both married to white men, but her man was the handsome Pastor. Jackie's husband was only an assistant manager at a bank of all things. Her husband had status and prestige. Jackie's husband was a no-body.

Matt looked up from the newspaper and saw the interview taking place on the TV screen. He quickly reached for the remote and took the TV off mute. Jackie was explaining to the news person that she felt confident that her husband would be cleared of all charges. "No Way." Matt muttered and flicked off the television. He turned to Monique and smiled. Monique returned the smile and then returned her attention to the glamour magazine.

After breakfast, Matt called the butler to bring the Hummer around front. Matt loved cars, and he especially loved driving them. The money he saved on a chauffeur, he put towards his fleet of pristine automobiles. He boasted of having a car for every day of the week. Today was hump day and on that day he drove the Hummer. When it was delivered to the front of the mansion, he climbed in and drove slowly down the driveway. The feel of a new car was one of the best feelings on earth.

Matt fell in love with new cars as a salesman in high school. Yes, high school. Matt had lied about his age. After school and on weekends, he was Mr. Reidsville at Eastside Chevrolet of Jacksonville, Florida! Matt was the top salesman of all time for the dealership. He consistently out sold all other sales people by far. He sold a car to just about everyone he talked to. The problem was, however, that it took a certain amount of time to sell a car. No matter how he tried, he could not sell a car in less than two hours. Therefore, his income was limited to only 4-5 cars per work day. He did this each and every work day, but that was not enough for Matt.

There had to be a better way to make money. That is when Matt's attention focused on the preachers of the day. Now, they were making some money. Matt was never fooled about preachers and churches and the money they made. He started to go to all the different churches in the city to study the style and techniques of the preachers. Soon, he

only focused on preachers and churches with obvious money. These were churches built on prime real estate like downtown Jacksonville, Ponte Vedra, and Orange Park. The preachers in these churches knew the system and knew how to preach in order pull in the money.

Matt studied and learned the language, style and strategy of all the big dogs while he looked for an opportunity to jump into the business. When he heard of a developing scandal at The Redeemer, he immediately walked down the isle and joined the Church, Sunday school, Outreach Ministry, and Men's Breakfast group. Using all the buzz words and bible verses, he quickly moved up within the church and positioned himself to take over when the scandal broke. The strategy worked, and the rest is history. The Redeemer became the "Real Miracle of Downtown Jacksonville".

Yes, all was as it should be. Matt reviewed the grounds and noted the perfect landscaping of the exclusive neighborhood. This was where he should be and what a man like him deserved. His living environment was a check. Yes, a definite CHECK! He wanted for nothing in this area. There was, however, never enough money, power and influence. There was also the matter of security. How do you make sure you never lose what you already have? That thought turned his attention to Sam Livingston. Sam had noticed that the money on the table after last Sunday's collection was far greater than the ten thousand or so that was usually reported. Fortunately, Sam was foolish enough to mention his observation to Oberson. Sam had to go away, and he had to go away fast.

Oberson, the faithful Assistant Pastor that he was, agreed to the malicious plot to get rid of Sam almost immediately. The plan was in progress and working well. It was good to see the Livingston's on the steps of the courthouse. Sam won't be free for long, and he certainly will not be thinking about any inconsistencies in the church collections. Even if he did mention anything, he is totally discredited now with his new sex offender status. He was guilty until proven innocent. Matt loved it, as he smiled to himself. He also knew that Sam would be found guilty, guilty as hell!

Matt pulled into the parking lot of the Church and parked near the side entrance. This was his private entrance to the "Prayer Room". No one entered through this room except him, not even Jane, his loyal secretary. As Matt unlocked the door, he was reviewing in his mind, all the chores he had to do before he actually entered the Church office through the other side of the Prayer Room.

Everyone thought that Matt spent hours a day in prayer because he spent so much time in the Prayer Room. Actually, this was where Matt did all his computer work. In Junior High, Matt became fluent in six computer languages. He was completely self-taught, and his instincts told him to keep his computer skills as a closely guarded secret. It had remained that way, and now it was his most valuable weapon.

Matt had completely computerized his financial empire and the management of it. What's more, his loyal secretary did most of the management without knowing what she was actually doing. He did this by writing customized software to operate twelve "ministries", two local, four national, and six multi-national. Jane simply followed instructions laid out initially by the highly paid Accounting Consultants, and then perpetuated the process using Matt's software.

Matt stepped into the prayer room and settled into the comfortable high back chair that had a cushioned kneeler positioned in front of it. The lighting in the room was dim with a slight orange cast. It reminded Matt of sunset lighting. It was very cozy and relaxing. He reached behind the chair and pulled out what looked like an old fashioned wireless keyboard. He placed the keyboard on the kneeler mantel and typed in the special key combination. The keyboard lit up and a translucent 3-D computer screen appeared and hung in mid-air above the kneeler. The sight of the crisp display floating in space always thrilled Matt. The power of this small system was astounding. The boot time was only a few seconds and now he could go right to work.

Matt had to make arrangements for the cash payments to several key officials, the judge, district attorney,

assistant district attorney, bailiff, and the clerk of the courts. Pulling from his offshore accounts, he arranged for twelve installments to be paid to each of the city officials. Communications to any of these people were rare. Matt left it up to them to figure out what he wanted. If they couldn't figure it out, the money would be lost. Matt chuckled as he thought to himself. If you have to worry about losing the money, ya shouldn't be bribing people in the first place. The fact is, Matt lived way below his means. He had so much money, it scared even him. Bill Gates had nuthin on Matt Reidsville. Never let anyone know how much ya got. Matt's father taught him that, and Matt lived by it.

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Stanley Oberson also drove himself to work that hump day morning. He was concentrating on the road ahead of him as he maneuvered the pot holes in the pavement. He too had seen the Livingston's on the morning news. Stanley had immediately called his son Vira to the kitchen and pressed him for a report on the progress towards practicing his speech.

"Have you practiced your speech this morning Vira? Have you? Answer me Boy!"

His mother stepped in before the boy could answer. "Of course he has. We went through the entire speech three times already this morning."

Stanley studied the expressions on the faces of his wife and son. They had better not be lying to him. He made a mental note to have the boy give the speech to him at least three times that evening. He will get that speech right if it is the last thing he does! Stanley drove on, trying to calm himself down. My career depends on this, he thought. Shaqui better make sure that boy does what he is told, or her father will have both their butts in a vice.

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Matt finished his computer work and shut down the

system. He placed the computer back behind the chair and then exited the prayer room from the other side. He proceeded to the church's main office with his solemn "I've just finished praying" look on his face.

"Good morning Jane!" he beamed as he entered the office.

Jane stood up from her desk and greeted the Pastor with her usual tone of complete loyalty and admiration.

"Jane, has Pastor Oberson come in yet?"

"Yes Sir. He is in his office."

"Would you send him in please? Thanks." Matt entered his office and Stanley was right behind him. Matt turned and almost bumped into him. "Oh! Oberson, there you are. How ya doing this fine sunny morning? Great! Hey, how's our little project going? You got the script down?"

"Yes Sir!" Stanley beamed. "Vira's been practicing and practicing. We call it his speech you know. He's going to say it just like one of his school speeches."

"Good, Fine, absolutely Terrific Oberson. I knew I could count on you. You are doing very important work for the Lord. I don't think David could have done any better than you in these treacherous times. Let us pray. Dear Lord protect your servant. Lord, protect his family. Do not let any harm come to them, and give them the strength to do more for you now and in the future. Amen."

"Amen! Sir! Amen!"

"How's my lovely daughter, Oberson?"

"Fine, Fine" Stanley replied in a stammer.

"You keep up the good work taking care of my precious cargo and that wonderful jewel of a kid. Can ya grab me a cup of coffee Stan? Little extra cream this mornin. Feelin a little peuuuny and need some pic me up. Thanks Oberson." Matt said as he slapped him on the back and proceeded into his absolutely humongous office.

#### Chapter 4

Sam felt strange being out and about in the middle of the morning in the middle of the work week. He was usually stuck behind the counter at the Bank during this time of the day. The Bank, however, did not think it would be good for

business to have a sex offender servicing customers. A simple leave of absence would have been sufficient to deal with Sam's situation, but it was more fun for his boss to just go ahead and terminate his employment. Guilty until proven innocent was the safest route to take. And if you are proven innocent, we still think you had something to do with that boy. You can't fool us! You're outta here! Ya Pervert!

In spite of his circumstances, Sam was in a surprisingly good mood this morning. He was on his way to Frank's house, or Frank's plantation as Sam liked to refer to it. Frank was an extremely successful horticulturalist/gardener on the outskirts of Jacksonville. Sam and Frank became good friends once they realized that they both loved to play chess. You would never expect either one of them to even know how to play the game, and certainly not enjoy it, or to be any good at it. Yet, Frank was the Southeast Regional Chess Champion and the President of the Southern Chess Master's Association. No one in the region could beat Frank, and only a couple of people in the Country had ever defeated him. That was true except for Sam. Sam always won when they played. Frank had never beaten Sam. Regardless, they remained the closest of friends.

"Mr. Frank! How ya doing Old Dog? Plantation runnin you OK?"

"Sam! My Boy!"

"I ain't yur Boy! Frank. This ain't no true Plantation. You gotta pay people to work round here ya know!"

"And Top Dollar at that" Frank said. Frank came from off the front porch as Sam got out of his car. They both met at the top of the drive way and embraced shoulder to shoulder. "Hey Sam. Sorry to hear about your troubles. How ya holding up? How's Jackie Holding up?"

"We're fine Frank. No weapon formed against us and all that you know."

"What?" Frank said with a puzzled look.

"Never mind Frank. It's Bible Talk."

"Oh! You had me going there Sam. Does that mean

you're doing alright?"

"Yes Frank, we're fine."

"Alright! Let's play some Chess! Sam, you know I have a good chance of beating you this time, you being beat down and all."

Sam tilted his head forward, looked at Frank and paused before saying "Yea Right." They walked toward the house and continued their playful banter.

Sam was always impressed with how Frank kept his house so immaculately clean and so elegantly decorated with plants and flowers. Betty, Frank's wife, helped, but everyone knew that Frank was the housekeeper and the gardener. The two men headed to the back of the house where they played chess. The back room was like an attached greenhouse with an air conditioner. It overlooked the fields of liners filled with flowers, shrubs and trees.

"I see you added two more greenhouses on the north side, Frank. Business must be good."

"More than I can handle, Sam. I need some help. Hey! I here you're looking for a job."

"Don't start, Frank. I'm a banker. Got any money I can count?"

"Not a Dime!"

"Yeah, right. Let's get to the game."

Frank and Sam squared off from each other at the chess table. It was situated in an area of the room that was enveloped by plants both inside and outside the glassed in porch. The entire scene was a masterpiece of horticulture, nature and design. The two men looked at each other and then they both slowly sat down, each determined to defeat the other. Frank moved immediately and Sam countered.

"You could at least think about it." Frank said.

"Likewise" Sam muttered. "How did you manage to grow green flowers, Frank?"

"Don't talk to me about my flowers. That's a distraction strategy."

"No, I'm serious Frank. Flower pedals are supposed to be any other color but green. How did you produce a green flower?"

"Natural process of evolution" Frank said while

concentrating on the chess board. A sly smile was on his face, however. Sam knew this was unusual, and he knew it was a major accomplishment for Frank.

"I know you do not believe in evolution." Sam Said

"Why not? How else could the earth and all the plants and animals come to be?"

"God created them Frank."

"Yeah, in six days. I can't believe you think that, Sam. I know you're a church goer, but you can't seriously consider the Bible as being literal on that point." Frank moved and Sam countered.

"Stop it Sam!"

"Your Move Frank."

Frank concentrated. The little twerp is going to beat me again, he thought. "Ok, so the world is 6000 years old instead of 4 billion years old. You're telling me you believe that?"

Sam looked up from the table and stared at Frank.

"My friend, the world is 13,000 years old and you can trace the world from it's creation to the present day through the stories about the lives of the people in the Bible."

"You got that right, Sam. Those are stories, just stories. You can learn moral lessons from them, but they are just stories."

"They are history, Frank, not just stories."

It didn't take Sam long to beat Frank once again. At the sound of Check Mate, Frank stood while shaking his head. "I just can't understand how you do that to me every time. No one else in the country can do that. Yet, you do it every single time we play." Frank turned towards his paradise and said "So you like my green flowers, huh?"

"It's amazing what you've done Frank. It's truly remarkable."

"No, what's remarkable, Sam, is that I am a chess master and you can come here and beat me every time and yet you still believe in fairy tales."

Sam did not answer right away. This was a critical point in their relationship, and Sam wanted to use this opportunity to really get Frank to consider God, the creator of heaven and earth. "Frank, there is more evidence to

support God and the Genesis version of Creation than there will ever be for the theory of evolution. Take your green flowers for example."

"My point exactly, Sam. Evolution. You see it before your very eyes."

"No Frank. That flower will never evolve into an apple tree, and the apple tree will never evolve into a palm tree. Evolution requires that to have happened hundreds of thousands of times in the past, and yet there is not one shred of evidence that it ever happened once. You know how to manipulate the pollination of plants to alter certain characteristics of a plant, but you also know that a particular species of plant will always remain that species, regardless of the number of times you cross pollinate it."

"You may be right, but over millions of years, that could change."

Sam countered with emphasizing the word "could", and then noted that they were going in circles because they were back to the question of the age of the earth.

"What do you think the earth was like before the flood?" Sam asked.

"Why do I care, Sam? I don't believe the Flood happened."

Sam ignored Franks answer and answered his own question. "Not only was the earth a tropical paradise, the Bible tells us that there as no rain before the flood."

"Don't be ridiculous, Sam. There had to be rain. How else would the plants and animals have survived?"

Sam slowly answered. "A mist came up from the ground, and there was a fog or mist layer in the atmosphere above the ground."

Frank considered what Sam said. "This is all in the Bible?" Frank asked. "Why didn't anybody ever tell me this before?"

"You mean before now, Frank?"

"Yeah, before now. I would think that something like that would be big news. Now, you're telling me that it has been in the Bible all along."

"The world doesn't want you to know, Frank."

"Ok, say it's true. So what. It's different now. Big

deal. Things change."

Sam pointed to the new greenhouse that Frank just built. "Let's say you took that greenhouse and somehow re-created the environment that existed before the great flood. What do you think would happen, Frank?"

"The plants would grow well, but so what?" Frank said

Sam then told Frank that a man's lifespan was close to one thousand years before the flood, and reptiles lived long enough to grow into dinosaurs. Frank took it all in and Sam knew he had him hooked.

"What do we need to do to re-create this environment?" Frank asked.

"That's the tricky part. No one knows exactly for sure. All we know is that reptiles grew faster and people lived longer. Reptiles today continue to grow through out their lives. They never reach maturity and stop growing like us. My theory is that the reptiles of today are the dinosaurs of yesterday. If we re-create the pre-historic environment, today's reptiles will once again grow into dinosaurs."

Frank considered what Sam had said. Sam could tell he was deep in thought. They both were. Finally, Frank said "We use the growth of reptiles in the greenhouse to monitor our progress toward re-creating the pre-flood environment."

"Exactly", Sam said

"Hmmm ... Very interesting proposition Sam. Are you going to help me with this while you are going through this trial?"

"Sure Frank. When do we start?"

"Tomorrow my friend. Right now I am beat down by the secret Chess Master."

Sam grabbed his shoulder. "It's not that bad is it?"

Frank and Sam walked out to the new greenhouse.

Frank's mind was racing with possibilities. He contemplated developing a false floor and ceiling and creating a mist from each while circulating cool air through out. The question was; what should the temperature be? What should the temperature of the water in the mist be, and what should the temperature of the circulating air be? How much sunlight should be allowed in? Should the temperature vary

throughout the day and night? Frank stopped at the door of the greenhouse. "I'm glad I built two of these. Looks like you are going to take over this one, Sam."

"Me! Frank, I'm helping, not doing. Besides, you're the greenhouse expert. I'm the chess expert."

"Careful", Frank said. "You want to leave this greenhouse or do you want to become the fertilizer for the plants in it?"

"Sorry, Frank. Couldn't hep it."

"Riiight. I see how it goes. Come on in here Frisko Chess King. Take a look at the newest addition to my plantation."

## Chapter 5

Sam sat at the breakfast table in the kitchen, furiously punching numbers into his calculator and jotting notes on a tablet. Jackie walked in, ready for work, and sipping coffee. She stopped and asked "Watcha workin on honey?"

Sam continued punching in numbers for a few more seconds and finally stopped, sighed and looked up. "Well darlin, as far as I can figure it, you just need to work an extra thirty minutes per day to make up for my lost income."

"What are you talking about, Sam?"

"You see, the way I figure it, you make about one thousand dollars an hour. Therefore, to replace my salary, you just need to put in an extra thirty minutes per day."

Jackie looked puzzled. Sam hesitated. "Oh! You're right. That doesn't take overtime into account. That would mean you only have to work about 15 minutes over. Just get the overtime cleared with your bosses and we're covered. I can retire and you just need to do a little OT at the end of the day." Jackie had a whimsical look on her face. Sam continued. "Let's see ..... You could, say, empty the trash cans at the end of each day."

"We have people that do that."

"How about getting the coffee ready for the next morning?"

"We have people that do that also."

"Hmmm ...." Sam pondered. "What could you do extra at the end of the day that will only take an extra fifteen minutes?"

"Nuthin!, and I ain't working no overtime for you." Jackie said as she pounced toward Sam. She curled her arms around his head and shoulders and kissed him on the neck. Sam was grinning sheepishly. Jackie snatched up the tablet. "Hey! Wait a minute! These are not overtime calculations! Sam, what are you figuring up here?"

"Frank and I ....."

Jackie rolled her eyes and exclaimed. "Don't tell me you told Frank about the Dinosaur House!!"

"It's not a dinosaur house, it's a greenhouse."

"Sure", Jackie Said. "It's a greenhouse for growing dinosaurs! I told you, Sam. You cannot build a greenhouse in our back yard!"

"We are not going to build it in our back yard. It's going to be in Frank's back yard. He just built two new greenhouses, and we are going to use one of them to grow dinosaurs." They both stopped and looked at each other and contemplated how ridiculous Sam sounded. Sam tried to take the statement back, but Jackie just couldn't stop giggling. Eventually, she regained her composure and asked.

"And who is going to pay for all of this?"

"Don't worry, honey, you won't have to pay for any of it. Frank is paying for everything."

"Oh really? Boy! You sure are getting good at this moochin off people." Jackie stopped and instantly regretted what she said.

Sam raised his eyebrows and then slowly cracked a smile. "It was much easier than I thought." he said with a chuckle. "But like I said, you just need to work a little overtime."

"I told you, I ain't workin no overtime." At that, Jackie poured herself some more coffee, gave Sam a peck on the cheek, and mockingly strutted out of the kitchen with her chin jutting out and up. Her stride was exaggerated to match her defiant tone.

Sam smiled and said in a sweet tone "Have a nice day, Honey."

Jackie looked back. "Don't forget our appointment with Richard this evening."

Sam waited for Jackie to drive off. He then scrambled to gather up all his notes and get going to Frank's house. It had become his routine since being laid off. Hanging out with Frank on the Plantation kept him busy, and kept his mind off the upcoming trial. Frank loved the company, and the help with the plants. More importantly, Frank needed Sam to answer all the questions he had about the Bible. Sam knew that Frank was becoming saved. The Holy Spirit was doing a strong work in him. Betty was so impressed with what Sam had finally managed to accomplish, that she gave him a big hug whenever he came over. Betty had been preaching to Frank for their entire forty three year marriage. Frank was polite to his endearing wife, but he never really listened, or considered what she was telling him. But now, Frank was consuming the Word and it was changing him. Betty saw it in his face and felt it in his touch. It was truly a miracle, and Betty relished every moment of it.

Sam pulled into the driveway, and saw that Frank was already working in the greenhouse. He got out of the car and headed toward the house. Betty came from around the corner and walked up to Sam and gave him another big hug. "He's still asking questions." she whispered in his ear and then squeezed his shoulder.

"Good", Sam said. "Hey Frank, I have some notes here on how we can set up the greenhouse."

"You Do? You must have slept in a Holiday Inn Express last night."

"No, Jackie and I are getting along just fine."

"Let me see what you have, Sam." Frank took a glance at Sam's notes and slapped the pad onto Sam's chest. "Don't be ridiculous, Sam. I'm way ahead of you. Look here. The floor boards are already in place. You can help me install the misters under the floor and near the ceiling." Frank rammmed Sam in the back. "Come On Boy! Let's get to work. Oh. Sorry. Shall we proceed with the greenhouse renovation, Mr. Livingston?" Sam pretended to pout and stomped to the greenhouse door. He looked inside and was

absolutely amazed.

"You must have worked all night Frank!"

Frank put his arm on Sam's shoulder. "It's amazing what you can do when you know you are right with God."

Betty came up behind them and gave each of them a kiss on the back of the neck. "Lunch is at Noon Sharp. Now you boys play nice together."

It didn't take long for Frank and Sam to setup the new greenhouse. Frank was standing back and admiring their work. "You know Sam, if this works, it will change everything. Evolution will essentially be debunked. History will have to be re-written. Faith in God, The Creator, will be as it should be. People will believe in God again."

"Whether it works or not, Frank, God is still The Creator. As far as people believing again, they may for a short time. But, No One comes to the Father, unless the Father Draw him."

"What are you saying, Sam?"

"It's not the signs and wonders that convince people and cause them to believe and trust in God. The Jews were led out of Egypt by all kinds of wonderful signs and acts of God. However, it wasn't long before they were complaining and losing faith. You see, it's not in us. God is the one that draws us to Him. He is drawing you now Frank. When I first met Jackie, I wasn't saved, but Jackie was. She was understanding and patient and informative, but it wasn't until God, the Holy Spirit, started working in my very soul, that I started to see the light, the wisdom, and the love of God. That is happening to you now, Frank. I could tell you to cherish these moments, but the fact is; God's love never stops. You will be able to cherish the Love of God for the rest of your life, and throughout eternity. What you are experiencing now is just the beginning."

"That is what Betty has been trying to tell me for our entire marriage. Why didn't I listen, Sam? Why didn't I listen?"

"I can ask the same thing Frank. Why didn't I listen? I was in my thirties before I began to believe. I think my own intelligence got in my way. I had it all figured out,

or so I thought I did. If we are successful in growing dinosaurs again, we will be able to show the world that the scientists only thought they had the history of the world figured out. They were wrong about the demise of the dinosaurs. They are wrong about the age of the earth. They are wrong about the creator of the earth. This can be a very important work for God's kingdom. God may be using both of us right now."

"I'm in my seventies, Sam."

"Moses was in his eighties when he was sent back to Egypt."

"You're right. I read that last night."

"Keep reading, Frank. Keep reading."

#### Chapter 6

Jackie was waiting in the driveway when Sam pulled up. She waived Sam to get into her car, and they drove off to the appointment with Richard. "For a jobless man, you sure are busy, Sam. I told you not to be late. You know this is important. We can't mess this up."

"You're right honey. I'm sorry. It's just that Frank has so many questions. He is so excited about his salvation and developing a relationship with Jesus."

"Really! That's wonderful. I still can't believe you did it Sam."

"You know you can't, because I didn't. God did it."

"Ahhh!, but you were His instrument. I'm so proud of you!"

"Well, I'm just happy for Frank and Betty. Betty is so excited, she can't stand it. And she's relieved. I've never seen anyone so relieved."

Jackie drove the rest of the way in silence. All the talk about Betty's relief seemed to make them both think about their need for relief. They needed these ridiculous charges to go away. Each day came and went with no call from Richard saying the charges had been dropped. Now, it was one week away from the trial and they were heading to Richard's office to discuss courtroom strategies. No charges had been dropped. No deals had been made. There

was no sign of any abatement what so ever. They pulled into the parking lot of Richard's office. Jackie and Sam looked at each other and said at the same time. "Don't Worry" That caused them to both chuckle. They got out of the car and walked to the office door.

Sam opened the door for Jackie and then followed her into the plush waiting room that smelled of polished wood. The walls were covered with thick dark wood panels. Guarding and surrounding the back hallway was an expansive cherry wood desk. Sam approached the desk and slowly rubbed the top and rounded edge.

"What a beautiful piece of furniture. It must have ..."

"Don't touch anything Sam. Not even a paper clip, or pen, or piece of paper or ..."

Sam raised his hand. "I get the concept."

"Good." Jackie said as she wandered about the waiting room with her arms crossed. As she walked by the hallway, she saw Richard waving for them to come to the back.

"Come on back Jackie and Sam. The staff is gone for the day, but I think we can survive without them. How you two doing? Want some coffee, soda, or purified water?"

"I'll have some coffee." Sam said.

"Nothing for me thanks."

Everyone settled into the conference room where there was a television and a DVD player. Richard was not in his usual jovial mood, and that made Sam uneasy. He faced both of them and said "Sam, I know you are one hundred percent innocent of all charges and implications in this case. However, we have a problem. It's a very big problem." Richard picked up the remote and turned on the TV. "This is the deposition of El Vira. It was filmed last week. I received it this morning."

As Sam and Jackie watched the deposition, they both started to weep. They grabbed each other and held both hands and cried. How could one person do this to another? Why were they being so harshly accused of such vile acts that never happened?! Vira was explaining in great detail. He used words and described actions that embarrassed Sam and Jackie beyond what either one could endure. When the video had finished, they all sat quietly. Jackie bowed her head

and started praying while she squeezed Sam's hands. Sam bowed his head also. There was nothing left to do but pray.

After a long silence, Richard finally said they had to discuss their strategy for next week. He turned to Sam and said "Don't take this the wrong way, but I can't stop asking myself how such a young boy could describe the accounts in such detail?"

Sam looked at Richard and calmly said. "He is rehearsing a speech. I tutored the boy, and on one occasion, he had to practice giving a speech. Vira's mannerisms and his tone are exactly the same as when he was practicing his speech for school. This is a speech that he has been given, and he has memorized it."

"But Why? Sam! Why? And Who? Who would be able to write such a speech and how could they force this boy to memorize it and give it to a room full of intimidating men and women in business suits and in the deposition room of all places? Is this kid made of steel?"

"No", Sam said. "His father is. It is not so much that he is made of steel. It's that he is absolutely ruthless."

"Why is he ruthless toward you?" That was the question, the big question. Why had Stanley Oberson turned so viciously against Sam Livingston?

Silence grew between them once again. "Think Sam", Richard said. "What have you done recently, or in the recent past? Is there anything you may have said or done to trigger this attack?"

Jackie finally spoke. "You saw the money, Sam."

"What? What money?"

"You remember. Several weeks ago, you said you accidentally walked in on the ushers counting the money, and you said there was much more than ten thousand dollars on that table."

"Yea, So?"

"That's the problem. You saw something you shouldn't have seen."

"I don't get it. What does that have to do with this? It makes no sense."

"It makes perfect sense." Richard said. "There is

something going on with the money in that church, and you saw evidence of it."

"What evidence? I saw the money, I didn't take a picture."

"You mentioned that there was more than ten thousand dollars there."

"What is the significance of that?"

"Sam," Jackie interjected. "They report the Sunday collections in the monthly financial report distributed to all the members on the first Sunday night service. It's always around ten thousand. Sam and I have always made a joke about it. No matter how much the church grows, the collection is always around ten thousand. It never changes more than a few thousand dollars. So, Sam, you noticed that the church is bringing in much more than ten thousand each week."

"Yes, at least four to five times that amount. At least that is my estimate after glancing at all the stacks of money on the table. There were at least twelve stacks of twenties, fifteen stacks of fifties and ...."

"Ok Sam, we take your word for it." Richard said as he raised his hand. "How do they know that you know? Who saw you? How do they know that you counted all the money?"

"You Banker You." Jackie quipped.

"I mentioned it to Pastor Oberson. I thought I was congratulating him on such a large Sunday collection. He didn't say anything, he just walked away."

"Bingo! That was where this whole thing started."

"Come On! Richard. That caused Pastor Oberson to try to send me to jail for the rest of my life, to ruin me completely?!!!" Sam stood. He was frustrated and furious at what was happening to him. "Why not kick us out of the Church? Why not just wait to see if I was going to say anything?"

"But you did, Sam." Richard got up and started pacing. "It's not just Oberson. It must be Reidsville also. Just mentioning that you noticed the large amount of money in the collection must have touched on a very closely guarded secret. It is a secret that is so dire, that it is more than worth putting you away for years and ruining your

life. Also, realize that we are just looking at the cash collected. There has to be just as much in checks collected each Sunday." Richard stopped and looked at Jackie. Tears were streaming down her face. Soft, gentle sobs were beginning to come up from her slender frame. Sam put his arm around her again. They both looked extremely frightened.

"What can we do, Richard?" Sam asked.

Richard looked puzzled. "We have to discredit the boy, but by definition, a boy this age is innocent. Therefore, we have to focus on the person coaching El Vira and try to bring the coaching to light and then discredit the coach."

"That sounds tenuous at best, Richard." Jackie stood up and continued. "We know that Reidsville is ultimately behind all of this. He must be pocketing the extra money and he is desperate to hide that fact. I say we start with Reidsville. If we bring down his house of cards, the rest of the conspiracy will be exposed and the Oberson speech will be revealed."

"Sounds like a good plan, Jackie, but we go to trial next week. There is no way we can do all that in a week." After a long pause, Richard began again, but cautiously. They were all standing up by this time. "You both need to prepare for the worse. Jackie, don't start throwing money at this, because there isn't a lawyer in the country that will be able to do better than we can do. The simple fact is that they have a super weapon in this boy. He is extremely convincing and I imagine they know that. We will be working diligently to unravel this conspiracy, but it will take some time. I am sorry that one man can do this to another, and we have no immediate recourse. I assure both of you that I will not let this stand. We will get to the bottom of it and we will expose this and the criminal activity behind it."

#### Chapter 7

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and Earth are filled with your Glory. Blessed be to God on the most High. We honor you and serve you. Blessed be the name

of the Lord. Thank you for all that you have given us, and thank you for our ability to give back to you. We know that you can do all things, but you want us to be part of your creation. We are here to serve you and we give our hearts and souls to you. We give you all that we have, for we know that you will take care of us and provide us with all that we need. Praise the Lord. Praise the Mighty Lord. Sally Stevens, we are your Miracle TODAY! Your Electric Bill is PAAAIIIIIIIID! Genie Wilcox, call your Mama, cuz your phone is turned OOOOnnnnnn! Blessed be the name of the Lord. HHHAAALLLLAAAALLLLEEUUUUYAAAAA!!!!!!!"

Jackie sat in the balcony of the sanctuary. Normally, Jackie and Sam got to church early enough to claim their seats on row five, just inside door number eight on the ground floor. Jackie had gotten up on this morning and snuck out before Sam awoke. Sam was having extreme difficulty sleeping, which was almost unheard of for him. Since the meeting with Richard, Sam tossed and turned until the early morning hours and then finally fell asleep. The more Jackie saw what this was doing to her husband, the angrier and more determined she became. She was here in church, by herself, not to hear a sermon, but to observe the atmosphere of the congregation and more importantly, to study Pastor Reidsville.

Jackie now saw a man that was as slick as a snake in oil. She used to view him as a true man of God. Instead, he was some sort of monster. He simply had to be. There is no other explanation for how or why he would be orchestrating this vicious attack on Sam. To be clear, it was an attack on both of them and their lives. What could be so precious to Reidsville that he would go to such lengths to destroy them? Were these extraordinary measures, or was he simply that powerful? Why would Oberson go along with using his son to perpetrate such an awful conspiracy?

Jackie's attention returned to Reidsville. His tone had become serious. He wasn't trying to generate enthusiasm or excitement. "My fellow Christians. I have some very disturbing news for all of you. Yes, very, very disturbing news. One of our own. Yes, Yes, it is one of our own trusted members of this very congregation. The devil is at

work Evvvverrrrrryyyy Where! The victim of this attack is the Son of our beloved Pastor Oberson. Stanely! Stanely! Come up here and be with me. Stand by me because you know that we AAAALLL stand by you and your family." Stanley stepped up to the pulpit and both men embraced for an extended period of time. "Stanley, my brother in Christ Jesus! His name is blessed on my tongue! Let us pray. Let us pray. LET US PRAY!!! You are dear to us. You are a soldier of God, and God has chosen YOU! Yes! Yes! Yes! Gawd Almighty! Yes! You are chosen of Gawd to fight His battle with the devil! Tell us Stanley. Tell us about your battle. Tell us what Gawd has chosen for you and your family to endure. Tell us what Gawd has told you to do IN HIS NAME!"

Stanley stepped to the microphone and immediately began to weep and wail. "Father God Help Us All! Hallelujah. Father God Help Us All. Hallelujah! I am your servant Father God. You have chosen me to be your champion. I am your David! I fear no evil. I am at your command! Almighty God, You have saved my son from the hands of a sexual predator. You have given my son the courage to speak out against this beast. In the name of all that is holy, we thank you Father God. Vira, please my son, come up here and tell us your story."

"NO NO NO! You are a Liar!!!!" The screaming voice came from the balcony. It was Jackie. She couldn't take it any more. She had to speak out against this travesty. No sooner did she yell the word liar, two goons came out of nowhere and picked her up by the arms. Jackie was kicking and screaming. Her legs were flailing in the air as the two body guards carried her swiftly towards the stairway to the outside. Jackie's high heels ripped through the pants leg of the guard on her right. Then she caught the shin of the guard on the left. In spite of all the desperate squirming, twisting and kicking, Jackie could not break free. The guards carried her down stairs to the exit door and literally threw her onto the pavement outside.

Jackie was stunned, disoriented and completely out of breath. She looked up towards the exit. The door flew open again, and her shoes came flying out. It wasn't until then

that she noticed she was in her stocking feet.

Jackie tried to catch her breath. Slowly, she attempted to get up onto her knees. As she tilted forward, a hand reached under her arm. "Here you go young lady. Let me help you." Jackie looked up and saw the face of a lovely old lady with a kind and caring face that matched her sweet soft voice.

"Thank you. Thank you so much" Jackie said as she allowed the lady to help her climb to her feet. "My Shoes are over there." They both worked themselves toward the steps to pick up Jackie's stiletto pumps.

"You know, my husband was kicked out of the church this way several years ago. So, I sort of know just how you feel right now."

"I am so embarrassed." Jackie replied.

"Don't be. You have every right to be upset. I didn't believe a word they were saying either. You need to speak up against them. You know my husband spoke out against the church. He called himself the Watchdog. All his writings on the internet caused them quite a bit of trouble. He ended up in a lawsuit, but the courts sided with the preacher. It was a dark day for my husband, for both of us."

Jackie reached down and picked up her shoes. The heel was broken on one of them, so she just carried them with her on the way to the parking garage. "I don't remember any law suits over internet writings." Jackie said.

"Oh No, it wasn't this church. It was the one down the street. Of course, we don't go there anymore. Where's your car parked, honey?"

"Over there to the left." Silence fell between them as they maneuvered the parking garage to Jackie's car. "Here it is. Thank you so much for helping me. You don't know how much I appreciate your kind assistance."

"It was my pleasure, sweetie. You just need to know that you are not alone in your troubles. My husband lost his part of this fight, but the Lord has passed it on to you and Sam. God is by your side. You are protected."

Jackie looked down to put her key into the car door and then looked up. "How did you know my husband's name....."

The lady was gone. Jackie looked all around the parking garage. There was no sign of the woman. An eerie silence filled the garage. Jackie got into her car. She paused for a moment and considered what had just happened. Then, an overwhelming need to get out of the parking garage overtook her. She cranked the engine and then swiftly drove to the exit and into the street.

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Sam was sipping his coffee and leisurely pacing about the house. He assumed that Jackie had gone to church, and he was not sure it was a good idea. He knew Jackie, and she would not let anyone say anything derogatory without a stinging comeback. Sam hoped that no one mentioned the case to her. Then he considered what would happen if the pastor referred to the case during his sermon. Sam could only imagine what Jackie would do or say, and what the response of the church would be. It was not a pleasant sight to envision.

Sam heard a car plow into the driveway. Something was wrong. He rushed to the front porch and saw Jackie slumped over the steering wheel. As he moved toward the car, he felt like he was moving in slow motion. Jackie got out of the car and fell against Sam's chest. She began sobbing, crying and whaling. Her legs buckled under her own weight, and Sam quickly scooped her up into his arms.

Sam had never seen Jackie in such a distraught condition. He stood erect as Jackie buried her face into his shoulder. Sam raised his head high and perused the neighborhood in front of him. He looked intently for any sign of anyone who may have been responsible for his wife's condition. Slowly, he turned and continued his surveillance. After a three hundred and sixty degree scope, he was convinced that there was no one in the immediate vicinity that had anything to do with the assault.

Sam carried Jackie into the house and placed her on their bed. He turned to remove her shoes and realized she was in her stocking feet. He examined the stockings. They were torn, as if she had walked without shoes for a long distance. He examined the rest of her outfit. No tears, no rips, no sign of any type of sexual assault. Sam felt some

relief, but not much. Jackie had drifted off to sleep. Sam removed her suit jacket and then placed her under the covers. He looked at the alarm clock. Church had just let out.

Sam left Jackie to rest, and went to the kitchen to make his call. He was going to find out what happened at church and Jerry, their Sunday School Teacher, could tell him. "Hello, Jerry, this is Sam Livingston. Did anything unusual happen in church today? Jackie just got home and she is very upset."

"Well Sam, there was a small commotion in the balcony, but I couldn't really see what was going on."

"What kind of commotion?"

"Well, a lady screamed."

"It was a lady. You could tell it was a lady?"

"Well, not really Sam. It may have been a lady, or it may not have been."

"What did the person say?"

"Well, she screamed something, but I couldn't make it out."

"So, it was a woman?"

"Now Sam, I said I wasn't sure."

"So, something happened on the balcony and someone screamed, but you could not make out what she screamed and you could not see what was happening? Is that it Jerry?"

"Well .... Yeah."

"You're lying. All of you are! Jerry, you need to be careful who you throw stones at.

"Likewise Brother!"

"You Leave My Wife ALOOONE!!!!" The guttural sound of Sam's voice carried though out the house. Jackie awoke and called for Sam. He rushed to the bedroom.

Sam held Jackie in his arms and comforted her. "It's nothing honey. I was just on the phone to Jerry. Everything is going to be fine." Jackie drifted back to sleep, so Sam gently laid her back down and reached for the bedside phone. He was not going to leave her side again. Sam dialed Frank's number. "Hey Frank."

"What's wrong Sam?" Frank knew instantly that

something was wrong, by the unusual tone of Sam's voice.

"I need you and Betty to come over as soon as possible. Something has happened to Jackie. She's fine, but she is pretty shaken up."

"We are already there Sam, or we will be as soon as you hang up." Frank turned to Betty. "Our friends need us Betty. Get your mending kit and I will fetch my herb stash. Jackie has taken a bad turn and Sam needs us to help him take care of her."

Betty looked puzzled and concerned as she turned towards the kitchen. They were both in Frank's pickup before Frank could even think of saying hurry up.

Sam heard the knock at the door and reluctantly left his wife's side and went to let Frank and Betty in. "Hey Frank, Betty, thanks for coming."

"Where is she?" Betty asked

"She's in the bed, asleep." Sam said as he pointed to the room. They all went to the bedroom where Jackie was resting quietly. She began to stir and then opened her eyes. She smiled at the three concerned faces overlooking the bed.

"Well, if it ain't the three stooges. Who let ya'll out of the cage?" They all chuckled with relief.

"Frank, dear, I think Jackie could use some of your special tea."

"Oh, Yes, please Frank. Fix us all some." Sam asked.

"Coming right up." Frank said as he left for the kitchen.

"When Frank gets back with the tea, you are going to tell us all what happened. Ok Honey?"

"Sure Sam, but you're not going to be pleased." Sam nodded and they all waited as Betty fussed over Jackie.

Frank entered the bedroom with a tray full of tea and fixins. He was bursting with pride as he explained the herbal content of the three different teas he had prepared. Sam and Frank began fixing their own tea and Betty prepared a special one for Jackie. Then they turned to Jackie and expected a full reporting of what had happened to her.

Jackie started by telling them about the Pastor discussing the case with the congregation. Sam stood up

while shaking his head. She told them about Stanley whaling and carrying on about being David against Goliath. When she uttered the words "sexual predator", Sam yelled "Liars!"

Jackie paused and looked at Sam. "That's what I said."

"You didn't!" Frank exclaimed.

"I sure did, right from the balcony. I screamed it."

"And Jerry couldn't quite make out what you were saying."

"Oh! They heard me. No sooner did I yell it, the security guards had me by the arms and were dragging me out of the church."

Sam sat down and ran both hands through his hair.

"Ok, that is pretty bad, but how did you end up shoeless and so distraught by the time you got home?"

Jackie told them about the kicking and screaming and being literally thrown out onto the sidewalk. She was about to tell them about the lady, when Sam jumped back up and grabbed Frank by the arm. "Come on Frank, let's take a ride." Jackie and Betty both tried to object, but they were speaking to the wind left behind by Sam and Frank rushing out of the house.

Frank hopped into the driver's seat of the pickup and Sam took shotgun. No words were spoken between them. They knew where they were going and why. The crowd was still at the church. Frank pulled up to the front and parked the pickup next to the crowd. Sam got out and headed toward Stanley Oberson. He never saw it coming. Sam was slammed to the sidewalk by one of the large security guards. Another guard jammed his foot into Sam's neck. "Hey! Leave him alone!" Frank yelled as he was slammed against the truck. His head was shoved against the window and a knee rammed into his lower back.

"Call 911!" Oberson screamed.

The guards held Sam and Frank in place until the police came. Two officers cuffed the two culprits and put them in the back of the squad car. "Where are you taking us?!" Frank demanded.

"Mr. Livingston. We are taking you and your friend home. You haven't done anything, but we needed to get you

out of that volatile situation." Sam knew the policeman from the bank and graciously accepted his assessment.

"Thanks. You know where I live, don't you Charlie?"

"Sure Sam, I'll take you right there. I suggest you come back for the truck tomorrow."

"OK Charlie, I owe you one."

"Not a problem. Not a problem at all."

As they drove back, there was silence between the four men in the squad car. Finally Frank spoke up. "So, is this what you Christians do for fun on Sunday's? I'm kind of new to this Christian stuff. I thought Christians were supposed to be decent folk, not bullies."

Sam rolled his eyes and shook his head slowly. He was about to speak, when Charlie began explaining. "Sir, it is a sad state of affairs in the Churches today. The devil is at work in the congregations, if not being in full control of them. To be strong as a Christian, you need to read your Bible and get your inspiration directly from the Holy Spirit. You won't find it in most churches today."

"I can attest to that." The other officer responded. "My Great Grandad was the Watchdog."

"Who is the watchdog?" Sam asked.

"Ask your Wife." He replied.

The police car pulled into Sam's driveway. Jackie and Betty were both on the front porch with their hands on their hips. They approached the squad car and peered into the back seat. There sat two grown men with their shoulders pointing inwards. Sam and Frank looked sheepishly at their wives. Jackie and Betty began to shake their heads in unison. "What kind of mess did you both get into in such a short time?" Betty asked.

"Tell me Charlie, did ya throw the book at em?" Jackie asked.

"Ms Jackie, we caught them before they actually broke the law. Therefore, I am releasing them into your custody. Do you agree to take full responsibility for these two delinquents?"

Jackie hesitated and then, with a smirk on her face she said "Yes, I guess so officer. Let em out. We'll take em."

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Sam and Jackie were left to spend a quiet evening together after Frank and Betty went home in Sam's car. "Sam, there is something I haven't told you about what happened at the church."

Sam looked up from his Bible and faced his wife.

"What is it?"

"After I was thrown out of the church, a kind elderly lady helped me back to my car. On the way, she told me about her husband. He was called The Watchdog and he went up against the Pastor of the large church down the street from ours. She..."

"The Watchdog?! The police officer with Charlie mentioned his great granddad was the Watchdog."

"Sam, this lady knew your name, and I never mentioned you. I also turned around and she was gone. The last thing she said was that her husband's fight was now in our hands, and that God was with us."

They both looked at each other and then they both looked at the computer. Jackie got to it first. "We can search Watchdog and Baptist Church. That might bring up something." Jackie pulled up Yahoo! and typed it in. The search results listed "The Watchdog Blog Shut Down after Court's Ruling". Jackie clicked on it and they both read the article in silence.

*The Watchdog blog was started by a long time member of the Church. Their new Pastor had started a marketing program which the Watchdog thought was contrary to the Will of God. He started to ask questions and express concerns, but was completely ignored by the Pastor and the Church Staff. During his investigation, the Watchdog found out about some shady land deals and extravagant spending on the part of the Church for the personal benefit of the Pastor. When the Watchdog expressed his concerns, he was still ignored. So, he started the Watchdog blog on the internet. When the Church discovered the blog, they used all their power to expose the Watchdog and kicked him and his family out of the Church. One thing led to another and eventually, the Church and the Watchdog*

*were ensnarled in a messy law suit. In the end, the courts sided with the Church and they forced the Watchdog to shut down his blog. From that point on, the Pastor and his cohorts were known as the Baptist Mafia.*

"AAAHHHHH!!!" Jackie inhaled. "Honey! Look at the Date. That was over seventy years ago! That would make his wife at least One Hundred and Fifty years old today!"

"So?"

"Sam, that old lady that helped me today, was his Wife!"

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